

2024 National Delegate Conference Decisions

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Decisions**

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Motions

3. Organising and Training to Win Ballots and Disputes

Carried as Amended: 3.1

Conference notes that in January 2024 UNISON joined the protest in Cheltenham against the Tories' new Minimum Service Levels Act 2023, and a day of historical strike action took place in Northern Ireland.

Conference notes that the last year has seen a high level of organising and bargaining in UNISON. The 'One UNISON' campaigns of 'Pay Fair for Patient Care', organising initiatives in English multi academy trusts, and fair pay for social carers have contributed to growth in membership, member recruitment, new activists and increase in stewards.

Conference notes that in 2023 there was a net membership growth. Out of those joiners 15 percent of them were young members. This is an increase in young members and a proportional increase from 10 percent of joiners in 2021 and 13 percent in 2022. However, conference notes the still worrying trend in the activist base in the union, with the average age of a UNISON activist being 57 years old.

Conference believes that in order to ensure the sustainability of our union, training and recruitment and training of our young members is key to ensuring the survival of our union.

Conference notes that in the last few years many young members were balloted within their workplace branches for the first time in their lives.

Conference recognises the importance of trade union education and training to:

- 1) Make members involved in disputes aware of the statutory requirements around balloting for legal strike action;
- 2) Give members the tools and knowledge to support and take part in successful bargaining and campaigns in their branches.

In particular, conference recognises the need for education to be available to young and new members taking their first steps in UNISON.

Conference recognises the importance of strategic and base organising in order to bargain successfully, win disputes, and develop a strong activist base in the union. Conference further recognises the need for education amongst our members, and specifically young members, in building for successful legal industrial action.

Conference therefore welcomes continued resourcing and support of UNISON's 'Organising to Win Strategy' to increase member participation in our union, recruitment and training of our young members.

Conference calls upon the National Executive Council to:

- a) Continue to support the implementation of the Organising to Win strategy, with the recruitment of young activists at its heart;

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- b) Work with the National Young Members Forum to promote the importance of UNISON membership to young workers across public services, and to emphasise the bargaining gains achieved by UNISON in recent years;
- c) Work with the National Young Members Forum to identify successes in developing and organising young activists and promote best practice across UNISON;
- d) Liaise with UNISON's Learning and Organising Services, and other relevant parts of the union, to review the training and education available on industrial disputes and lawful industrial action;
- e) If necessary, consider developing further workshops, resources and materials aimed at educating young and new members about:
 - f) Provide support to Branches to identify all Young Members and what their barriers are to taking part in industrial action.
 - i) How lawful strike action is decided upon and balloted for;
 - ii) How structures within UNISON operate and coordinate more generally;
 - iii) What UNISON members' employment rights are, whilst taking part in legal strike action.

6. Challenging the Exploitation of Migrant Workers

Carried as Amended: 6.1, 6.4

Conference is deeply concerned about the exploitation of migrant workers in the UK, particularly in the social care sector. Acute underfunding, a refusal to address workers' pay and the absence of meaningful reform has left the social care sector in crisis. Care workers are overworked, underpaid and struggling to plug the gaps in a sector desperately short of staff. A rise in overseas recruitment has been fundamentally important to meeting these staffing challenges across health and social care. However, migrant workers have been left doubly vulnerable because of conditions in the social care sector interacting with punitive immigration rules.

Care worker exploitation is rife, irrespective of migration status. But add in the even greater power unscrupulous employers have over migrant care workers and the conditions for the most extreme and disgraceful practices have been created. Migrant care workers, sponsored by their employer, are often unable to leave exploitative situations and find work elsewhere. Irresponsible care employers know this and seek to extract money and working hours from them, often in clear breach of the law. Care workers who whistleblow are often victimised, dismissed and then left destitute and at risk of deportation.

The interaction of the terrible underlying conditions of that sector with our immigration system has led to unnecessary suffering by migrant social care workers.

Rather than support migrant workers, the Government has sought to make the rules even more punitive and exploitative, ending the ability of care workers to bring their children and spouses with them. Conference believes that separating families and

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isolating workers from the right to a family life is not only inhumane but will also worsen the exploitation migrant workers experience.

Conference recognises that the majority of migrant workers in the care sector are women. The government's punitive approach has a disproportionate effect on women migrants generally, and Black women specifically. This impact is exacerbated by the fact that women, as the primary carers at home, are often forced to bring elderly relatives, or young children with them. There are verified reports of traffickers targeting women in abusive relationships to exploit their desperation to leave their countries of origin, only to find themselves victims of modern slavery. There is further evidence to suggest that some employers in the sector are complicit.

Conference welcomes the work done at all levels by UNISON to respond to this challenge, especially by branches and activists to challenge exploitation and injustice, support migrant worker members from destitution and the threat of deportation. This work has been supported by the provision of free immigration advice through the helpline run by JCWI (Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants). This invaluable service has supported members dealing with the hostile environment, ever-changing immigration rules, employers using visa conditions to exploit workers and more. It has also supported branches and activists dealing with complex immigration rules affecting workplace rights.

Conference also welcomes the launch of a new migrant worker network, a new informal network which enables the union to improve our communication with migrant worker members and strengthen our organising and recruitment activity.

Conference therefore calls upon the National Executive Council to:

- 1) Raise awareness of, and promote, the new migrant worker network;
 - 2) Support the work of branches and regions in organising migrant workers with resources and advice
 - 3) Continue to support and promote awareness of the JCWI immigration advice helpline
 - 4) Campaign to improve the rights of migrant workers, working with the union's migrant worker networks;
 - 5) Continue to campaign against the "Hostile Environment" approach to immigration policy.
 - 6) Develop Branch Action Plans to identify how many migrant workers Branches have in workplaces and identify any potential discrimination cases.
 - 7) Work with the National Women's Committee and other relevant body to campaign for the reform of social care.
- 8. Union Learning is Central to Skills and Development for UNISON Members and Activists**

Carried as Amended: 8.1

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Learning is fundamentally central to supporting our activists and ensuring that they receive the best training and support; learning is also vital for our members to develop personally and professionally; and learning is key to supporting wider growth and productivity through ongoing training or developing new skills.

Conference recognises that learning is central not only to building our activist base but it is key in building participation amongst our members and potential members in organising campaigns and in widening participation.

Conference also recognises that unions are integral to ensuring that any future government policy on providing future skills, such as Artificial Intelligence environmental awareness and green skills, to promote growth and productivity, is accessible to all workers.

Whilst employees (with some qualifying factors) have a statutory right to ask for paid time off work for training or study, this alone does not help the skills agenda. However, where we have learning agreements with employers, we have been able to provide a framework to utilise this right and support staff to undertake paid time off for training.

In addition, the East Midlands region have seen success in engaging with employers through promoting learning charters. A learning charter is a signed commitment to supporting staff learning and development through working with Union Learning Reps (ULRs). Where there is no learning agreement with an employer, a learning charter may act as the first step and be a useful tool to engage with employers on a local level.

Cymru/Wales region has been successful in engaging employers that have been resistant to trade union engagement previously, utilising learning as a way to reach staff, and start a learning conversation. As a result, those employers are now actively engaged with the union, membership in those workplaces has increased, and retention of UNISON membership has improved.

Union Learning Reps (ULRs) play a vital role in developing learning in our workplaces, supporting individuals, and providing wider growth through skills and development. They are activists that are entitled to statutory paid time off to undertake this role and relevant training. The role includes:

- 1) Promoting the value of learning with employers and members;
- 2) Linking relevant learning to organising and bargaining campaigns supporting recruitment and retention;
- 3) Arranging learning and training;
- 4) Supporting learners, mentoring and following up after training;
- 5) Supporting workplaces in ensuring employees have the right skills;
- 6) Widening and increasing participation.

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In embedding learning in the workplace, learning agreements and learning charters can be a valuable tool for ULRs in engaging employers.

Conference notes the need for a renewed focus on ULRs as a key activist role in organising and branch activity.

Conference calls upon the National Executive Council to:

- a) Refresh and develop learning resources and guidance on learning agreements and learning charters;
- b) Track and review where we have current learning agreements with major employers and seek to revitalise their use;
- c) Maximise the bargaining and organising potential in existing learning agreements, by working with service groups, Learning and Organising Services and regional learning leads;
- d) Provide guidance and support on developing learning agreements or developing learning charters with employers where there is no recognition or where it can outline a local application of a national agreement;
- e) Encourage branches and ULRs to support members to request paid time off for training, both collectively and individually;
- f) Promote the role of ULRs and their active involvement in organising campaigns and branch activity;
- g) Encourage learning to be a standing item on branch meeting agendas.

9. Supporting Black Members Experiencing Racism

Carried

Despite UNISON's continued efforts to tackle racism in public service workplaces, continued reports from the Police, Probation, NHS, and others demonstrate that significant changes are still required before equality for Black workers will ever materialise.

Conference condemns the slow pace of change in too many workplaces and the exclusion of Black workers from discussions about what reforms are necessary.

Although an immediate change to reflect what is required to deal with institutional racism will not happen overnight, a concerted effort can be made to not only consult us on proposals but also to involve us in the decision-making process. This means being an effective part of the process to generate the required change that continues to inhibit the progress of Black people.

Conference applauds initiatives such as UNISON Eastern's Anti Racism Charter which requires employers to commit to ensuring Black workers are central to all negotiations on how to deliver anti-racist workplaces and monitor and evaluate progress. In the Year of Black Workers UNISON adopted and encouraged take-up of this initiative across the union as a UNISON priority activity.

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UNISON has made tremendous strides forward in holding employers to account for racism in the workplace and their responsibility to make efforts to have an anti-racism working environment. Much effort has been made to help reps understand how best to support our members in identifying racism, prejudices, micro aggression, and unconscious bias.

However, these achievements have also demonstrated that further development is needed to establish best practice in this area.

Conference believes training should be provided for branch officers and stewards to better equip them to be part of the solution. This will enable branch officers and stewards to help our members fight and win fairer workplaces.

We feel it is time for UNISON to progress in developing methods to better protect Black members in the working environment – instead of mainly focusing on supporting Black members after the painful experience of racism. This is a great opportunity to accelerate change and deliver an inclusive working environment.

Conference resolves that the National Executive Council working with UNISON College Learning and Organising Services help to:

- 1) Identify experienced trainers at a national and regional level who can deliver training to members focussed on better protecting Black members in the workplace and helping them fight for and win fairer workplaces by working proactively with employers.
- 2) Create specific training resources which will educate and promote branch officers and stewards to access this training in their branches.

14. Speaking 'In a Personal Capacity'

Lost

15. Treating our Members With Dignity and Respect

Carried

Police and Justice staff are well established members of our union and have been for decades. Police and Justice members work in very difficult circumstances both protecting the public and enforcing the law. The needs of these members are no different to that of other service groups. These members support our union and act with dignity and respect.

At previous Conferences there have been offensive and ill-informed comments that have caused offense to Police and Justice members present. These remarks have often gone unchecked, leaving Police and Justice delegates feeling deflated and isolated.

All members of UNISON should be treated with dignity and respect in line with the rules of our union. Conference therefore calls on the National Executive Council to maintain proceedings in the spirit of the aims, objectives and rules of our union and to challenge inappropriate comments when they occur.

18. Artificial Intelligence

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Carried

Conference, Artificial intelligence (AI) is a rapidly developing technology that has the potential to transform and improve the quality and efficiency of delivery of processes and services in the public sector.

AI can also create new jobs and roles in all public sectors and can also enhance the skills and capabilities of existing workers, by providing them with new tools and insights to improve their practice.

Conference, it also has to be recognised that Artificial intelligence (AI) poses a number of threats to the UNISON members, where employers can look to use AI to replace workers rather than using AI to aid productivity.

Conference, one risk is Job Automation: AI technology has the potential to automate various tasks that are currently performed by humans. This could lead to significant job displacement, particularly in public services where there are routine tasks such as administration which are traditionally carried out by women. Workers in these roles may find their jobs eliminated or gradually reduced, affecting their income and job security.

Another risk is Skill Relevance: AI-powered automation often requires workers to possess new and more advanced skills to remain competitive in the job market. Individuals who lack these skills or are unable to adapt may find it challenging to secure employment or may face downward pressure on their wages and overall working conditions.

AI could exacerbate wage inequality. As automation takes over certain jobs, the demand for skilled workers in AI-related areas may increase, leading to higher wages for those with the necessary expertise. On the other hand, workers in jobs that are easily automated might experience a decline in job opportunities and stagnant wages.

The implementation of AI may widen the digital divide between workers who have access to technology and those who do not. Workers without access to digital tools or training may struggle to adapt to AI driven work environments, facing exclusion and potential job loss.

With the advent of AI, companies collect and process vast amounts of personal data to train and improve AI algorithms. This raises concerns about data privacy and security for unionised workers, as their personal information might be at risk of being mishandled or accessed without their consent.

AI driven technologies can affect traditional unionised work structures. Companies may employ non-unionised workers to leverage AI capabilities or bypass collective bargaining by relying on algorithms and automation. This erosion of union power could weaken worker protection and bargaining positions.

Conference to address these threats and protect UNISON members, it is important for UNISON negotiators, policymakers, and employers to collaborate on initiatives like reskilling and upskilling programs, negotiating protections for affected workers,

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ensuring data privacy regulations, and promoting AI ethics and responsible implementation.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to:

- 1) To approach the government to campaign and work with them on a comprehensive and coordinated approach to prepare the workforce, industry and all organisations for the adoption and implementation of AI. This approach should involve education, training, regulation, governance, and evaluation;
- 2) Involve and engage all stakeholders, including affiliated trade unions, policymakers, and researchers, in the development of a policy for use and deployment of AI. This should ensure that AI is aligned with the values, needs, and preferences of the workforce and users;
- 3) Prepare UNISON briefings on the effects of AI for the workforce and a guide on negotiation with employers on this issue.

24. Four Day Working Week

Carried as Amended: 24.1

The fight for decent working hours has always been at the heart of union campaigning. Trade unions fought for an eight hour day in the 19th century and a two-day weekend in the 20th. In the 21st, it is time to take the next step and win a four-day week with fair pay for all. The four day week is a reduction in the standard working week for the same pay and benefits.

Today we are living through another time of rapid industrial disruption, with the explosion of AI and automated management systems. However, as we saw with the industrial revolution, Capital is grabbing more of the gains and as workers we are being short changed.

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Today we are living through another time of rapid industrial disruption, with the explosion of AI and automated management systems. However, as we saw with the industrial revolution, Capital is grabbing more of the gains and as workers we are being short changed.

Achieving a reduced working week for those delivering public services sets a precedent for wider societal change, benefiting not only UNISON members but the UK workforce as a whole.

A concerted effort across all service groups within UNISON is crucial for achieving a significant, widespread shift towards a reduced working week for those delivering public services.

The evidence base for a four-day working is growing. The results of research undertaken in Wales – where a reduction of the working week has been investigated

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in social partnership – and a pilot in Scotland supports in principle the move to a four day working week.

Additionally, the results of the world's biggest ever four day working week pilot which took place in the UK found that:

- 1) Almost every company (92 percent) that took part has decided to continue with the four-day week after the pilot;
- 2) The vast majority of companies were satisfied that business performance and productivity was maintained;
- 3) Over the six month trial period, stress and burnout for employees both significantly declined with 71 percent of employees reporting lower levels of burnout;
- 4) Reported levels of anxiety, fatigue and sleep issues decreased, while mental and physical health both experienced improvements;
- 5) Measures of work-life balance improved. Respondents found it easier to balance their work with both family and social commitments, and were more satisfied with their household finances, relationships and how their time was being managed;
- 6) There was a substantial decline (57 percent) in the likelihood that an employee would quit, dramatically improving job retention;
- 7) There was a 65 percent reduction in the number of sick days.

The increasing evidence shows that a four day work week can lead to increased productivity, improved mental and physical health, better work-life balance, and reduced CO2 emissions.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to:

- a) Advocate for the benefits of a four day work week to employers, policymakers, members, and the wider public;
- b) Develop a comprehensive strategy that builds on the research in Wales and pilot in Scotland, to develop resources and guidance tailored to the unique needs and challenges of UNISON's service groups to support branches and members in negotiating for a four day work week;
- c) Collaborate with our Service Groups, trade unions and campaigns, advocating for a four day work week;
- d) Work with Labour Link and lobby for legislative and policy changes to facilitate the wider adoption of a four day work week.
- e) Establish a working group to coordinate efforts and share best practices for advocating a reduced working week for those delivering public services.

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f) Seek to work with likeminded organisations in the furtherance of the introduction of a reduced working week for public services within the UK with no loss of service delivery.

28. A Health and Safety Response to a National Crisis of Stress and its Effects on Public Service Workers

Carried

Conference affirms that employers have a legal duty to protect both the health, and the safety of their employees in relation to the activities of the employer.

Conference notes that work related stress is defined as 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them'. Stress is a hazard in the same category as electrical safety, fire safety, manual handling hazardous substances, violence, infectious diseases such as Covid 19 and long Covid.

Stress levels faced by those providing public services have been exacerbated by the legacy of Covid 19, growing workplace uncertainty and long term chronic underfunding of services and work related stress when linked to other mental health issues such as anxiety and depression could be classed as a disability and offer protection under the Equality Act. Lack of proper sick pay and reasonable adjustments in many workplaces reveal wider systemic failures in protecting our members rights at work. Staff dealing directly with the public and clients have seen stress rise due to service cuts, delays, waiting lists, verbal and physical abuse and all outside their direct control. This is contributing to a national crisis of stress at work and its effects. It is also deeply concerning that the Conservative government's haphazard approach to the Retained EU Law Bill, has put health and safety legislation and protections under direct threat this year.

Public service workers, including those working for private and not for profit employers, are all too often put in a position that compromises their health through being overworked, working ill and working too many hours. These and many other factors have contributed to an alarming number of workers being signed off sick with stress. The evidence of this can be seen in the Health and Safety Executive's own annual statistics on accidents and ill health, which have shown that work-related stress, depression and anxiety has become the highest cause of work-related ill health absence now accounting for 51 percent of all new and long-term cases.

The vital work of our health and safety representatives were put firmly under the spotlight as the pandemic progressed. It is important that this work continues. We must act now to support UNISON members facing these challenges.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to:

- 1) Develop a stress checklist for branches to hold employers accountable in carrying out robust risk assessments, and making a commitment to uphold health and safety standards, with input from the National Disabled Members Committee;

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- 2) Support a national campaign utilising the existing 'Be On The Safe Side' campaign tools, including the development of new tools and resources to support branches and regions in campaigning, organising and recruitment approaches;
- 3) Work with regions to develop the regional lay health and safety forums, supporting branches to build strong collective bargaining arrangements and support the continued training and development of health and safety representatives and officers;
- 4) Work with self-organised groups and young members to promote the health and safety rep role;
- 5) Campaign for proper sick pay from day one of an absence;
- 6) Work with our political funds to influence all political parties to lobby for more support and protection for workers in relation to stress and all other workplace hazards such as, Covid 19 and the ever-increasing effects of long Covid on workers;
- 7) Continue to highlight poor pay, terms and conditions as having a material effect on the ability of services to recruit and retain staff and consequently encourage all campaigning, including industrial action to secure better pay, terms and conditions;
- 8) Report on the sheer waste of resources when it comes to training and hiring new staff for them only to leave due to unacceptable levels of stress;
- 9) Recognise that unmanageable caseloads and unsafe staffing are a major factor in anxiety and stress, leading to more serious poor mental health issues. Work with service groups in developing recognised and agreed caseloads which can be used by national bodies and in local negotiations as best practice and supporting recruitment and retention;
- 10) Work with Hazards and Stress Network to raise awareness of these issues across a broader network of organisations and civil society.

31. Time to Invest Now - Don't Make Public Service Workers Pay the Price of Austerity!

Carried as Amended: 31.1

Years of under investment and cuts have led the UK to be a poorer place.

Conference therefore notes with concern the growing issue of employers passing on costs to their staff as a consequence of cuts.

Uniforms, mandatory training, shadowing, criminal record checks, mandatory professional accreditations, annual registration fees, car parking and using a car to make visits are all essential for staff to be able to do their jobs, provide a good service and keep their community healthy and safe.

However, far too many workers are being charged for the very essentials they need to go to work. This can add up to thousands of pounds taken from workers' wages every year, leaving workers out of pocket just for doing their jobs.

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UNISON's report, "Driven out of work" shows that one in five frontline public service workers use a car to do their jobs. For example, visiting patients, providing care, keeping vulnerable children safe, doing housing repairs or ensuring water supplies safe all require staff to drive hundreds of miles to do their jobs. But out of date mileage rates mean these vital staff are thousands of pounds out of pocket. Conference is dismayed that the average local government or NHS worker who drives daily is losing more than £6,000 a year.

Conference notes that the UK economy is fifteen years into economic decline, and this has cost the average worker £10,700 a year according to new research from the Resolution Foundation. Taxes are at a record high while investment in public services is at rock bottom, and the UK suffers from the highest income inequality of any major European country. Middle income workers in the UK are now 20 per cent poorer than their peers in Germany and 19 per cent poorer than those in France. For those on lower incomes the picture is even worse, with UK workers being around 27 per cent poorer than their German and French counterparts. Workers need to see genuine pay rises, not docked wages for essential workplace costs.

Conference highlights that, exacerbating this, the biggest costs are often passed onto those least able to afford them. Recent UNISON research on criminal record checks shows that more than four in five (85 percent) of public service workers requiring criminal record checks earn below the average wage in the UK, with two in five of them seeing their wages deducted to pay for it. Similarly, UNISON's research on mileage rates shows that public service workers required to do a car for their job, and therefore left out of pocket by out-of-date mileage rates, earn on average just £22,499 - significantly below the UK average. Conference is concerned that budget cuts, low pay the costs of working are pushing essential workers into financial hardship and poverty.

Conference is clear: it is wrong for employers to pass costs onto their staff. When something is essential for a job to be done well, safely or to the employer's standards, it should always be the employer who foots the bill.

Conference notes that it doesn't have to be this way and applauds the efforts of UNISON activists across the country to challenge unfair costs of working. Conference also notes that many local successes where branches have secured local wins such as temporary uplifts to mileage rates, reversal of fees for criminal record checks and campaigns against car parking charges.

Conference also notes that the reason given by employers to activists challenging these costs being passed on is too often the wider austerity that has seen public service budgets slashed.

Conference demands a new economic strategy for the UK, one which ends austerity and delivers higher growth, better jobs, fairer redistribution and increased investment in world class public services across the whole country. Conference also demands action to tackle the deep regional inequalities that hold much of the country back. Local and devolved governments are best placed to work with local communities to generate better jobs and fairer economic growth, but the slashed funding, cuts and the lack appropriate powers are holding them back.

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Conference notes with concern that an ever increasing share of public finances are being directed to military expenditure with Government Ministers pressing for it to rise to 3 percent of GDP by 2030 (an additional £157Billion).

Conference believes that investment in public services is key to delivering higher growth and lower inequality, and that a growing economy rooted in fairness is the only route to rescuing public services. Conference agrees with the Resolution Foundation's Economy 2030 report that the quality, not just the quantity, of taxes is critical to achieving growth and tackling inequality. Conference recognises that our tax system is out of date, with council tax based on three-decades-old property values, inheritance tax reliefs too easily abused, people on the highest incomes paying unjustifiably low rates and the entire system failing to keep pace with the need to transition to net zero. Conference believes that we need both higher and better quality taxes, shouldered by wealth and other forms of unearned income, not just earnings.

Conference believes that it is important that alongside excellent campaigns in workplaces it is essential that UNISON is also working to change the laws and regulations at national levels in Westminster and devolved administrations to protect workers from these unfair charges and deductions, as well as making the case for greater investment in public services paid for by fairer, more progressive taxation, and being part of the conversation about achieving equitable, sustainable growth.

Conference therefore calls for the National Executive Council to:

- 1) Ensure that the case for investment in all our public services is heard loud and clear in the coming likely election period by:
 - a) Continuing to support branches fighting cuts;
 - b) Support activists and members to engage in the public debates about how to achieve economic growth and wide scale benefits of investing in our local public services, using where appropriate the Resolution Foundation report's findings and recommendations.
- 2) Progress policy development and campaigns on the costs of working including:
 - a) Collect evidence of the financial hardship incurred by our members working across public services as a result of the costs of working being passed onto workers;
 - b) Continue to lobby the UK Treasury to increase out of date mileage rates in line with the real costs of using a vehicle for work;
 - c) Campaign against essential costs of working being passed onto staff, including car parking, uniforms, mandatory training, shadowing, criminal record checks, mandatory professional accreditations, and annual registration fees;
 - d) Develop policy proposals that would ban the unfair costs of working being passed onto workers, and work with regions, service groups, Labour-Link and the Campaign Fund where possible to call for legislative change in Westminster and

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the devolved administrations preventing employers from passing on essential workplace costs to their staff;

- e) Work with UNISON College to develop training for activists and branches to challenge unfair costs of working in their workplaces;
 - f) Undertake further investigation into whether unfair costs of working leave low paid and insecure workers earning below legal minimum levels or not.
- 3) Continue work on progressive taxation to fund public services and ensure fair, sustainable growth in every region by:
- a) Continue work to develop options for more progressive taxation to better fund public services and shift the tax burden from working income to unearned wealth and corporate profits, drawing on the Resolution Foundation's report;
 - b) Work with the TUC, WTUC, STUC (who have already issued their own taxation report) ICTU and other likeminded organisations to explore the case for fiscal devolution to improve growth and productivity in every city and region of the UK, develop progressive alternatives to council tax, and continue to make the case for central government investment to fund public services based on need, underpin growth and tackle regional inequalities.
 - c) Oppose increases in military expenditure which will be at the expense of much needed investment in public services and infrastructure.

39. Domestic Abuse: Access For All

Carried as Amended: 39.1, 39.2

Conference is appalled that two women are killed each week from domestic abuse and many women and children are stuck in abusive situations due to the fact that they cannot access a refuge space.

Conference is further concerned about the number of disabled people, including disabled women and children, who experience domestic abuse and violence. According to Office of National Statistics (ONS) data one in seven disabled adults (14.3 percent) experience domestic violence or abuse compared to 5.1 percent of non-disabled people. While 17.9 percent of disabled women and 9.2 percent of disabled men report experiencing domestic abuse or violence, we know that the actual numbers are likely to be much higher as disabled people are less likely to report the abuse as they often rely on the perpetrators to survive. Disabled people also experience abuse for 50 percent longer before they tell anyone. And even when they do report it, more often than not, they will have nowhere to go. Just one percent of women's refuges are fully accessible for disabled women and there are no accessible refuges for disabled men who experience domestic abuse.

The reduction in refuge provision for women and children throughout the UK is not only adding to the death of women and children each week it is also creating access problems for women and children.

It is not right that a woman should have to give up her employment to be able to access a safe space in refuge. This is due to the high supported accommodation

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costs which leaves it an unaffordable choice for women and children in abusive situations. Whilst housing benefit covers some of the cost if you are working this can still leave a large sum of rent for the refuge space to be paid.

It is also not right that due to cuts, women and their children sometimes have to move across the whole of the UK to access refuge spaces and many employers are reluctant to keep jobs open for staff unless they are a national company that can move staff. This leaves the woman with no other option but to access benefits when they should be able to continue to work whilst in a place of safety. Whilst this is sometimes needed for safety reasons, this is not always the case.

A woman should not have to give up her home or her employment due to abuse, there should be funding available to ensure that a woman and her children can be safe and be able to remain in their employment.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to:

- 1) Challenge the government on the domestic abuse issue and push for access for all;
- 2) Set up a campaign about 'Access for all' in refuges, challenging the equality of provision for all regardless of income or status;
- 3) Work with National Disabled Members Committee and Labour Link to raise awareness of the lack of accessible domestic violence services for disabled people and campaign for funding to help domestic violence refuges to be made accessible;
- 4) Inform and encourage regions and branches to talk to and challenge their own Local Authority, supported housing provision within the local authority to provide funding for refuge spaces for working women to access;
- 5) Work with service groups on bargaining support for securing access to workplace paid domestic abuse leave.
- 6) Encourage branches to write to their Local MP's/MS's/MSP's to push for funding to be provided for working women in refuge.

40. Zane's Law

Carried

Conference notes that current UK regulations with regard to toxic waste disposal and the danger to human life, to our environment and to the planet as a whole, from both historic landfill sites and currently approved landfill sites operating the 'dry tomb' principle, are dangerously inadequate. Especially so, in the face of climate breakdown, with rising sea levels, increased rainfall, and flooding.

Over the last 30 years, successive UK governments have watered down European legislation on contaminated land to favour politically connected land-owning and developer lobbies over their responsibility to the environment and to life on Planet Earth.

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At the 51st regular session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva (Sept/Oct 2022), a proposal to enact a human right to a clean environment was tabled for discussion, to include a mandate for strong action on contaminated land. Only the UK and the USA declined to sign up to this vitally important measure.

In 2014, seven year old Zane Gbangbola died, and his father was paralysed with a diagnosis of hydrogen cyanide (HCN) poisoning, during catastrophic flooding in the UK. Flood water passing through a historic landfill site, known to the authorities to contain toxic gasses, carried Hydrogen Cyanide gas into Zane's home, detected at high levels by the Fire and Rescue Services and Specialist HAZMAT teams. The storms that resulted in flooding across the country were the first stated by a UK Prime Minister as being caused by Climate Change.

Following an emergency COBRA meeting, held on the day Zane died, David Cameron's government deliberately spun this tragic event as a 'carbon monoxide poisoning' to cover up the facts known at the time. This 'official' version would be the determination of Zane's long delayed Inquest, at which no information held by public agencies about multiple, local, contaminated landfill sites was deemed worthy of consideration by the Coroner. An Inquest that further stripped Zane of his Human Rights Act (HRA) rights under Article 2, removing rights of investigation into his death. Zane was denied a Jury, and Legal Aid for legal representation was also denied, witnesses and evidence were also denied. The BBC TV News further exposed Hydrogen Cyanide was detected multiple times, there was no carbon monoxide, and there was 'political pressure' to determine carbon monoxide; the BBC referenced Public Health England FOI's which further highlighted that the local hospital was overwhelmed with unwell people.

'Zane's Law' proposes measures to begin to address the crisis of contaminated land in the UK. Publicly launched at COP26 by Zane's parents and Natalie Bennett at a Truth and Justice event, hosted by Jeremy Corbyn, Natalie has since been promoting 'Zane's Law' in the House of Lords.

British TV and Media are increasingly reporting communities injured by living in proximity to landfill, this is a ticking time bomb international communities are addressing. Just this year, ten years since Zane's death, the family's house was once again flooded with overspill water from the unregulated landfill site behind their home.

Conference fully supports the Truth About Zane Campaign's call for 'Zane's Law' which, in line with the Environment Act 2010, would require:

- 1) That every local authority must keep a full, regularly updated register of land that may be contaminated;
- 2) That these registers of land be accessible and available for inspection by the general public;
- 3) That local authorities be responsible for fully inspecting any land registered that may be contaminated and remediating it if necessary;

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- 4) That local authorities be responsible for inspecting previously closed landfill sites and remediating them if necessary;
- 5) That the government take responsibility for providing the necessary funds for Local Authorities to meet these new requirements.

We call on the National Executive Council to:

- a) Consider awarding Zane's parents honorary life membership of UNISON;
- b) Affiliate to the Truth About Zane campaign;
- c) Publicly support the call for an independent panel inquiry into the death of Zane Gbangbola;
- d) Publicly support the call for Zane's Law to be adopted into statute.

41. Justice for the Victims of the Windrush Scandal

Carried

Conference remains extremely concerned about the UK government's approach to providing redress for the victims of the Windrush scandal.

Conference notes the findings of the Windrush Lessons Learned Review led by Wendy Williams which concluded that the UK Home Office had shown "ignorance and thoughtlessness" on race throughout the scandal, that immigration regulations were tightened "with complete disregard for the Windrush generation" and that officials had made "irrational" demands for multiple documents to establish residency rights.

While the government initially confirmed an action plan to deal with the 30 recommendations from the inquiry, Conference is appalled that in 2023 the then home secretary, Suella Braverman, decided to abandon several of these commitments, including strengthening the powers of the immigration watchdog and running reconciliation events with Windrush families.

Conference therefore congratulates UNISON for securing the right to join the judicial review of the government's decision to renege on these inquiry recommendations, working alongside members of the Windrush generation.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to:

- 1) Keep up its pressure on the government to deliver proper compensation and other forms of redress for the Windrush generation;
- 2) Continue to fight against the racism experienced by members of the Windrush generation and UNISON members working across our public services;
- 3) Highlight wherever possible the central role that the Windrush generation played in helping to build the UK welfare state after 1945 and the vital part that migrant workers continue to play in keeping our essential services running.

45. Cuts and Funding

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Carried as Amended: 45.1

Conference is appalled at the ongoing funding crisis in local government, which is now resulting in an existential threat to the future of many councils across the UK. Extensive UNISON research from last autumn revealed that councils across the UK were facing a funding shortfall of £3.56billion in 2024/25 and a cumulative funding gap of just over £7billion for 2025/26. On a regional basis, Scottish councils collectively faced the largest funding gap per head of population at £121, followed by Cymru/Wales at £112 per person.

A combination of extreme levels of funding cuts from central government and growing demand for a range of services are the heart of this seemingly never-ending crisis. Well over 30 councils from across England, Wales and Scotland have indicated that they are getting worryingly close to declaring effective bankruptcy. This is on top of the growing number of councils that have recently issued section 114 such as Nottingham and Birmingham.

According to the Institute for Government, local council 'spending power' in England, the amount of money authorities have available to spend from government grants, council tax and business rates, fell by 17.5 percent between 2009/10 and 2019/20, before partially recovering. However, in 2021/22 it was still 10.2 percent below 2009/10 levels. The fall in spending power is largely because of reductions in central government grants. These grants were cut by 40 percent in real terms between 2009/10 and 2019/20, from £46.5billion to £28.0billion (2023/24 prices). This downward trend was reversed in 2020/21 and 2021/22 as central government made more grant funding available to local government in response to the pressures of the pandemic. Even including Covid grants, the fall in grant income was still 21 percent in real terms between 2009/10 and 2021/22; without, the fall was 31 percent.

A number of councils have highlighted that they are likely to join councils like Birmingham and Nottingham in issuing section 114 notices: including Somerset, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, Bradford, Middlesbrough, Oxfordshire, Hampshire and Durham. A new piece of analysis by Grant Thornton has said that 20 percent of councils are at risk of financial failure within 12 months without additional income or more spending cuts. That figure increases to 25% by the end of next year and rises to 40 percent of all councils within the next 5 years. Well over 30 councils from across England, Wales and Scotland have indicated that they are getting worryingly close to declaring effective bankruptcy.

The government has powers to introduce Commissioners into Local Authorities that issue Section 114. Such Commissioners can take decision making authority or under the threat of doing so enforce savage cuts in local authority spending.

In Birmingham eight Commissioners were appointed for five years and are paid £1,100 a day (the Lead Commissioner £1,200) for a minimum of three days per week, plus expenses such hotel accommodation. All paid for by Birmingham city Council.

Under pressure from the Commissioners Birmingham Council agreed to cuts of over £300 million over two years slashing Adult and Children Services, Youth Services, Libraries and Homeless Services and other services to vulnerable citizens. These cuts include nearly 850 redundancies and deleting hundreds more of vacant posts.

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The cuts will also impact on the Health Service and the Community and Voluntary sector putting them under greater pressure.

Conference calls on the National Executive to:

- 1) Campaign strongly for proper recognition of local government services, calling for the investment needed to provide services and safeguard jobs, an end to the austerity politics which cause cuts to services, job and pay, and for local government funding to be significantly increased alongside a fairer system for distributing the funds and longer term settlements;
- 2) Generate a range of political activity in parliaments across the UK calling for more funding for council services, working with Labour Link to impress upon the need for any future Labour Government in Westminster to look to rebuild the important range of public services that councils provide back towards 2010 levels;
- 3) Campaign against using Commissioner's to replace decision making by local councils;
- 4) Organise a national demonstration in London on a Saturday in the autumn of 2024 to call for fair and restored funding for local government.
- 5) Work with Labour Link to demand that the incoming Labour Government immediately underwrite the debt incurred by Councils resisting cuts and fully fund Local Government.

56. Tory Cuts to Police Funding Harms Community Safety

Carried

A decade of Tory austerity has starved our communities of essential services, eroded the resilience of the public sector and removed vital safety nets. Long term underfunding and cuts to key public services has made communities less safe and left vulnerable people without the help they need.

Conference asserts that the most effective and least damaging way to tackle crime happens long before a crime is committed. Public services such as pre-school enrichment programmes, Sure Start family centres, addiction treatment, decent stable housing, therapeutic support, mental health services and properly resourced trauma informed support are just some of the value for money investments that can reduce crime and improve the health and potential of the nation.

Reduced capacity across public services means more work for the police, the NHS and the criminal justice system. The disastrous privatisation and centralisation of the Probation Service by the government in 2014 has left probation with a critical workloads crisis.

Conference believes policing is a vital service which is used by all sections of the community.

Conference further believes that deep cuts to the police service has led to the erosion of neighbourhood policing and the important role of the police community support officer (PCSO), key to building trust with communities and for policing by consent.

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Boris Johnson's declaration to fund, nationally, an extra 20,000 officers may have appeared to be a positive step in reality it has resulted negatively on Police Staff. Police staff are the trained people behind the Police officers, they investigate the technical crimes, they do the research that enables Police Officers to make arrests. Police Staff roles are varied and their often behind the scenes work, is not seen or recognised for the value that it brings. When you make a call to the Police, the first person you talk to is very likely to be a staff member, they record details, decide on the type of response required, they will do background checks and ensure the right resource is assigned. These people are just the start of the process and are trained in depth to deal with just about every eventuality.

Due to binding targets on police officer numbers, spending on officer recruitment has meant a shortfall in funding for police staff and PCSOs, leaving police officers filling jobs formerly done by staff. This has been compounded by large budget deficits in forces across England and Wales and in Police Scotland. This has taken police officers away from their core crime fighting role and has led to a decimation of PCSO numbers and neighbourhood policing.

Conference notes that PCSO numbers have been significantly cut since the election of Conservative led governments in 2010. According to Home Office figures the full-time equivalent numbers of PCSOs in England have fallen by 51.8 percent between March 2010 and March 2023. This is 8,392 PCSOs.

PCSOs were introduced because police officers, by the nature of their role, are not able to spend the time in communities necessary to build long term confidence and trust. This is even more relevant today when police officer resources have been stretched to breaking point, PCSOs have kept neighbourhood policing alive. Substantial investment to rebuild the numbers of PCSOs in our communities is key to ensuring people feel safe in their neighbourhood.

Conference therefore calls upon the National Executive Council to:

- 1) Raise awareness of the impact of the loss of Police Staff jobs has on the whole of the community and campaign to highlight the risks to public safety of cuts and austerity;
- 2) Work with the Police and Justice Service group to campaign to save police staff jobs;
- 3) Campaign to restore funding to neighbourhood policing and restore the importance of the role of PCSOs and police staff;
- 4) Campaign to restore funding to youth services;
- 5) Campaign to restore the Probation Service as a community service, with local democratic oversight and management;
- 6) Continue campaigning for improved funding for mental health and an end to public health cuts, particularly in vital areas such as drug and alcohol services.

63. The Climate Emergency - Why it Matters to UNISON

Carried as Amended: 63.1

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Trade unions are indebted to the young people across the globe whose campaigning has brought this vital issue to the top of our political and bargaining agendas.

The legally binding commitment to get public services to Net Zero by 2050 is essential but inevitably comes with increased pressures on all services to make the necessary changes - some of which are already being implemented. This will mean that, in the public sector, climate change adaptations and mitigations will increasingly form part of our organising and bargaining agendas.

That more than 2500 civil society organisations including Public Services International (PSI), the first global trade union movement to do so, 700 parliamentarians, 101 Nobel Laureates and 100 sub-national governments and cities around the world have endorsed the call for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (FFNPT), and that a bloc of 12 countries, including major coal producing nation Colombia, are seeking a negotiating mandate for FFNPT.

Climate change policy in public services is inextricably linked to policies on public health, the cost-of-living crisis, education and skills and almost all other areas of public policy.

Conference notes that the:

- 1) The UN Secretary General has said we are in a new era of global boiling with unprecedented extreme weather impacting every part of the globe with increasing frequency;
- 2) The International Energy Agency (IEA) states that to stay below the Paris Climate Agreement of 1.5 degrees celsius fossil fuel use must reduce by 25 % this decade and we cannot develop any new fossil fuel sites;
- 3) Working class in the UK and globally are already being impacted by the terrible consequences of climate change, through loss of lives, livelihoods, food, access to water, housing and accommodation, forced migration, unbearable working conditions and an intolerable burden on emergency services;
- 4) The Tory government has done little to safeguard workers or people from the impacts of climate change and, far from it, is advancing a narrative that seeks to make a virtue of weakening its commitments;
- 5) The Labour party began an election year pledging to spend £28billion a year on green investment. However, by February this had been reduced to £15billion, with Keir Starmer saying that “fiscal rules come first”. However, there are no fiscal rules on a dead planet.

Conference recognises that UNISON has members across all public services and that all are affected directly or indirectly by climate change and that this impact will only increase over the coming years. Examples of direct service group related impacts include:

- a) Our Care Sector members - Our Care workforce is having to adapt to mitigations on transport that they can ill-afford as well as an increased workload in managing the increased health impacts on the people they care for;

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- b) Our Schools and Further Education members;
- c) A specific Maximum Temperature Law, including the ability to withdraw labour if workplace temperatures surpass 30 degrees Celsius (27 degrees Celsius if doing strenuous work in PPE);
- d) Amendments to Health and Safety legislation to support the mandatory use of workplace climate hazards risk assessments and publicly available climate hazards review reports by employers and trade union health and safety representatives.
- e) The costs of heating and cooling ancient school buildings is impacting on all budgets whilst in FE, climate change was a central part of this last year's pay claim precisely because our members there are facing a huge overhaul of service delivery to meet the necessary skills training the government needs to mitigate climate change;
- f) Our members in the in the health service are having to manage the increasing workload from the health impacts of excess heat or pollution as well as large scale transition planning to greener ways of working;
- g) Our Energy members – National climate commitments to reduce reliance on fossil fuels will inevitably mean a transition to renewable energy sources. Our members in energy are rightly demanding a central seat in all discussions about the impacts of that transition away from fossil fuels. UNISON is clear that the transition must be fair, and our energy members need to be represented at every stage of any transition arrangements that will affect their jobs and skills;
- h) Our members in Environment Protection - responsible for responding to the floods and droughts and other direct environmental impacts that erupt up and down the nations on an increasing frequent basis with reduced funding – they are absolutely at the frontline of what this means in the UK.

These are just some examples of areas affected with similar changes planned for cleaning our water, greening transport and environmentally sustainable housing as further examples of how necessary climate change related mitigations are affecting areas of our membership.

Conference also understands that climate change affects the most disadvantaged people and communities the most and that those that are most harmed are also those with the least voice and the least power to change the situation. That is true globally but also within the UK.

Impact on Women - women still take on a disproportionate burden of care giving – feeding, housing, and warming their families - all of which is becoming unaffordable directly linked to the global impacts of the climate crisis.

Impact on Disabled Members - Disabled people rely on cars more than other groups, this raises issues of affordability and accessibility for the transition to greener transport. Charging points for electric vehicles are being built that are unusable by Disabled drivers and create obstacles for Disabled pedestrians. Disabled people are

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less able to evacuate safely when an environment related disaster strikes such as flooding or fire and many health conditions are exacerbated by extreme temperatures or pollution.

Impact on Black members - As has been demonstrated by the ULEZ debates, Black members, and people in poorer urban areas, are disproportionately made chronically unwell from climate change related harms such as air pollution.

Impact on Retired members - Older people are less able to cope with the extremes of temperature caused by climate change and the inherent energy costs of trying to manage them.

Impact on Young members - Young people are not only victims of climate change, bearing the brunt of an uncertain and precarious future, they are also valuable contributors to climate action.

And LGBT+ members are not immune – the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), is clear that all socially marginalised groups are disproportionately impacted.

Conference believes:

- i) We need a rapid transition away from oil and gas to prevent catastrophic climate breakdown;
- ii) Failing to take urgent measures to transition away from fossil fuels puts jobs at risk from sudden climate events or their economic consequences and foregoes opportunities to build in a timely way the larger skilled workforce needed across the whole economy without which decarbonisation cannot happen;
- iii) Inequality and declining standards of living for working class people are explicitly locked into a fossil-fuelled market economy and austerity policies;
- iv) The costs of transition to a decarbonised economy and society must not fall on those least able to pay;
- v) Transition policies must be generated by state investment;
- vi) A truly Just Transition leaves no one behind and includes vital recognition that public sector jobs are an integral part of a green future and must be invested in to raise pay and conditions to be seen as attractive employment opportunities in a zero-carbon economy.
- vii) We must resist attempts aimed at using climate to divide working people; this only serves elites and distracts us from our common interest in jobs and a secure future;
- viii) Political posturing on net zero policies does not help our class and we must fight for policies that address climate change and environmental degradation rooted in economic and social justice;
- ix) Trade unions and workers in all sectors are central to transition plans;

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x) Workers in other countries are our allies.

In recognition of the climate emergency, the role of trade unions, and the impact on members, conference agrees that UNISON should continue to play a key role in:

- A) The social dialogue and workplace negotiations needed to deliver just transition across all workplaces – including supporting our own members and activists to engage on these issues locally;
- B) The international and national policy debates about the best and fairest way of achieving decarbonisation;
- C) The civil society movements that will keep leaders and governments on track.

Conference therefore calls on the National Executive Council to:

- I) Recognise and embed Climate Change as part of its wider organising strategy;
- II) Continue to work with service users, community, NGO and green alliances on public sector workplace climate policies as they are developed and announced, calling for greater public investment to secure a Just Transition;
- III) Support each service group and sector committee to development a green bargaining and negotiating agenda at every level of the union;
- IV) Update the Code of Good Branch practice to include the new Environment Officer role;
- V) Support each Region to co-ordinate regional branch Environmental Officer network meetings and activities;
- VI) Continue to pursue all outstanding, or ongoing, actions from the 2022 National Delegate Conference motion 93;
- VII) Work with the Labour Link to campaign for the reinstatement by Labour of the pledge to spend £28billion each year on green investment;
- VIII) Work with appropriate bodies to build combines within and across sectors, at the level of branches as well as nationally and globally, to develop common industrial strategies that contribute to a 'whole economy' approach to decarbonisation, including engagement with community and climate justice groups;
- IX) Agree a UNISON year of Climate Activism by no later than 2026 with all appropriate organising and operational support to highlight and amplify UNISON's response to the climate emergency and the role of the Environment Officer within branches;
- X) Continue to work internationally to support the Global South and to ensure that a just transition for all is achieved for the public good and not private profit;

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XI) To endorse the call for a FFNPT and engage with the Labour Party, via Labour Link, and other political parties to highlight UNISON's support for the next UK Government to endorse the call for a FFNPT.

And to campaign for:

- a) Policies to address climate change and environmental degradation that are in the interests of workers and communities, and a plan for the forms of bargaining and industrial action to achieve them;
- b) Negotiated transition plans that guarantee protection for all workers in all sectors of the economy including across all equality strands, and as a minimum should cover jobs, wages, pensions, training and skills and trade union rights;
- c) Public ownership of key sectors such as energy, water, transport, mail, broadband, education, health and social care;
- d) A fair and progressive taxation system, accessing the wealth of one of the world's richest countries without asking working people to pay for a crisis they did not create;
- e) A National Climate Service to plan, coordinate, fund and ensure education/training for the workforce necessary to undertake the rapid and wide scale transformation to a decarbonised economy;
- f) Workers and their unions being directly and immediately engaged with government in designing and defining what the decarbonised industries and their workforces of the future look like;
- g) Solutions to the climate crisis that are in the interests of workers and communities, not capital.

65. Climate Emergency

Fell

71. LGBT+ Rights

Carried

Conference notes:

- 1) UNISON's strong support for trans rights and welcomes the introduction of trans ally training across the union;
- 2) The blocking of proposed reforms to the Scottish Gender Recognition Reform Bill by Westminster Tories. These reforms were intended to make life better for trans people who are amongst the most oppressed and victimised members of society. The government's own Equalities Survey found 67% of trans people avoided being open about their gender identity because they feared a negative reaction. This move by Sunak's government is an attempt to whip up 'culture wars' against an already demonised group, at a time when workers are fighting back against the cost of living;
- 3) That in December 2023, the Tories produced new guidance for schools on youth transitioning. This guidance is extremely concerning as it creates barriers for

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young people who are gender-questioning who would want to speak to their teachers in confidence. As well as attempting to prescribe how children and young people can identify, and that “there will be very few occasions in which a school or college will be able to agree to a change of pronouns”, the guidance states that, “Schools and colleges should engage parents as a matter of priority, and encourage the child to speak to their parents”. However, this is guidance, not policy;

- 4) The DfE’s Keeping Children Safe in Education makes clear that “In order to fulfil this responsibility [safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children] effectively, all practitioners should make sure their approach is child centred. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child.”;
- 5) Stonewall explains in its guidance for schools that “regardless of their age, a person’s status as trans is private. Schools and colleges should not disclose information – such as details about a transition – that could reveal somebody’s trans status to others, including parents or carers, staff, and anyone outside the school, college or setting. You may only share this information where there is a safeguarding risk, or if a child or young person has given their permission for specific details to be shared.”.

Conference further notes:

- a) Events like Drag Queen Story Time have been targeted by far right and nazi groups like Turning Point UK, who have organised repeated protests outside the events;
- b) These protests have on the whole been met with larger counter demonstrations supporting the hosts, workers and story tellers. However, we cannot be complacent and assume this will always be the case, successful protests require organisation;
- c) Trans Day of Remembrance on 20 November and Trans Visibility Day on 31 March. Both of these are important days to highlight both the attacks trans people face and the campaign for trans rights.

Conference believes that:

- a) The rights of trans people do not conflict with or reduce the rights of other oppressed groups. We stand in solidarity with our trans comrades and fight for a ban on trans conversion therapy, to end all barriers to gender self-identification, for fully funded trans healthcare;
- b) It is a council and school’s duty to ensure that their students’ and young people’s welfare is always the highest priority;
- c) While we of course involve parents and carers where practical, where appropriate, and where necessary, we know that there are times when this is not advisable, and sadly sometimes not even safe;
- d) In an election year, it is clear that the Tories will scapegoat LGBT+ and particularly trans people if they believe it will win them votes;

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- e) Abandoning gender self-identification as a policy in 2023 by the Labour Party was a step back in the fight for LGBT+ liberation;
- f) Trans women are women, trans men are men and non-binary people exist and should be respected.

Conference resolves to call on the National Executive Council to:

- i) Work with the LGBT+ committee and other appropriate bodies in UNISON to support protests and struggles to defend and extend trans rights. This includes investigating what activities and publicity can be organised on Trans Remembrance day and Trans Visibility Day and supporting trans ally training;
- ii) Work with the Labour Link committee to develop the best way to campaign for LGBT+ rights and liberation within the Labour party;
- iii) Work with the LGBT+ committee and other appropriate bodies in UNISON to develop guidance and support for our members working in libraries, schools and other roles where they are facing increasing transphobia and homophobia, particularly where hosting Drag Queen Story Time has been opposed;
- iv) Work with the LGBT+ committee, Regions and other appropriate bodies in UNISON to continue to support, publicise and attend Trans Pride events.

72. Year of LGBT+ Workers – Embedding LGBT+ Equality in Our Union

Carried

Conference notes that we are halfway through celebrating the Year of LGBT+ Workers and welcomes the opportunity that this provides to promote UNISON as the union for LGBT+ workers, raise awareness of LGBT+ rights throughout the union, challenge discrimination, and recruit and activate LGBT+ members.

The year highlights the important contribution our LGBT+ members make to the union, to improving employment conditions for LGBT+ workers and to campaigning more broadly on equality for LGBT+ people. Over the years the LGBT+ group has played a key role in campaigns to improve the rights of LGBT+ people within the workplace and wider society and particularly active in the repeal of section 28, equalisation of the age of consent, and the introduction of civil partnerships and marriage for LGBT+ people. But there is still much more to do.

Most recently, the national LGBT+ committee has launched its trans equality campaign, and within that, helped to create the successful trans ally training across our union. This helps members to better understand the issues our trans, non-binary and gender diverse members face and how to be allies to them. We are proud of how many members have taken part in this programme and how many trans, non-binary and gender diverse members have become activists because of this work. It also shows that by equipping members with knowledge and empathy, we can facilitate more welcoming and supportive workplaces.

As a trade union, we need to continue to encourage active recruitment and promotion of LGBT+ members in UNISON and strive for LGBT+ representation at all levels of leadership. By fostering diversity in leadership, we not only provide role

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models for LGBT+ members but also bring diverse perspectives to decision-making, benefiting the entire union.

To achieve this, branches need to support local LGBT+ Pride events and run awareness campaigns within the workplace and making UNISON's LGBT+ materials visible.

Conference acknowledges that tackling systemic and ingrained discrimination against LGBT+ workers will take more than one year. Conference further recognises the need to use the success of the year to continue our work and embed the work on LGBT+ equality in all areas of our union.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to work with the appropriate parts of the union to:

- 1) Continue to promote UNISON's year of LGBT+ workers including national and regional events;
- 2) Evaluate the success of the year with an indicator of where activity has taken place and the range of stakeholders involved;
- 3) Encourage regions and branches to use days in the LGBT+ calendar to promote the work that UNISON does for LGBT+ equality;
- 4) Establish a programme of activities which build on the achievements of the year;
- 5) Promote and encourage the use of UNISON LGBT+ guidance, fact sheets and model policies in public service workplaces;
- 6) Work with service groups to follow up on the motions which have been passed by Service Group Conferences to deliver the bargaining agendas on LGBT+ rights and equality in the workplace;
- 7) Promote and participate in equality training, and in particular the trans ally training.

76. Stop Tory Attacks on Disabled People's Income and Independence

Carried

Conference notes the Conservative government's publication of "Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper" in March 2023. This put forward new plans to make disability benefits dependent on eligibility for Personal Independent Payments (PIP) and removed rights of appeal against some benefit decisions. The government announced the implementation of these plans in the Chancellors Autumn Statement in November 2023.

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

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In his 2023 Autumn Statement the Conservative Chancellor claimed these changes would help more disabled people work from home. However, in reality these changes will penalise disabled people who are not able to do this, while pushing others into low paid, isolating jobs without access to reasonable adjustments. Conference believes that threatening disabled people with benefit cuts if they cannot work from home is no way to address the issues disabled workers face, including chronic lack of access to reasonable adjustments.

Conference notes that the Conservative government has presided over 14 years of policies that have punished disabled people through cutting disability premiums and introducing unfair work capability assessments, conditionality, and sanctions. Even for those disabled people in work, the disability pay gap is worse than it was a decade ago and in 2022 stood at a shocking 17.2 percent or £3,700 less a year than non-disabled workers. Added to this, the Conservative government's National Disability Strategy was found to be unlawful and based on an unlawful consultation.

It is perhaps only to be expected that the white paper was mainly a collection of small-scale pilots and re-announcements, while its key proposals are about making more disabled people work longer hours, whatever the pay. This is dressed up as ending work capability assessments but in fact it will make matters worse, with individual job centre advisors now being able to decide whether you are entitled to benefits or whether you instead need to find work or work more hours than you currently do. The system is likely to be even more unfair than work capability assessments, with no appeal against discretionary decision making by job centre advisors.

Conference believes that making Personal Independence Payments (PIP), and Adult Disability Payment in Scotland, the qualifier to exempt you from looking for work and work related activity is just a ploy to force more disabled people into work whether or not they are ready for it, and to pay them less money in Universal Credit. In any case, we know that PIP is not a fair system and UNISON's 2018 report "Punished for going to work" makes clear that it needs to be reformed.

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

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

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

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Conference notes that UNISON General Secretary Christina McAnea wrote to the Chancellor in November 2023, strongly objecting to these changes where she stated “If this government is serious about helping disabled people in the workplace, it needs to tackle the root cause of what makes working life so difficult for so many of them. Threatening benefit cuts or accusing disabled people of “not doing their duty” achieves nothing.”

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

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

83. The Constitution of the United Kingdom - Reimagined in the Interest of the Majority

Carried as Amended: 83.1, 83.2

The question of the constitutional future of the United Kingdom is becoming more prevalent amongst society and UNISON members. In the previous decade, the UK has been embroiled in constitutional arguments, the Scottish independence referendum in 2014 and Brexit in 2016. However, it is not only these era defining events that call into question the current arrangements of the UK.

Conference welcomes both the UK Labour party’s publication of ‘A New Britain: Renewing our Democracy and Rebuilding our Economy,’ and Welsh Labour’s ‘Independent Commission on the Constitutional Future of Wales.’ Conference this is evidence of the realisation that the UK must reform.

Evidence of the need for reform presents itself across the UK every day. Conference notes that the ever increasing wealth disparity in the UK, the increasing deprivation, child poverty and crumbling infrastructure. These issues are not unique to Wales, Scotland, or Northern Ireland. Nor are they being addressed, due to a combination of wilful inaction and centralised decision making.

The impact of policy making, and decisions taken at Westminster and Whitehall, are at best, disassociated, detached, and do not reflect the needs of the population. At worst, it is cynical, insular, and subject to currying favour with a fraction of the population for political gain.

Conference, democracy in the UK is at risk. Despite increasing support by the public for further devolution, power has in fact been further centralised and consolidated by the UK government.

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Furthermore, it is unknown to many that devolution is not constitutionally enshrined. Though in practice it is unlikely that devolution could be withdrawn by an instrument of parliament, the fact that such a tool exists is further illustrative of the folly of the current arrangements.

Conference observes that as a consequence of the current arrangements, the United Kingdom does not conduct itself in partnership. Moreover, the arrangement can falter on the whims of one individual at Westminster. Liz Truss' steadfast refusal to engage with the First Minister of Cymru/Wales during her entire administration despite insistence from senior civil servants provides stark evidence of this.

The current arrangements also prevent citizens living under devolution arrangements properly holding elected leaders to account. Too often, it is convenient and politically self-serving to lay the blame for tough or unpopular decisions at the door of the UK government. Whilst in each case there will be truth in such claims to a varying degree, this does not, in any way exemplify a healthy, functioning democracy.

Conference notes that it hinders UNISON's ability to campaign on strategic pay, terms and conditions issues as confusion and obfuscation over responsibilities and decision making by governments results in members disengaging and believing that the campaign efforts focused on the UK government are the greatest determiner of our outcomes.

Conference believes that the regions of England are poorly served by the current ad-hoc and inconsistent pattern of sub-national governance. Since George Osborne's first devolution deals the intention of the centre has been that sub-national institutions should follow the old, failed orthodoxy of supply-side economics and competition for global capital investment. Instead, we need democratic sub-national institutions that have the legitimacy, authority, powers and resources to pursue different economic policies, to stand up to business interests and reflect the wishes and needs of people in the places they serve.

Conference, put simply, the constitution of the UK and devolution, in its current guise is not working for the people of the UK whether you are from Aberystwyth, Aberdeen, Antrim or Accrington.

Conference calls on National Delegate Conference to:

- 1) Agree that the constitutional arrangements of the UK do not serve the interests of the majority of our citizens.
- 2) Agree that reimagined constitutional arrangements should involve consistency, with all areas covered by legitimate, democratic, well-funded sub-national institutions that can pursue policies that reflect the wishes and needs of their populations

Conference instructs the National Executive Council to:

- a) Commission research on the various models of federalism including the possible introduction of regional assemblies in England, and present the findings of this

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research, along with recommended options of how federalism could be applied to the UK, to National Delegate Conference 2025.

95. Solidarity with Ukraine and its Labour Movement

Carried

Conference notes the devastating damage inflicted since the full scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022. Ukraine was poor before the war, with a per capita GDP of \$3,700 (one third of the poorest EU state); last year GDP fell by 30%. Unemployment is estimated by the IMF to be 19.4 percent.

Six million people (15 percent of the population) have fled Ukraine, five million have been internally displaced.

The Kyiv School of Economics reports (October 2023) that 1,700 secondary schools, 1000 nurseries and 586 higher education institutions have been damaged or destroyed, as have 1,223 medical facilities, including 384 hospitals and 353 pharmacies.

Conference believes the international labour movement has a duty of solidarity with the people of Ukraine, as with all peoples suffering imperialist invasion and oppression, and with its labour movement, fighting both the Russian invasion and the neoliberal policies of the Zelensky government.

Conference strongly endorses the decision of our delegation at TUC Congress last September to vote for the resolution in solidarity with Ukraine and its labour movement, which was passed overwhelmingly.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council:

- 1) To actively support Ukraine's struggle for liberation from Russian imperialism; immediate withdrawal of all Russian troops from Ukraine; and the struggles of trade unionists, socialists, etc in Ukraine and Russia for workers' rights, social provision and democracy as well as Ukraine's right to self-determination;
- 2) To organise campaigning on this basis, including:
 - a) Strengthen links with unions in Ukraine;
 - b) Provide details of Ukrainian trade unionists who will speak at branch, regional and national events;
 - c) Holding online and real-world events to educate members about these issues;
- 3) To affiliate to the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign and encourage branches etc to do likewise.

98. The Right to Strike

Carried as Amended: 98.1

Government proposals in effect will ban the right for workers to raise genuine concerns concerning pay and working conditions through strike action.

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The new law is insisting on Minimum Service Levels, during strikes in areas where our members work.

Ambulance, Border control and some passport workers will be affected, but this law can be extended, to include, other hospital workers, schools, further and higher education.

For example ambulance workers must ensure "cases that are life threatening or where there is no reasonable clinical alternative to an ambulance are kept at a level that would be there, if the strike was not taking place on that day". This at a time when the Tories have continually underfunded the NHS, undermining staff morale and creating staff shortages. Meaning that it is not strikes that cause staff shortages but government policies.

A recent TUC survey found that one in five workers or 5.5 million are at risk of losing their right to strike under the Strikes (Minimum Service Level) Act.

The right to strike is fundamental. It is vital for the balance of power in the workplace.

We must defend it at all cost, we must defend this right, we must not stop defending this right. We must protect the voice of workers. UNISON is already challenging this Act, it must continue to do so. UNISON members should not wait for employers to use this proposed Act.

Conference instructs the National Executive Council to:

- 1) Work with other trade unions to campaign for the repeal of the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023;
- 2) Campaign that the National Labour Link Committee works to ensure that the Labour Party has a manifesto commitment to repeal the legislation and also the Trade Union Act 2016 within the first 100 days of a new Labour government at Westminster. .

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Composites

A. Organising to Win

Carried

UNISON boasts a proud history of tirelessly advocating for the rights and wellbeing of public service workers in the United Kingdom

However, the landscape in which we operate has evolved dramatically over time. As the challenges facing our members continue to transform, we must adapt and innovate to ensure that our role remains effective and impactful.

The role of organising within UNISON stands as paramount. Organising is not merely a tactical approach; it is the cornerstone of our union's ability to represent, empower, and ultimately enhance the lives of public service workers. It is through organising that we harness the collective power of our members to effect positive change in their workplaces and communities.

Conference welcomes the new UNISON-wide Organising to Win (OtW) strategy that aims to build the union by ensuring the adequate planning and resourcing of organising priorities, increasing member participation, achieving sustainable membership growth and expanding the activist base.

2023 saw a high level of organising, campaigning and bargaining activity, supported and promoted by multiple teams across the union and amplified by paid advertising and press and social coverage to ensure maximum impact.

In Northern Ireland the strategic organising model, championed by the OtW, was successfully utilised during 2023 to help the region achieve record recruitment of nearly 11,000 new joiners, 10% yearly growth, and an all-time high full membership figure of 51,000 members.

In Scotland the Regional Plan has seen effective campaigning and successful industrial action ballots and strike action in Local Government, Further Education and Higher Education, utilising modern organising tools and lay activists and staff working to deliver positive outcomes; building membership and recruiting activists in social care; organising around violence in schools and pay grading in the NHS.

All contributed to growth in:

1) Membership. Net membership growth was achieved for the second consecutive year;

2) Member Recruitment. Over 209,000 new members joined in 2023. An increase of 13 percent on 2022 and 47 percent on 2021;

3) New Activists. 4,097 new stewards, health and safety representatives (H&S) and union learning representatives (ULR) were appointed in 2023. An increase of 56 percent on 2022;

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4) Activist Training. 1,648 stewards were Employment Relations Act (ERA) trained in 2023. An increase of 38 percent on 2022. Training also increased for Health and Safety and ULR representatives.

Conference recognises the considerable progress achieved and the challenges that remain.

Conference believes a union's strength lies in its collective power, and organising is the means by which we consolidate and harness that power, as a fundamental strategy for securing the rights and interests of members in a constantly changing environment.

Conference confirms our commitment to building a bigger and stronger UNISON, reflective of the diversity, values, and aspirations of the public service workforce, and dedicated to providing expert advice, support, and empowerment to its members through community, solidarity, and effective collective activity.

Conference calls upon the National Executive Council to continue implementation of the Organising to Win strategy, with a particular 2024 focus on:

a) A continued and increased commitment of resources over the coming years to achieve the ambitious growth targets set by the union and ensure that full resourcing is available across all the relevant OtW campaigns and workstreams;

b) Regional and service group annual organising plans to ensure ongoing sustainable growth in membership, participation, and activism;

c) Development of new tools and techniques to improve member retention;

d) Launch of an “active member” role, with pathways to further activism;

e) Promotion of the UNISON College and the role of Union Learning Representatives;

f) Review and update all activist training to ensure consistent best practice organising content;

g) Promote Regional Organising events such as the North West Skills For Strength, now in its tenth year, that attracts hundreds of activists every year to have a full day looking at organising methods and successes;

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h) Continued engagement with the national industrial action project to ensure best practice organising techniques are embedded in future strategies for winning national ballots and disputes’;

i) Collaboration with the national communications team to promote organising and campaigning work of the union and continue to build on membership and activist growth;

j) A fundamental review of the Organising Framework for 2024/5;

k) Develop Branch guidance and training to align organising and bargaining at a local level to increase member terms and conditions and secure improved union facilities;

l) Review existing UNISON guides and resources to ensure consistency with the Organising to Win strategy;

m) Continue to improve organising data insight and reporting;

n) Ensure a consistent and high standard of training is delivered throughout the organisation;

o) To proactively develop organising plans for under-represented members in Branches and Service Groups.

Conference recognises that the opportunities presented by OtW will only be fully realised if it is supported at all levels of the union and calls upon the National Executive Council to work with all Branches and Regions to:

i) Review any BSOF surpluses and ensure maximum resourcing of “One UNISON” priority campaigns, including piloting of paid release and / or secondment of activist teams to work alongside UNISON Branches to deliver priority organising activity;

ii) Promote Organising to Win best practice by encouraging all activists to access the new organising guides, webinar recordings, templates, and tools contained on the UNISON Organising Space;

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iii) Give active organising support to any “One UNISON” campaigns that covers members of the branch;

iv) Regularly monitor and review the Organising Framework and other branch organising plans to raise UNISON’s profile and deliver effective base organising activity to increase member recruitment, retention, participation, and activism at the workplace level.

Conference believes that full implementation of the Organising to Win strategy is a process and encourages continuous review and evaluation of the organising strategy's effectiveness, with a focus on celebrating and promoting successes to build member confidence and engagement.

B. National Care Service

Carried

Conference notes the ongoing crisis in adult social care across the UK and is deeply concerned about the deteriorating state of the sector.

Conference asserts that a toxic combination of years of chronic underfunding and an under-regulated, deeply fragmented market system are responsible for producing this prolonged crisis in the sector.

Conference notes with alarm that evidence of this crisis can be seen in the fact that hundreds of thousands of elderly and disabled people are not receiving the levels of support they need, while extractive providers continue to bleed profits from the system.

Conference notes that the crisis is also evident in the continued mistreatment of the care workforce: employment in the sector is frequently insecure and largely underpaid, often illegally so; while proper sick pay remains elusive for thousands of care workers, along with decent training and progression opportunities.

Conference is particularly concerned at the targeting of migrant workers, both in terms of the impact this will have on these workers and their families, but also the damage it will do to our health and care services, which depend on migrant workers for their survival.

Conference is unsurprised that vacancies in social care are still above 150,000 in England alone, with more than a quarter of the workforce leaving their jobs every year. There are also huge numbers of NHS vacancies and, although the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan (for England) was finally published in 2023, it does not include social care and the chances of the NHS being able to implement it with such restricted funding are limited.

Conference notes that despite adult social care contributing more than £50bn to the UK economy, it continues to be seen purely as a burden on the government purse

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rather than a vital part of boosting growth. Conference therefore endorses UNISON's campaigns to highlight the importance of social care and boost its standing.

Conference believes the answer to the challenges facing social care is a National Care Service. The NHS remains one of the UK's most cherished institutions and Conference welcomes the union's campaigning for a national care service that would bring social care closer to parity with related services in healthcare, going beyond the short-term and piecemeal solutions repeatedly offered up by Westminster governments.

Conference believes we can only secure the future of social care through a long term plan which would prevent new contracts being given to care providers who do not meet high standards.

Conference believes that will require a workforce well prepared for the care needs of today and the future. The establishment of a Fair Pay Agreement for adult social care in England, empowering social care trade unions to negotiate fair pay, terms, conditions, staff benefits, and training, would be a critical first step.

Conference further believes that care providers should be forced to demonstrate financial sustainability and responsible tax practices, value their staff, ensure all social care workers are paid fairly for what they do and deliver high quality care for service users.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to continue campaigning for the creation of a National Care Service based on these values which would benefit every family in the country, prioritising the social care workforce and rewarding them for their work.

Conference notes that UNISON campaigning has had to take different forms in the different UK nations.

For instance, Conference notes that the Scottish government have announced their support for a National Care Service but put forward legislation that will not deliver a national care service worthy of the name and notes that the union has had to campaign against this deeply flawed version of a national care service. Conference notes that this work succeeded in bringing about a pause in the proposed legislation, as well as leading to controversial plans to remove statutory duties from local authorities being scrapped.

Conference further notes "Towards a Real National Care Service" the report by Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) sponsored by UNISON Scotland. This report builds on a previous APSE report commissioned by UNISON Cymru/Wales and outlines a model of a national care service that is not for profit and summarises the case for the direct public delivery of social care and sets out the initial steps we can take towards this. It shows why direct public service delivery is both affordable and necessary and aims to begin a serious conversation about a UK national strategy for achieving this.

And Conference welcomes the fact that in Cymru/Wales work is progressing with the Welsh government on proposals for a pay and progression framework for the

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workforce, and that in December 2023 an initial implementation plan for a national care and support service was published.

Conference also congratulates the union for its “Let’s Make Care Work” campaign for a national care service in England.

Conference is particularly encouraged by the Fabian Society’s “Support Guaranteed” report, funded by UNISON’s Campaign Fund, that seeks to lay out the detail and building blocks for a national care service.

The report outlines the need for immediate action in areas such as the workforce but also a longer-term process to build sustainable change, moving away from the current market system.

Conference also endorses the proposed launch date contained within this report for a National Care Service of 5 July 2028 (the 80th anniversary of the launch of the NHS).

Conference notes that the report has already been influential and that its principles have been accepted by the Labour party. However, the need for a National Care Service must be a priority and not delayed until at least a second future Parliament.

Furthermore, Conference is alarmed at the worsening state of the NHS over the past year, with ever lengthening waiting lists, widening health inequalities and an increase in reports of patients coming to harm.

Conference reiterates its policy from National Delegate Conference 2023 that the NHS model must be supported but that there needs to be a change away from underfunding and privatisation. And that, during an election year, these demands need to be raised louder and bolder, including with the regional and national activities outlined in motions at National Delegate Conference 2023.

Conference therefore calls on the National Executive Council to:

- 1) Continue to demand proper funding increases for adult social care and the NHS across the UK;
- 2) Intensify the union’s campaigning against the use of profit driven providers and private equity companies in social care;
- 3) Highlight the importance of the care sector to the UK as a potential driver of economic growth;
- 4) Campaign for a credible workforce strategy, and an end to the exploitation of social care staff and the targeting of migrant workers;
- 5) Continue to work with other organisations in the sector who are also demanding change;
- 6) Continue to make the case, with governments and opposition parties across the UK, for UNISON’s version of a national care service;

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- 7) Intensify the union's campaigning for a national care service to be created within five years as part of UNISON's wider general election work;
- 8) Promote and embed the principles of the APSE report "Towards A Real National Care Service" and the UNISON commissioned Fabian Society report 'Support Guaranteed' as a starting point for further work in developing a model for the sort of national care service that we can support and the country needs throughout UNISON;
- 9) Work with devolved nations, service groups, self organised groups and other like-minded stakeholders to design a vision of the National Care Service we want to see. This should be underpinned by the following principles:
 - a) Social care should be fully funded, universal and free at the point of delivery;
 - b) Social care should be delivered by democratically elected councils and there should be proper investment to develop social care to a high standard;
 - c) There should be sectoral bargaining across social care;
 - d) For profit providers should have no place in a national care service;
 - e) Fair work, decent pay and improved status should be the norm for all care workers;
- 10) Call on Labour Link to promote this vision within the Labour party in the UK and the devolved nations and seek their support to take it forward in UK Parliaments and to implement it when in power;
- 11) Campaign for all future National Care Service workers to be employed on public sector contracts with access to public sector pensions;
- 12) Work with Labour Link to restate UNISON's opposition to market mechanisms and the need to prioritise the rebuilding of the NHS rather than an expansion in use of the private sector, as well as restating the union's call for vastly increased funding.

C. The Legacy of the Year of Black Workers

Carried

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Conference following the success of UNISON's Year of Black Workers 2023 (YOBW23), the National Black Members Committee (NBMC) wish to place on record our thanks to all of our activists made this campaign such a success across our union. Throughout the year we saw a renewed and focussed approach to challenging racism and the experiences of Black workers in the workplace and wider society.

The Year of the Black Worker was an opportunity to both celebrate the contribution and achievements of Black Workers across the public sector as well as to also highlight and campaign on the continued deplorable racism and discrimination faced by Black Workers every day. The theme also challenged us to take this beyond 2023 and to establish legacy to generate change.

Conference notes a survey by UNISON in London of 1,000 Black workers in 2023. This revealed that only 30 percent felt their employer took race equality seriously. Additionally, half of those surveyed (51 percent) also said they had witnessed or been a victim of racial discrimination at work, and 53 percent said they believed race had prevented them from progressing in their career. Yet with the Year of the Black Worker now over, Conference recognises that there is still work that must be done, and we must build on the success and the momentum of the Year of the Black Worker in order to not lose focus on tackling these core issues.

UNISON's long history to create and ensure the structures of representation in UNISON, was recognised, and reinforced as we highlighted the important contribution our Black members make in the union, to improve pay and conditions through our ethnicity pay gap campaign and our anti-racism charter which continue to call for improved equality rights for Black workers.

Black Workers continue to face discrimination and racism in the workplace across the public sector, there is still no mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting and many employers continue to refuse to engage on this important issue. A recent TUC report on Office for National Statistics (ONS) figures showed that Black employees earn £13.53 median gross hourly pay, significantly less than White employees who earn £14.35.

Conference acknowledges that tackling systemic and institutional discrimination against Black workers cannot halt after 2023 and we need to use the building blocks that we have put in place in 2023 to tackle these core issues and must ensure that the issues that Black Workers face form the heart of our bargaining agenda and pay campaigning, only through decent pay awards, local and national, and continuing our fight for insourcing and against outsourcing can we continue to make a real difference.

Conference welcomes the UNISON Anti Racism Charter as a way of embedding the legacy of the Year of the Black Worker, the charter sets out clear and tangible policy changes and equality auditing measures that will make an immediate impact for Black workers whilst also making a clear statement that it is not good enough for employers to only be 'not racist', they must be actively anti-racist. It commits organisations and their leaders to having a clear and visible race equality policy, as well as a programme of anti-racism initiatives such as training for all staff.

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It has become apparent that on the run up to a general election, the Tories will escalate their attempts to divide us so that they can cling on to office. They continue to use racism and the scapegoating of refugees to do this, particularly with the racist Rwanda deportation scheme. Part of our legacy is to increase our campaigning against this, and to build unity amongst our members against such racist policies.

As 2023 ended, Black members recognised that it was vital that the level of activity from 2023 and renewed energy to address racism is not diluted as we move into the next phase of initiatives and campaigns in UNISON in 2024.

Conference also recognises that we must continue the legacy of the Year of the Black Worker by seeking to strengthen fair representation within the union as well, with more Black Members officers in branches and thriving Black Members Regional Self Organised Groups, as well as more Black activists at every level in the union as we grow the next generation of leaders.

Conference therefore calls on the National Executive Council to:

1) Support national and regional Black members self organised groups to fully evaluate the success of the 2023 Year of Black Workers with an indicator of where activity has taken place and the range of stakeholders involved;

2) Continue to work with national and regional Black members groups to establish a programme of continued activity to build on the achievement of the YOBW23;

3) Follow up on motions passed at previous national, service group and self organised groups conferences to deliver the bargaining agendas for Black workers. This includes work with service groups to continue to ensure tackling the Ethnicity Pay Gap is at the heart of their bargaining, organising and campaigning agendas to deliver for Black members;

4) Publicise ongoing work, campaigns, and achievements of National, Regional Black Members groups via UNISON social media forums and UNISON website, which will be disseminated across all regions and as many branches as possible in the union. And publicise UNISON's equalities training to all branches and provide monitoring information of attendees based on regions and service groups;

5) Report back to the National Delegates Conference in 2025 through the annual report on the continue activities, initiatives, and bargaining campaigns.

D. Palestine

Carried

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Conference condemns the devastating war between the Israeli government and Hamas and the killing of tens of thousands of civilians, the vast majority of whom are women and children. We condemn the use of sexual violence in war on any side.

Conference calls for an immediate comprehensive ceasefire, full access to vital humanitarian assistance and an end to the blockade.

On 7 October Hamas launched a brutal attack on civilians in southern Israel, killing over 1,200 civilians, injuring 5,400 and kidnapping 240, including Israelis and migrant workers. Conference condemns this heinous attack and fully endorses UNISON's calls for the safe release of all hostages.

Conference condemns the indiscriminate bombardment of Gaza and ground attacks which have displaced most of the population and damaged or destroyed the majority of homes. Critical infrastructure and essential public services including health, education and water and sanitation have been decimated, resulting in a public health catastrophe.

Over 85 percent of the population of Gaza have been displaced into poorly equipped refugee camps following Israel's ordering of 1.2 million people to immediately leave their homes in northern Gaza and flee south. It is our firm belief that mass displacement is regarded by international jurisprudence as both a war crime and a crime against humanity.

By mid February over 1.5 million people were crowded into Rafah, more than six times the usual number. The Norwegian Refugee Council described it as a "gigantic refugee camp". Israeli attacks on Rafah and other areas look likely to be horrific with UN aid chief Martin Griffiths saying "military operations in Rafah could lead to a slaughter".

Conference notes that in 2018, the UN Special Rapporteur for the Situation of Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories had declared Gaza to be "unliveable". Since October 7, the Israeli government has severely tightened its siege of the Gaza Strip, cutting off supplies of water, food, electricity, fuel, medicine and other necessities to 2.3 million Palestinians. This amounts to collective punishment, considered to be a war crime under the Geneva Convention.

The tight land, sea and air blockade, imposed by the Israeli government in 2005, and successive bombing campaigns have had a devastating impact on the economy and the lives of the people of Gaza, undermining their rights to health, decent work, water and sanitation and freedom of movement.

Gaza's health system was already on the brink of collapse before 7 October 2023, with severe shortages of essential medical supplies, equipment and specialist provision. Underfunding, the blockade, restrictions on access to Palestinian hospitals in East Jerusalem and the impact of previous escalations have severely undermined the right to health.

The siege and bombing of Gaza and attack by ground forces has further exacerbated the health crisis, with hundreds of health workers killed and bomb damage, attacks and fuel shortages placing the vast majority of hospitals out of use.

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Conference condemns these attacks and calls for health facilities, patients, ambulances and health workers to be protected in accordance with international law.

Conference notes the response of UNISON members and branches in providing material and vocal support to the people of Gaza in recent months and urges UNISON branches to continue their support for Medical Aid for Palestine and the Red Cross.

Conference notes that vast areas of Gaza are no longer recognisable, with homes, services and entire neighbourhoods turned to dust. With the level of destruction the people of Gaza will need aid and support for many years to help rebuild basic services and institutions. The rebuilding must be centred on the right to public services and decent work and not a return to the poverty and denial of rights of previous decades.

The horrific violations of international law committed by the Israeli government, Hamas and other armed groups in Gaza, Israel and the West Bank must be investigated and prosecuted by the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice. Conference calls on the UK government to support the International Criminal Court's ongoing investigation into the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, request that the crime of apartheid is considered, and respect the independence of the court.

Conference notes the proceedings instituted by South Africa against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ): 'The Application of the Convention on the Prevention of and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip'. Conference welcomes South Africa's request for the ICJ to urgently implement provisional measures including ordering Israel to cease military actions to prevent possible "irreparable harm" while the case is being determined. We express disappointment however, at the UK government's lack of support for South Africa's case.

Conference is concerned that the UK government continues to grant licences for the sale of British weapons to the Israeli government. Conference notes the Palestinian trade union call to halt the sale and funding of arms to Israel and related military research. We call on the UK government to take immediate measures to suspend the arms trade with Israel and urge Iran and other states to end the transfer of weapons to Hamas and other armed groups.

Conference reaffirms its longstanding demand for a viable Palestinian state. The UK government must recognise Palestine as a sovereign state and call for the United Nations to recognise Palestine as a full member state as a first step to achieving this. Only an internationally supported, just political solution, in line with successive UN resolutions, which provides for a viable, contiguous Palestinian state, alongside Israel, where both states live side by side within secure and recognised borders, will achieve justice and rights for the people of Palestine and Israel.

Conference recognises that the prospect of a two state solution has been significantly undermined by the continued de facto annexation of the West Bank, particularly under the Netanyahu led government.

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Conference is concerned at the further deterioration of the situation in the occupied West Bank, where there has been a significant increase in attacks by settlers and the Israeli military and further restrictions on freedom of movement. Palestinian workers have been particularly affected, with many losing their livelihoods. Conference welcomes UNISON's support for the MAAN Workers' Association and Kav LaOved to organise and support Palestinian workers who face extraordinary levels of exploitation in the illegal West Bank settlements.

Conference reiterates its grave concern at the demolition of Palestinian property and the expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, which contributes to the de facto annexation and colonisation of Palestinian land and is rapidly undermining the prospect of a viable Palestinian state alongside Israel. We call on the UK government to ensure respect for international law by prohibiting trade and other activities with the illegal settlements.

Conference reaffirms its commitment to Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions, as an effective and peaceful method to pressure Israel into upholding international law and bringing an end to the occupation. We reject attempts by the government and others to define BDS as inherently antisemitic and welcome the UNISON and Hope not Hate briefing on understanding antisemitism and Islamophobia in the context of Israel and Palestine.

Conference condemns the UK government's attempt to undermine and restrict Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) and the Right to Boycott and welcomes UNISON's work to oppose the Economic Activities of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to:

- 1) Campaign for an immediate and permanent ceasefire; an end to the siege of Gaza including the full restoration of water, electricity and communications; immediate access to comprehensive humanitarian aid including food, water and medicines; and the safe release of both Israeli hostages, and Palestinians wrongfully held in Israeli prisons, including under administrative detention;

- 2) Call on the UK government to take measures to uphold international law including suspending the arms trade with Israel, banning trade with the illegal settlements and supporting the prosecution of violations of international law by the International Criminal Court and International Court of Justice;

- 3) Call on the UK government to recognise Palestine as a sovereign, independent state, put pressure on the UN to recognise Palestine as a full member state and implement credible measures and call for renewed talks to facilitate an internationally supported, just political solution, in line with successive UN resolutions, which provides for a viable, contiguous Palestinian state, alongside Israel;

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4) Work with Labour Link to secure a commitment from the next Labour government to recognise Palestine as an independent state;

5) Encourage branches to support the work of Medical Aid for Palestinians and the Red Cross to support the right to health and make a further donation to Medical Aid for Palestinians;

6) Continue to oppose the UK government's Economic Activities of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill and other attempts to restrict BDS, and continue to use targeted BDS to apply pressure to the Israeli government to end the occupation, respect the rights of Palestinians and bring about peace, including promoting UNISON's campaign to divest from Local Government Pension Schemes to branches and regions;

7) Continue providing practical solidarity in support of the rights to decent work and quality public services, including through work with trade unions and Palestinian and Israeli human rights and workers organisations;

8) Encourage branches and members organising around Palestine in their workplaces and encourage them to mobilise for national and local peaceful protests;

9) Promote educational initiatives within our branches to raise awareness about the history and complexities of the Palestine-Israel conflict;

10) Continue to support the work of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) and encourage regions and branches to affiliate.

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Amendment to Rules

1. Schedule E Political Fund Ballot

Carried

In paragraph 2 delete:

“Lower Ground Floor, Fleetbank House, 2-6 Salisbury Square, London, EC4 8JX”

Replace with: “8th Floor, Windsor House, 50 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0TL”

In paragraph 6 a) delete:

“a) the person satisfies the conditions which are for the time being specified by the Secretary of State pursuant to section 75 (2) of the Act or is a person specified in an order made under that section (the conditions and the persons specified by the Secretary of State were, at the time of the adoption of these rules, contained in The Trade Union Ballots and Elections (Independent Scrutineer Qualifications) Order 2002 (SI 2002/2267) – available at www.hmso.gov.uk);”

replace with:

“a) the person satisfies the conditions which are for the time being specified by the Secretary of State pursuant to section 75 (2) of the Act or is a person specified in an order made under that section. The conditions and the persons specified by the Secretary of State were, at the time of the adoption of these rules, contained in The Trade Union Ballots and Elections (Independent Scrutineer Qualifications) (Amendment) Order 2017 (SI 2017/877) – available at www.legislation.gov.uk);”

In Paragraph 25 delete:

“The scrutineer shall at all times take all reasonable steps to secure their safe custody so as to minimise the risk of any contravention of the requirements imposed by or under any enactment of these rules or the occurrence of any unfairness or malpractice”

Replace with:

“The scrutineer shall at all times take all reasonable steps to secure their safe custody of the returned envelopes and voting papers so as to minimise the risk of any contravention of the requirements imposed by or under any enactment of these rules or the occurrence of any unfairness or malpractice.”

Throughout Schedule E:

Delete “his/her” replace with “their”

Delete “he/she has” replace with “they have”

Delete “him/her” replace with “them”

Delete “his or her” replace with “their”

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Delete “his” replace with “their”

Delete “she/he is” replace with “they are”

Delete ‘he/she is’ replace with ‘they are’

Delete “he/she declined” replace with “they declined”

Delete “he/she considers” replace with “they consider”

Delete “his independence” replace with “their independence”

2. Rules C, D, E, G, H, I, K, M, P and Schedules A, B, C, D in the UNISON rule book

Carried

Delete ‘she/he’ and replace with ‘they’

Delete ‘she/he has’ and replace with ‘they have’

Delete ‘she/he is’ and replace with ‘they are’

Delete ‘he/she is’ and replace with ‘they are’

Delete ‘she/he was’ and replace with ‘they were’

Delete ‘she/he shall’ and replace with ‘they will’

Delete ‘she/he meets’ and replace with ‘they meet’

Delete ‘she/he resigns’ and replace with ‘they resign’

Delete ‘she/he thinks’ and replace with ‘they think’

Delete ‘she/he considers’ and replace with ‘they consider’

Delete ‘she or he has’ and replace with ‘they have’

Delete ‘she or he intends’ and replace with ‘they intend’

Delete ‘she or he may’ and replace with ‘they may’

Delete ‘she / he admits’ and replace with ‘they admit’

Delete ‘she / he objects’ and replace with ‘they object’

Delete ‘she/he denies’ and replace with ‘they deny’

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Delete 'she/he claims' and replace with 'they claim'

Delete 'she/he does' and replace with 'they do'

Delete 'she/he wishes' and replace with 'they wish'

Delete 'he/she declined' and replace with 'they declined'

Delete 'he/she considers' and replace with 'they consider'

Delete 'her/his' and replace with 'their'

Delete 'her or his' and replace with 'their'

Delete 'his/her' and replace with 'their'

Delete 'his or her' and replace with 'their'

Delete 'her/him' and replace with 'them'

Delete 'her or him' and replace with 'them'

Delete 'him/her' and replace with 'them'

D 2.5.1.2 delete 'has' and replace with 'have'

D 3.5.7 delete '(s)he meets' and replace with 'they meet'

delete '(s)he was' and replace with 'they were'

M 5 (f) delete 'by reason of her/his accepting office' replace with 'by reason of them accepting office'

M 7.3 delete 'she/he had had' and replace with 'they have had'

3. Rule D Regional Representatives

Carried

Rule D 2.2.1

Under the sub paragraph heading "Less than 100,000"

Remove: "1 male"

And replace with: "1 general"

Under the sub paragraph heading "100,000 or more and less than 150,000"

Remove: "1 male"

And replace with: "1 general"

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Under the sub paragraph heading "150,000 or more"

Remove: "1 male"

And replace with: "1 general"

4. Rule D Service Groups

Carried

Rule D 3.1.1

Replace the name "Police and Justice" with:

"Police, Probation and CAFCASS"

5. Rule G Stewards

Carried

Insert a new bullet point under rule G 5.3: "complete the Union's mandatory data protection training within three months of being elected; and any subsequent annual refresher training."

6. Rule M Data Protection

Carried

Delete the current wording of existing rule M 6.2 and replace with: "For the avoidance of doubt, each branch and its members must abide by the data protection principles and requirements embodied in data protection legislation."

7. Rule M Data Protection

Carried

Delete the current wording of existing rule M 6.5 and replace with: "Data protection legislation refers to all applicable privacy and data protection laws relating to the processing of personal data and the privacy of electronic communications, in force in the UK including the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR); the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018); and the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003 (PECR), and any laws that replace, extent, re-enact, consolidate, or amend any of the foregoing."