

**2025 National Women's Conference  
UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

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**UNISON WOMEN'S CONFERENCE 2025**

**PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

**13-15 FEBRUARY 2025**

**EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

**CENTRE**

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# 2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

## The Exchange - EICC

13 Feb 2025 15 Feb 2025

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### Recruitment and Organising

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#### 1. Unite for more Rights

This Conference notes:

- a) That in recent years LGBT+ people, and particularly Trans people, have been at the sharp end of attacks. This has been a conscious part of scapegoating by politicians with the 'war on woke' as they seek to divide and weaken us.
- b) Anti-Trans rhetoric leads to physical assaults. Home Office statistics in 2023 revealed that hate crime against Trans people increased 11% from the previous year, and 186% in the previous 5 years.
- c) The continual attack on Trans people, their identity and their right to exist from individuals and groups who describe themselves as gender critical. This is often co-ordinated on social media platforms.
- d) That gender critical groups and individuals often organise around women only spaces and the idea that Trans people having rights means that women will lose rights. This is a reactionary idea that has always been used when those facing discrimination organise and fightback.

This Conference believes:

- 1) That Trans women are women and Trans men are men, all our LGBT+ comrades must be respected.
- 2) That Trans equality is a trade union issue. Trade unions are about uniting us to make us stronger and we oppose all divisions amongst our class.
- 3) Women's rights are not diminished by Trans people having more rights. Rights are not in finite supply. In fact when we unite and organise together, we can often win more rights for all.
- 4) Therefore that women have a vested interest in standing alongside our Trans comrades in solidarity and in resistance and all of us fighting back together.

This Conference calls upon the National Women's Committee to work with the National LGBT+ Committee to:

- i) Co-produce a myth-busting factsheet, with all the self-organised groups in U UNISON, to counter the idea that an increase in Trans rights would mean a decrease in the rights of others.

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- ii) To work with all other relevant bodies in UNISON such as, but not limited to, the NEC and the Labour Link Committee as part of a campaign for the Labour government to introduce self-ID for Trans people as they had originally pledged to do in 2019.
- iii) To continue to roll out the UNISON Trans ally training into branches.

*Camden UNISON*

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### **2. Lasting legacy for self-organised groups**

After a groundbreaking year for LGBT+ workers in 2024, where we saw LGBT+ visibility shine, and the adoption of a stunning rule change at the 2024 national delegate conference to ensure that non-binary members can stand for our national executive council's regional seats, we cannot allow LGBT+ workers' rights to slide backwards. Following the years of young members, disabled members and the year of Black workers it is vital to keep up the progress made in celebrating intersectionality in all its forms.

In a union with 1 million women workers, we have seen how intersectionality is woven into our very fabric. Women are the backbone of our union, and it is the women who can, and do, lead the way, embracing members in all their intersectional identities, and ensuring that all members of our great union have a voice, and have a place.

UNISON has a long-standing commitment to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion within the workplace and society at large. This has been demonstrated in recent years by the dedicated efforts of UNISON to support and advocate for young members, disabled, Black and LGBT+ workers. During these years UNISON members have been reminded of the importance of recognising and addressing the unique challenges faced by members who belong to multiple marginalised groups, through an intersectional approach. Being able to self-organise in how we individually identify is the strength of UNISON.

We have seen how celebrating the contributions and achievements of young members, disabled, Black, and LGBT+ workers is essential to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment. Organising for change, whilst linking in with UNISON's national and local campaigns is strengthened by supporting our unique intersectionalities. Intersectionality is a critical framework for understanding how various aspects of a person's identity combine to create unique experiences of discrimination and privilege. UNISON's efforts to embrace intersectionality through our self-organised groups (SOGs) have strengthened our ability to advocate effectively for all members, ensuring that no one is left behind.

By celebrating the achievements of young members, disabled, Black, and LGBT+ workers, and by embracing intersectionality, we can build a stronger, more inclusive UNISON. Together, we stand united in our commitment to equality and justice for all.

Now more than ever we need the strength of our women members to speak out in solidarity and support for LGBT+ equality. All around the world LGBT+ workers' rights are being eroded and LGBT+ people's very existence are being driven underground with draconian laws and right wing aggression.

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In order for women to thrive in all our self-organised groups, conference calls on the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) continue to celebrate and highlight the achievements and contributions of women, young members, disabled, Black, and LGBT+ workers within UNISON.
- 2) continue to prioritise intersectional approaches in all organising, campaigning, advocacy and support efforts, ensuring that the specific needs of those with intersecting identities are addressed within the regional women's and national structures.
- 3) continue to organise events, campaigns, and educational initiatives that promote awareness and understanding of intersectionality, and its importance in the fight for equality and inclusion, ensuring that all necessary steps are taken to avoid holding meetings with women at the same time as other SOG groups are meeting.
- 4) encourage all branches to actively engage with, and support initiatives aimed at improving the working conditions and rights of disabled workers, Black workers, women, young members, and LGBT+ workers.
- 5) reaffirm UNISON's commitment to creating a union where diversity is celebrated, and all members can thrive without fear of discrimination or exclusion.
- 6) continue to promote self-organisation as the key to a healthy robust union.
- 7) advocate for the organising to win strategy to be closely aligned with our equalities agenda as a powerful tool in all UNISON campaigns.

***National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual  
and Transgender plus Committee***

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### **3. Young women need UNISON – UNISON needs young women**

Conference notes that there are over 80,000 young women members in UNISON – nearly 7% of the total membership. However, young women are under-represented as UNISON activists and may experience a number of barriers in getting involved in their trade union.

Conference believes that it is essential that young women are encouraged and supported to become active, engaged members of UNISON. Issues affecting young women workers are central to the workplace issues that UNISON tackles every day, such as low pay, precarious work, the lack of progression and development opportunities, and inadequate accommodation in the workplace for people with caring responsibilities.

In addition, the cost of living crisis has had a major impact on young women. Research by the Young Women's Trust highlights the gendered impact of the cost of living crisis. Their 2024 Annual Survey of young women showed that 42% of young

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women said their financial situation had got worse over the previous 12 months, compared to 27% of young men, and that 55% of young women were 'filled with dread' when they think about their household finances, compared to 43% of young men.

Many young women also have childcare and other caring responsibilities. A 2022 survey of UNISON young members found that 7.9% of young women members had childcare responsibilities, and 11.3% had caring responsibilities for an adult relative, partner or friend. UNISON has a number of structures and policies in place to support activists with caring responsibilities and it is important that these are promoted and publicised in order to support young women members for whom caring responsibilities may be a barrier to getting more active in the union. In particular, young single mothers may struggle to become more involved in UNISON.

Conference believes that UNISON needs young women, and young women need UNISON. Conference asks the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Work with the National Young Members Forum to identify and remove, where possible, barriers to young women becoming more active in UNISON, including promoting UNISON's accommodations for young women with childcare responsibilities, especially young single mothers, and support for low-paid women activists.
- 2) Encourage Regional Women's Committees to establish programmes to encourage young women to become more active at a regional and branch level, including job shares, mentoring programmes, and regional training sessions on issues like confidence building.
- 3) Consider establishing a UNISON Young Women's Network, along the lines of the Young LGBT+ Members Network and the Young Black Members Network, in order for young women members to network and informally discuss issues of importance to them.

### ***National Young Members' Forum***

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#### **4. 2027 Year of Women Workers**

This conference knows how much benefit has been brought with Self Organised Groups having their own Year of. We have had the Year of Young Worker, Disabled Worker, Black Worker and LGBT+ Worker. Is it not timely that for 2027 to be the Year of the Women Workers in Unison?

The issues and challenges that our women workers face is multi faceted. The fight for equal job opportunities, equal pay, safe homes, communities and workplaces free from threats of violence and misogyny, maternity and childcare issues, menopause, caring responsibilities, the list goes on and on. These issues are all on top of the cost of living crisis, housing and transport to name a few.

Unison with over a million women members is best placed to capture and raise the awareness of all women's issues. This would give focus to this work which would be of benefit to our women workers.

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Conference calls upon the Women's Committee to:

- 1) Bring forward a Motion to Women's Conference 2026 to make 2027 the Year of Women Workers.
- 2) If passed and selected to go forward to National Delegate Conference 2026, for the Women's Committee to work with Branches, Regions and Self Organised Groups to support the Motion for 2027 Year of Women Workers.

***UNISON Renfrewshire***

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### **Negotiating and Bargaining**

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#### **5. Gender pay gap**

Conference in the UK men earn 14% more than women, despite the introduction of the mandatory Gender Pay Gap reporting in 2017, women are still paid less on average than men.

More women than men work part-time, more women than men take on the caring responsibilities within their families. However, lack of good quality, properly paid part-time work alongside the lack of affordable childcare continues to worsen the issue for women and the continuing gender pay imbalance.

In the public sector women continue to be excluded from senior posts, with as few as one third of all management/director/senior officer posts being held by women. In contrast the vast majority (85%) of the lowest paid jobs are held by women, widening the gender pay gap.

Currently Gender pay gap reporting regulations only applies to employers with 250 or more employees, unfortunately this alone will not make a difference to the gender pay gap.

Conference calls on the NWC to continue to campaign for a new legal requirement for employers to report on their action plans to reduce gender pay gaps.

***West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Transport***

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#### **6. Global Gender Equality**

This conference notes that the Sustainable Development Goals Gender Index published in September 2024, Equal Measures 2030, found that no country has, so far, achieved the promise of gender equality envisioned by the UN's 2030 sustainable development goals set in 2015.

More than 850 million women and girls are living in countries rated as very poor subjecting them to potential restrictions and abuses including forced pregnancies, childhood marriage and bans from secondary education.

Between 2019 and 2022 nearly 40% - home to more than one billion women and girls- stagnated or declined on gender equality

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The Sustainable Development Goals index only rated one country as very good – Switzerland. The United Kingdom has remained at good on the same score since 2015. Some countries including the USA and Poland have regressed with 14 US states enacting near total abortion bans.

This conference calls upon the National Women's Committee to work with the National Executive Council and Labour Link committee to

- 1) To publicise the latest date of the Sustainable Development Goals Gender Index as widely as possible.
- 2) To campaign that the UN Sustainable Development goals relating to gender equality remain high on the government's agenda
- 3) To campaign for greater participation for women in national and international decision making structures

### ***West Midlands Region***

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#### **7. Closing the gender Health gap**

Conference, it is well noted that on average women live longer than men, yet women spend greater portions of their lives in ill health, make fewer visits to their GPs, receive less health monitoring, and take more potentially harmful medication.

The gender health gap refers to the disparities in health outcomes and access to healthcare services. Women, transgender, and non-binary people often face unique health challenges that are frequently overlooked or inadequately addressed in healthcare systems. This gap is driven by various factors, including:

- 1) Socioeconomic disparities: Economic barriers often limit access to healthcare for marginalized genders.
- 2) Cultural and Social Norms: Stigmas and biases can prevent individuals from seeking necessary medical care.
- 3) Lack of Research: health research has historically focused on male subjects, leading to a lack of understanding of female and non-binary health needs.
- 4) Inadequate Healthcare services: many healthcare systems do not provide comprehensive services that cater to the diverse needs of all genders.

The stat of the UK's gender health gap is backed up by a list of galling stats. It is estimated that 1 in 3 women in the UK suffer from Reproductive or Gynaecological health issues, yet less than 2.5% of publicly funded research is dedicated to reproductive Health. Yet 5 times more funding goes into erectile dysfunction, which only affects 19% of men, than into premenstrual syndrome, which affects 90% of women.

For decades, women experiencing symptoms relating to reproductive or gynaecological health have been dismissed or overlooked, often being told "we

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should just put up with it". This has led to women receiving poor treatment, dangerous misdiagnosis, and preventable deaths.

A recent study by Manchester Metropolitan University found women with endometriosis, a condition that affects 1.5 million women in the UK, were being "medically gaslit", with most feeling dismissed and ignored when accessing support. Barriers faced by women with this condition included a lack of medical understanding and a postcode lottery around the quality of care.

Studies also show that there are layers of discrimination within women's health; there are also disparities by race, class, disability, and postcode. If you are a black woman, you are 4 times more likely to die within 6 weeks of giving birth compared to a white woman. Black women are less likely to be included in health research compared to white women.

Caroline Criado Perez, the author of "invisible Women: Exposing data bias in a world designed for men" states that the problem is patriarchal world views that is prevalent in our healthcare system. Her research reveals that women are routinely underrepresented in clinical trials and that medical research proposed by women for women, is not allotted the same funding as medical research proposed by men for men.

According to Dr Irving Zucker, a professor at the University of California, Berkeley, for decades, women have been excluded from clinical drug trials, partly due to unfounded concerns that women's hormonal fluctuations make them difficult to study. Until the early 1990s, women of childbearing age were kept out of trial studies due to concerns about exposing pregnant women to drugs and risking damage to their foetuses.

In a report commissioned by the Women's Brain Project, a non-profit based in Switzerland, it was found that women are also under-represented in clinical trials in oncology and neurology. Other research shows funding for many conditions that exclusively or disproportionately affect women is significantly lower than for those affecting men.

Therefore, conference calls upon the national women's committee to

- a) Work with labour link to lobby government and the health minister to allocate resources that focuses on the health needs of women, transgender, and non-binary individuals to inform evidence-based healthcare practices.
- b) Work with labour link to lobby government and the health minister to implement policies to ensure that women, transgender, and non-binary individuals have access to comprehensive healthcare services, including reproductive health, mental health, and preventative care.

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- c) Work with all relevant bodies to launch campaigns to educate the public about the importance of gender equality in health and the specific needs of health marginalized genders.
- d) Work with all relevant bodies to advocate for policies that address social determinants of health, aiming to reduce inequalities in health outcomes related to gender.
- e) To report back to women's conference 2026 on the work carried out so far.

*UNISON Northern Energy*

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### **Campaigning**

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#### **8. Childcare**

Conference notes that Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK without a childcare strategy, despite this being a commitment of the Northern Ireland Executive's New Decade New Approach agreement.

Conference also notes that international and regional comparisons of the cost of formal childcare indicate that Northern Ireland has some of the highest childcare costs meaning that families are spending more on childcare in Northern Ireland than they are in other countries and in other regions of the UK.

Conference is concerned that the implication of this can mean that parents may only be marginally better off working in paid employment, if at all, and they are often staying at home and looking after their children. This, of course, has particular implications for women who continue to undertake the majority of childcare within the home.

Conference believes that the lack of affordable, high quality and accessible childcare has become an increasingly important issue as the proportion of women participating in the paid labour market has grown and the requirement for childcare provision outside of the home has risen.

Conference also believes that women with children are much less likely to participate in the labour market, and when they do, they are more likely to work in insecure and part-time positions. In addition to this, the pay penalty for motherhood is large, and parental leave entitlements are skewed towards mothers staying at home. There is growing agreement internationally of the importance of investing in the social infrastructure of childcare provision.

Conference welcomes recent progress on the issue with the announcement of a £25million package of measures. We welcome the introduction of the Northern Ireland Childcare Subsidy (NICS) as part of these measures, as well as funding to expand current early years and childcare provisions, address sustainability challenges within the sector and the establishment of 22.5 hours funded pre-school education for all children in their pre-school year. However, we believe these measures should be extended beyond their initial spend to include all parents with children of all ages.

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Conference instructs the National Women's Committee to support the UNISON Northern Ireland campaign for

- 1) a fully resourced childcare strategy for Northern Ireland.
- 2) 30-hours free Childcare in Northern Ireland, with the proviso that is properly funded.
- 3) Redirecting state spending from subsidisation of childcare to supply and investment in childcare services.
- 4) drastic improvement in the pay and conditions associated with childcare work.
- 5) Unionisation and collective bargaining or a system of sectoral agreements in the childcare sector.
- 6) Introduce genuine flexible working arrangements into the Northern Ireland labour market for the benefit of workers and employees, not just employers.

### ***UNISON Northern Ireland***

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#### **9. Addressing Unpaid Care and Employment Barriers for Women in the North**

Conference notes the recent report from Health Equity North, Woman of the North which has found the following:

- 1) Women in the North of England provide a disproportionately high amount of unpaid care compared to their counterparts in other regions, with 10.3% of women in the North engaged in such care, compared to 8.4% in London.
- 2) The statistics reveal that 12% of women in the Northeast, 11.2% in the North West, and 10.7% in Yorkshire and the Humber are primary caregivers for family members, often resulting in significant barriers to employment.
- 3) One in five women aged 55-59 in the North provide care for a family member due to illness, disability, mental health issues, or substance use, highlighting the urgent need for targeted support.
- 4) The lack of accessible early years childcare options is a critical factor preventing these women from entering or re-entering the workforce, exacerbating financial instability and limiting opportunities for personal and professional development.

Conference believes that unpaid care work is vital for families and communities but must not be a barrier to economic participation for women. The existing carers leave legislation requires enhancement to better support women in balancing their caring responsibilities with their employment rights.

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Conference believes that empowering women with knowledge about their rights, including flexible working arrangements and entitlements, is crucial in mitigating the challenges they face.

We call on the National Women's Committee to:

- a) Work with Labour Link to advocate for stronger carers leave legislation that provides adequate support for those engaged in unpaid care, ensuring that their rights are upheld and accessible.
- b) Work with LAOS to develop resources and training programs aimed at informing women about their rights to flexible working, early years childcare options, and the support available to them.
- c) Work with the NEC and all relevant structures in the union to develop a campaign to work with employers to put in place carers passports in the workplace for members who require them.
- d) Report back on progress at National Women's Conference 2026.

### *Northern Region*

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#### **10. Better Maternity Provision and Childcare to Support Women Workers**

The Centre for Progressive Policy reported that the UK's fertility rate has declined by 18.8% falling faster (2010 to 2022) than any other of the G7 countries. This means that the statistical average of 1.49 children per woman in the UK. Whilst the conclusion points to the main reason as austerity policies, there are many other reasons behind this statistic. The lack of good maternity and childcare provision is a contributing factor. What is clear is that our current maternity and childcare provision needs to be radically improved.

For too many of our women workers the decision to have a child or children is now extremely difficult. This means that we have less choice due to the economics and practicalities of having a family life. This is an issue that affects our lives now and our future generations. If we have a shrinking population, we have less workers in the future, less tax income and resulting issues for public finances. Our women workers need to be supported better in terms of maternity provision and childcare if we are to flourish as a society.

Conference calls upon the Women's Committee to:

- 1) Work with Branches, Regions, and Self Organised Groups to highlight the desperate need for better maternity and childcare provision across the four nations.

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- 2) To produce guidance that can help Branches in their campaigning and negotiating work to improve workplace maternity benefits and flexible working practices to help with childcare issues. Either by way of a published hard copy document or electronic copy.

***UNISON Renfrewshire***

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### **11. Scrap The Cap**

This Conference notes:

- 1) That an estimated 4.3 million children in the UK live in poverty.
- 2) The two-child benefit cap, introduced by the Tories under David Cameron, which means that families with three or more children are denied approximately £3000 per child compared to families where all the children were born before 2017.
- 3) That this policy has led to around 1.5 million children living in families where their benefits have been reduced.
- 4) The report by the Institute of Fiscal Studies which found that removing the cap would lift over half a million children out of poverty and would be the “single most cost-effective way” to bring children out of poverty. This would cost £2.5bn a year.
- 5) That Child Poverty Action Group data shows “10,000 children have been pulled into poverty by the two-child limit since the government took office” in early July.
- 6) That there have been repeated calls on the new Labour government to scrap the cap, but this been refused.

This Conference believes:

- a) That children of lone parents are amongst those most likely to be in poverty because of this cap. Women are more likely to be lone parents, and therefore bear the brunt of this.
- b) Because women are most likely to be primary care-givers to children, it is women who are also most likely to ‘go without’ so that children have food, clothing and as secure a home as possible.
- c) That a Labour government should make commitments and take action to eradicate child poverty. This includes ending the two-child benefit cap as a matter of urgency.

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This Conference calls upon the National Women's Committee to work with all relevant bodies within UNISON such as but not limited to the NEC, the Labour Link committee, and campaign for an end to the two-child benefit cap.

*Camden UNISON*

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### **12. Kinship Care and Fostering**

This National Women's Conference notes that Kinship carers are family or friends who step up, often during an unexpected crisis, to care for a child when their parents are not able to. This may be because the parent has died, is unwell, has gone to prison, is experiencing problems with drugs and alcohol, or are neglectful or abusive. Kinship carers are usually grandparents, aunts or uncles, brothers or sisters, a stepparent, stepbrother or stepsister, or someone who isn't related but knows the child well. Whatever their relationship to the child, in that moment a commitment is made. To bring love and hope to a child who has experienced trauma, no matter what.

According to the Kinship Charity recent make or break annual survey 87% of Kinship carers are women. With the medium age 55-59, though there is an increase of women under 40.

There are more than 141,000 children in kinship care in England and Wales, and it is estimated more than 1/3 of kinship careers are experiencing an income drop of more than 50% after stepping up to take on care of a child.

Many Kinship carers and Foster carers step up for children sometimes with very little notice, going through varying stages of legal processes which can vary from months to a number of years, attending meetings, court hearings, home visits and checks, transitions times for children to settle in, contact arrangements with parents, medicals etc. For single carers the pressure is even greater.

Unlike those who adopt children, many kinship and foster carers do not have the same protections and rights to time off work, with many making the only choice to either reduce their working hours or leave employment all together, impacting the individual but with the employer also losing experienced staff. Most Local authorities do not have any support for carers within their own Organisations with no guidance or policies in place.

This Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Encourage branches, and provide necessary information, for them to negotiate with employers to include kinship carers in the adoption leave policy and for employers to become Kinship friendly employers.
- 2) Consider how to publicise campaigns seeking bargaining wins for kinship carers so women members are aware and can support.
- 3) Collate and share best practice on bargaining successes in this area.

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- 4) To work with Labour Link to raise the profile of Kinship Carers and the issues face by them and foster carers within the Labour Party.

### *Greater London Region*

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#### **13. Addressing the impacts of lack of affordable housing on Women and Single mothers**

The lack of affordable housing is a pressing issue that disproportionately affects women and single mothers. In many communities, rising rents and stagnant wages have created a housing crisis that places immense financial and emotional strain on these vulnerable populations. Women, particularly single mothers, often face unique challenges that exacerbate the impacts of housing instability, including increased risk of poverty, homelessness and domestic violence.

In 2022, there were 2.9 million lone parent families, which 2.5 million or 84% were headed by a lone mother. The number of people living alone was 8.3 million, representing 13% of the household population of which 53% were women living alone.

A report by England shelter in 2024 confirmed that there are currently 109,000 households now homeless in temporary accommodation of which 59% are lone mothers, despite only making up 20% of families in the general population. That's a whopping 36,940 women caring for their children alone in the most appalling conditions.

A report by the department for levelling up, housing & communities showed that between April 2021 and March 2022 there were 1.21 million households on local authority waiting lists for affordable rented housing, this does not include other types of affordable housing so the overall number of households requiring affordable homes is likely to be much higher. While the report does not break down to show how many of these households are women or lone mothers, just looking at the statistics above we may conclude that women and lone mothers would make up the majority of those on the waiting lists.

In May 2024 the average price of a property in the UK is £285,201, While the average full-time wage in the public sector is £24,914.

The UNISON Housing Calculator as part of UNISON's Housing Campaign, show's it would for a public sector worker in North Tyneside 12.7 years to raise a deposit, while in Camden a public sector worker on the same wage would take 52.7 years.

Whilst the Campaign is fundamental is calling for change in the housing sector, there is more to do in securing affordable housing for women and lone mothers.

Conference, we call upon National Women's Committee:

- 1) To work with Labour Link, LAOS, Regions and Branches and any other relevant structure.
- 2) To Campaign for affordable housing for women.

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- 3) To Lobby MPs and Housing Minister to working with housing associations and councils, to make more affordable housing available to women, especially fleeing domestic violence or with young children.

***UNISON Northern Energy***

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### **14. Public Transport and Women's Safety**

Conference the British Transport Police Authority reports and alarming rise in violent crimes against women and girls, with 11,357 incidents recorded in the year ending March 31, 2024, marking a significant increase from 9,464 the previous year.

Conference, we know that there are specific vulnerabilities faced by women, across the public sector and community voluntary sector, in public transport settings, particularly for those working early or late shifts such as cleaners, nurses and hospitality workers, who often encounter unsafe travel conditions during off-peak hours.

Conference believes that all women have the right to travel safely on public transport regardless of the time of day or night. Effective measures must be implemented to enhance the safety of women using public transport, particularly in the night-time economy.

Conference believes that introducing comprehensive systems to regularly monitor, upgrade and repair lighting and communication systems across all public transport service to ensure well-lit and secure environments will help make public transport safer for women.

By addressing these critical issues, we can foster a safer, more inclusive public transport system for women.

We call on the National Women's Committee to:

Work with the NEC and all the relevant structures in our union, including labour link to engage with the transport minister and relevant stakeholders to push for policies and funding aimed at improving safety measures within the public transport system.

Work with the NEC and all the relevant structures in our union, including our branches to conduct a survey to understand the experiences of women who use public transport, gathering data on their safety concerns and incidents to inform a campaign for better safety for women using public transport. Work with Labour Link to address any issues that come out of this survey,

Report back on progress at National Women's Conference 2026.

***Northern Region***

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### **15. Women's Health Strategy for Northern Ireland**

Conference notes the health inequalities and disadvantages faced by women and is concerned that women are 51% of the population but are under-represented in medical research resulting in poorer outcomes for a range of health issues, not just reproductive health.

Conference notes that women usually live longer than men, but that they also live longer with illness and disability.

Conference notes that there are clear disparities in health outcomes and life expectancy between the most and least economically prosperous areas of Northern Ireland. Research has also clearly shown that women from ethnic minorities face additional barriers when accessing healthcare, with particular challenges presenting in maternity care.

Conference is concerned that reports have shown that the healthcare system does not keep women safe and does not listen to women. Conference is also concerned that women in some groups report not getting the same services as other women based on other characteristics such as ethnicity, sexuality, age and geographic location.

Conference believes that a Women's Health Strategy would address the poor experiences and health outcomes that women endure. It would also lead to a better understanding of women's health.

Conference believes that Northern Ireland needs a Women's Health Strategy that will ensure that medical professionals listen to women and make sure women and girls can have improved health outcomes and improved health support for menstrual health, pregnancy, pregnancy loss, support after the baby is born, menopause, mental health and wellbeing, cancers, health issues to do with violence against women and girls and healthy ageing and long-term conditions.

Conference believes that this strategy must take an intersectional approach and must take account of the additional issues that women from different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds face.

Conference calls on the National Women's Committee, to support the UNISON Northern Ireland campaign to make a Women's Health Strategy a priority in the coming year and to campaign for the resumption of the NI Executive work on a strategy soon as possible, so that women in Northern Ireland can have confidence that their health needs will be recognised, understood and treated, leading to improved health outcomes.

***UNISON Northern Ireland***

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### 16. Women's Health in the Workplace

Conference notes that the conversation on the importance of and the impacts of women's health conditions in the workplace has already begun.

1) In July 2022 the Government produced a Women's Health Strategy for England Women's Health Strategy for England - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk));

2) Unison National Women's Conference 2024 saw a successful motion carried on Prioritising Women's Health in the Workplace

This motion seeks to build on the conversation by framing how we in UNISON need to be part of changing and shaping workplace culture around the issue of women's health.

Workplaces by their very nature are part of a system created by men for men which is both macho and misogynistic. These powerful elements can work against women as they progress up the corporate ladder. We also hear too often from women members of poor treatment meted out to them by other female managers.

We see women categorised by their responses within the workplace in stereotypical language – women are described as 'sensitive', 'aggressive', 'over-emotional', 'a hot mess', 'mentally unstable' when in reality they are struggling to get through each day due to their health needs.

This motion seeks to address that by highlighting the need to shift from a 'blame and shame' culture to a trauma led empathic approach to women's health in the workplace.

In public service we talk about having a trauma led approach to service delivery. We recognise the impact that life experiences have on individuals, and we work with them to repair some of the damage to help people continue to thrive.

Trauma-informed practice is a framework based on five core principles:

- a) Safety
- b) Trustworthiness
- c) Choice
- d) Collaboration
- e) Empowerment

This motion calls for UNISON to influence and shape the agenda of women's health in the workplace in a trauma led way.

We want to see women feel safer in the workplace, and able to confidently discuss their health issues which may impact on their attendance and performance.

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

We want to see managers supported to understand that the different phases of a woman's life may bring its own challenges specific to each woman, and that these challenges can be traumatic to the individual.

We want to see our trade union colleagues empowered and upskilled to be able to ensure that when women ask for support be that in attendance, performance or any other matter, that investigations ask the difficult question: is there a health impact that has affected this situation?

We want women understood, supported and empowered through our health challenges. No shame, blame or an expectation to 'just get on with it'.

Conference, we call on the National Women's Committee to be at the forefront of changing workplace culture around women's health issues by:

- i) Consulting all women members especially LGBT+ and black members about how their health conditions have impacted them at work. In particular where they felt that those impacts fed into disciplinary episodes. The survey should include but not be restricted to
  - A) How able they felt to raise those health issues.
  - B) How management responded.
  - C) The gender of the manager dealing with the issue.
- ii) Developing policy guidance for employers to ensure that that trauma led practice is applied to all women within the workplace especially LGBT + and Black members
- iii) Work with LAOS to ensure that trauma led guidance, and training on how to ask difficult questions sensitively is part of routine training for all lay and elected officers
  - A) How able they felt to raise those health issues.
  - B) How management responded.
  - C) The gender of the manager dealing with the issue
  - D) Recognise the different impact on LGBT+ and Black members.

***North West Region***

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### **17. Challenging the myths about Women with neurodiversity and associated mental health conditions**

Until recently, it was considered that the overwhelmingly majority of people with autism spectrum condition (ASC) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) were 'men and boys'. This is of course not accurate, and we now know there are many women, girls and non-binary people with ASC and ADHD.

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

In the words of the National Autistic Society “Although we now know much more about the experiences of autistic women and girls, society’s understanding of autism has been limited by outdated stereotypes and incorrect assumptions. Although autism research and professional practice are slowly catching up to the realities of life for autistic women and girls, many barriers to diagnosis and support remain.”

Research by University College London (UCL) 2018 stated that men and boys are 3-6 times more likely to get a diagnosis and that the average age of diagnosis for women is in their late 30’s to early 40’s, compared to age 7 for boys.

It is reported that ASC and ADHD present differently in women and girls, and this results in them being more likely to be diagnosed with a mental health condition or a condition such as fibromyalgia. Many of the symptoms overlap and because of historical misinformation, women and girls are wrongly diagnosed.

Receiving the right diagnosis can be empowering and can assist with workplace reasonable adjustments as it is a protected under the Equality Act 2010.

Women who are members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender plus (LGBT+) community are also more likely to be neurodivergent. The main theory supporting this phenomenon is that neurodivergent people are less likely to adapt to ‘social norms’ and as a result are more likely to explore their gender identity and sexual orientation.

Conference calls on the National Women’s Committee to

- 1) Liaise with the National Committees of the LGBT+, Disabled Members, Black Members and Young Members Self Organised Groups (SOG’s) to formulate a fact sheet specific to neurodivergent women members’ rights at work.
- 2) Work with Regions and branches to promote awareness of the need to focus on women’s specific challenges and needs related to neurodiversity and potential diagnosis.
- 3) Establish and facilitate a campaign to both raise awareness to challenge the myths related to women with neurodiversity and ensure there is a focus on the need to improve the outcomes for women when they approach healthcare professionals.

***National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual  
and Transgender plus Committee***

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### **18. Financial hardship on young women and their mental health**

This conference recognises the significant challenges faced by our young women members within this current financial crisis. Deeply impacting their mental health and overall well-being. According to the Young Women’s Trust (2024) recent report, 24% of young women have fallen behind with their rent or bills and 28% cannot afford food or even basic essentials. An alarming number of young females (42%) report

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

that their financial situation has worsened over the past year, and more than half (56%) feel unsupported in their work environments.

We know that financial struggles can directly affect an individual's mental health, and according to Mental Health Org UK, individuals in the lowest 20% income bracket are 2-3 times more likely to develop mental health problems. This can be evidenced when looking at the appalling figures released. Reporting that 1 in 5 young female workers describe having poor or very poor mental health and 26% stay in a job they are unhappy in it as they can't afford to leave.

Therefore, we call on the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Work with branches to survey young female members about how poverty affects their lives and mental health.
- 2) Work with the Young Members Self Organised Group and LAOS to produce literature with targeted advice and support for young women facing financial hardships.
- 3) Work with the Health Service Group to promote awareness and advocate for mental health resources tailored to the specific needs of young women.

***North Cumbria Northumberland &  
Tyne & Wear Health***

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### **19. Mental Health First Aid and Preventing Burnout**

As a result of the Covid19 pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis and cuts to jobs and services, there has been a significant increase in mental health related illnesses, with poor mental health reported as the main reason for absence from work.

According to the Mental Health Foundation, social and economic factors can put women at greater risk of poor mental health than men.

Around 1 in 5 women have a common mental health problem such as depression and anxiety and while there can be many reasons why these develop, some risk factors affect many women. Women are more likely than men to:

- 1) be carers, which can lead to stress, anxiety and isolation
- 2) live in poverty which, along with concerns about personal safety and working mainly in the home, can lead to social isolation
- 3) experience physical and sexual abuse, which can have a long-term impact on their mental health
- 4) experience sexual violence, which can cause PTSD

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

Life events and hormonal changes can also affect women's mental health. For example:

- a) Having a baby can trigger ante and post-natal depression
- b) The menopause can include changes to women's mental health, such as mood swings, anxiety and feeling low

Women make up most of the frontline health and care workers, are over-represented in low-paid and insecure work and are more likely to have pre-existing difficulties with debt and bills.

All women in these positions were at a higher risk of developing a mental health problem before the pandemic and are now at an increased risk as the economic impact of the pandemic take their toll. Women are also more likely to be affected by domestic violence and abuse and were at a greater risk of this during the Lockdowns.

It should be remembered that the majority of members of UNISON are women and across the movement as a whole, a report published by the TUC in March 2023 found trade union membership in the UK grew by over 100,000 in 2019/20, with women making up 58 per cent of trade union membership at 3.76 million members.

Due to women carrying the burden of organising both at work and at home, this increases women's mental health issues in comparison to men.

When women find it hard to talk about difficult feelings, they tend to internalise and this can lead to depression, eating disorders and self-harm.

Society expects women to put others' needs first, and while this can lead to higher levels of mental ill-health it also means women are uniquely placed to be able to empathise with women members experiencing mental ill-health and are more likely to have experience of help available, as well as experiencing these problems themselves.

Figures show:

- i) Approximately one in four people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year
- ii) One in six will experience anxiety and depression each week
- iii) Last year, there was a 46 per cent in urgent referrals to mental health crisis teams
- iv) According to the World Health Organisation, 700,000 people take their own life each year – one person every 40 seconds.

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

In 2024, the UK officially fell into recession after the energy crisis of the previous two years and there is an estimated £2.4 billion of energy debt alone. Nearly 10 million in the UK are in debt and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis continues to impact on the economy.

UNISON stewards are supporting more and more members experiencing financial difficulties and with mental ill health.

Trying to provide the support members so desperately need takes its toll on the mental health and well-being of stewards, who so often put the needs of members before their own.

So much of the existing training provisions for trade union stewards focuses on supporting members but not on supporting stewards.

Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to:

- A) Work with LAOS to introduce a programme of Mental Health First Aid Training to be delivered through our learning and organising for women activists
- B) Encourage branches to work with employers to seek to introduce Mental Health First Aider programmes
- C) Raise awareness of the specific challenges mental ill health has on women in the workplace and strengthen our advice on risk assessments and what support is available
- D) Produce specific materials for a campaign to reverse cuts to mental health services and allocate the necessary resources that can be used across all four nations
- E) Work with LAOS to introduce guidance, support and training on supporting stewards' mental health and preventing burnout as part of stewards training

### ***North West Region***

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#### **20. Menstrual health and period dignity is a trade union issue**

Menstruation affects most women, as well as trans men and many gender diverse and non-binary people, for more than half of their working lives. While periods are a normal part of life, there are many ways that menstruation can affect working lives and the ability to do one's job.

However, this is not widely recognised by employers. In November 2023, the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) surveyed 2,000 women who had experienced menstruation in the workplace and found that:

- a) almost four in five women surveyed had experienced menstruation symptoms;
- b) more than two-thirds of those with symptoms had experienced a negative impact at work;

## 2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

- c) fifteen percent of respondents had a menstrual health condition like endometriosis;
- d) but only 12% of employers provide support for menstruation and menstrual health.

For some women and people who menstruate, periods may be painful or debilitating or exacerbated by another health condition. In some instances, workers may need to take sick leave in order to manage period pain; or may be experiencing chronic menstrual health and fertility-related conditions such as endometriosis, fibroids, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) and premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD).

Menstrual health problems may qualify as a disability under the Equality Act 2010 or be an additional factor affecting disabled people. It is important that workplace disability, reasonable adjustments and sickness policies reflect the ways that menstruation can impact on working lives, and take a supportive, not punitive, approach to employees experiencing menstrual symptoms.

There also continues to be a stigma and sense of embarrassment around menstruation: the CIPD report found that around half of employees who have to take a day off due to menstruation-related symptoms were reluctant to tell their manager that this was related to their menstrual cycle.

In addition, 'period poverty' is rising in the UK. An ActionAid poll in May 2023 found that that 21% of women and people who menstruate in the UK struggle to afford period products - up from 12% since 2022. This particularly affects young women – more than a quarter of 18-24-year-olds surveyed by ActionAid said they sometimes could not afford period products.

Being unable to afford period products can mean that people stay home from work, use period products for longer than is safe, or are forced to rely on unsanitary alternatives. This can be a risk to health and does not afford women and people who menstruate the dignity we all deserve.

Conference notes that UNISON branches have successfully campaigned for employers to address period poverty by providing free period products at work, for example in 2022 UNISON Westminster secured an agreement from Westminster Council to provide free period products for staff working in all council offices.

Conference believes that menstrual health is a trade union issue, and that access to safe, affordable period products is a right for all women and people who menstruate. UNISON's National Women's Committee is ideally placed to raise the importance of this issue in the workplace.

Conference asks the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Consider surveying UNISON members on how menstruation affects or has affected their working lives, including health issues, disability, access to sickness or wellbeing leave, and the impact of period poverty;
- 2) Consider producing guidance for branches on negotiating sickness, wellbeing and other policies which reflect the impact of menstrual health in the workplace;

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

- 3) Work with the National Disabled Members Committee to review UNISON guidance on reasonable adjustments and disability, and consider updating these to include information about menstrual health and fertility-related conditions where relevant;
- 4) Encourage branches to raise the issue of period poverty locally with employers, and consider producing guidance for branch Women's Officers and Welfare Officers on how to campaign for provision of free period products in the workplace;
- 5) Share and promote examples of successful campaigns and best practice in this area with Regional Women's Committees, branches, and members;
- 6) Work with Labour Link to influence the new Labour government to recognise the impact of menstruation and menstrual health in the workplace and the impact of period poverty, and to address these through appropriate policy proposals.

### ***National Young Members' Forum***

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#### **21. Menopause in the workplace**

Conference menopause is poorly understood which means many women face unacceptable challenges in the workplace and in their wider lives.

In the UK women make up 51% of the workforce, they will at some point in their lives experience menopause, not necessarily on their 40's or 50's. Younger women, transgender and non-binary people are also likely to go through premature or medical or surgical menopause.

A survey conducted by the TUC shows that c.8 in every 10 women will experience noticeable symptoms of menopause and of these 45% will find these symptoms hard to deal with and impacting their performance at work.

Conference calls on the NWC to:

- 1) Provide model menopause policies, such as H&S, flexible working, for use by branches
- 2) Work with Learning and Organising Services (LAOS) to provide menopause training for members on how menopause symptoms can affect their working lives and what actions can be taken by branches to provide the necessary support needed.

***West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Transport***

## 2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

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### 22. Menopause is not a taboo

Menopause is a significant life stage affecting all women, but research shows that the experience varies greatly, often more severe for some due to systemic factors. Black women, in particular, face unique challenges, including earlier onset, more intense symptoms, and the compounded impact of systemic discrimination, racism, and socioeconomic factors. Many women do not feel confident enough to discuss the impact of menopause on their well-being with employers or managers.

The key points that highlights the impact of menopause on Black women include:

- 1) **Earlier Onset and Severe Symptoms:** Some women tend to experience menopause earlier and with more severe symptoms, such as hot flashes, night sweats, and depression. These symptoms can significantly affect their quality of life and work performance.
- 2) **Healthcare Disparities:** Black women often face disparities in healthcare, such as misdiagnosis, under-treatment, and a lack of culturally competent care. This further exacerbates the challenges in managing menopause effectively.
- 3) **Socioeconomic Factors:** The intersection of menopause with socioeconomic factors—like income inequality, job insecurity, and limited access to healthcare—further disadvantages Black women, especially those in low-paid jobs.
- 4) **Workplace Impact:** Menopause symptoms can lead to absenteeism, reduced productivity, and mental health challenges. Without adequate workplace policies and support, women are likely to suffer disproportionately in their professional lives.

Addressing the impact of menopause on Black women is both a matter of health equity and workplace fairness. This will also ensure that all women, particularly Black women, receive the care, respect, and support they need during menopause.

Conference therefore calls upon the national women's committee to work with the national Black members' committee to:

- a) **Raise Awareness and work with branches and regions to implement educational programs within workplaces that focus on menopause, with particular attention to the experiences of Black women, women with disabilities, and those in low-paid roles on the cultural and medical nuances of menopause.**
- b) **Build on creating a joint campaign for better access to comprehensive healthcare for all women, including advocating for culturally competent menopause specialists.**
- c) **Encourage workplace policies that support women experiencing menopause, such as flexible working hours, remote work options, and designated rest areas.**
- d) **Explore how to support research that focuses on the unique impact of menopause on women from diverse backgrounds, their experiences and create leaflets that inform good practice guides for activist to engage with employers.**

## 2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

- e) Advocate for Policy Change to push for national and local policies addressing healthcare disparities and providing targeted support for Black women during menopause. Collaborate with other national committees and advocacy groups to drive systemic change.

### *National Black Members' Committee*

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#### **23. Post Menopause Support**

Specialist Perimenopause / Menopause / Post Menopause Support in every GP Surgery in the UK

Access to specialist perimenopause / menopause / post menopause advice and treatment within GP Surgeries in the UK is often a postcode lottery, with many female, transgender, and non-binary members, struggling to get the support and advice they need.

Just some facts and figures to illustrate why this issue is so important.

- a) There are approximately 13 million peri or post- menopausal women in the U.K.
- b) There are more than 30 recognised symptoms of menopause.
- c) Perimenopause is when hormone levels begin to fluctuate and symptoms may appear, often in the early to mid-forties.
- d) Menopause is 12 consecutive months without a period, the average age this happens is 51-52.
- e) Post-menopause is the years following menopause.
- f) Symptoms last, on average, 4-8 years.
- g) 1 in 4 will experience very few symptoms.
- h) 3 in 4 will experience symptoms.
- i) 1 in 4 will experience debilitating symptoms.

Menopause can be:

- 1) Natural.
- 2) Surgical - this occurs when both ovaries are removed.
- 3) Induced - this is caused by some forms of medical treatment.
- 4) Early – this occurs under the age of 45.
- 5) Premature - this occurs under the age of 40.
- 6) 1 in 100 will experience menopause under the age of 40.

## 2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

- 7) 1 in 1000 will experience menopause under the age of 30.
- 8) 1 in 10,000 will experience menopause under the age of 20.
- 9) Transgender and non-binary people may also experience menopause.

While menopause is talked about a lot more than it used to be, there is still a long way to go to ensure that those struggling with menopausal symptoms have access to the right, timely and appropriate support, advice and, where appropriate, treatment, in their own GP Surgery.

Conference acknowledges that UNISON is making great strides in getting employers to engage around menstruation, perimenopause, menopause and post menopause issues, including negotiating stand-alone policies that cover things like reasonable adjustments, signposting etc. However, Conference also acknowledges that more needs to be done within our own health care system generally, to ensure that those needing help can access a health care professional, confident in the knowledge that they are specially trained in menopause support.

Having a health care professional with specialist menopause training in every GP Surgery will allow those struggling with perimenopause or menopause symptoms to get the advice they need to make informed choices about their own health options.

Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to work with the NEC, Labour Link, UNISON's Health and Safety Committee, Regions and Branches to take the appropriate steps within its remit and scope of influence, to help campaign for change that will see at least one menopause support health specialist in every GP practice in the UK.

### *Tees Esk and Wear Valleys Health*

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#### **24. Menopause and ethnic minority Women**

Menopause in ethnic minority Women

Menopause in minority groups and communities is often overlooked in society. While significant progress has been made in recent years on the subject of menopause at work, there is still much to be done in breaking down the cultural barriers in the various communities where women may be isolated. We have a duty to identify where possible, the cultural constraints that may be preventing women from accessing the support they need at a vulnerable time in their lives. By identifying these barriers, we can bring some much-needed light and support through the working environment that will give them support and understanding.

UNISON has Women members from all backgrounds and ethnicity who may be suffering in silence and unable to get the help they need. Our focus needs to be placed on supporting them. We are slowly winning the battle for enlightenment in the workplace, and we must strive to ensure that no one is left behind.

## 2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

The British Menopause Society recognises that there are differences in both biological and hormone changes in women of different ethnicities and race. There are significant differences among women's perceptions, attitudes and expectations surrounding menopause, and this is hugely influenced by their race, culture and ethnicity.

A better understanding of similarities and differences will improve delivery of culturally appropriate care that may help with symptoms and increase the quality of life for midlife women of all ethnicities and races.

Women from different ethnic backgrounds may experience menopause symptoms differently, including severity and type. Challenges can be identified as:

- a) Menopause is still a social stigma and a taboo subject in many minority communities, many communities do not talk about it openly.
- b) Menopause may be considered as a symbol of loss of fertility and femininity.
- c) There may be a general expectation for women to stay silent and not complain about their ailments.
- d) There may be a societal belief that "If every woman must go through menopause, then what's the big issue?"
- e) A lack of knowledge about menopause and HRT, and the science behind it, may exist.
- f) Menopause may be considered as a natural process and women may have reservations about using medical treatment for something that is a natural process.
- g) There may be health literacy barriers.
- h) The lack of menopause educational resources, posters and videos showing ethnic minority women may mean that these women may not be able to identify with the narrative.
- i) There may be language barriers and a lack of understanding by healthcare professionals of the terms used by minority women to describe their menopause symptoms.
- j) Women from minority groups often face higher rates of chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and osteoporosis (to name but a few).
- k) Attitudes and beliefs, both religious and historic.
- l) Social norms and cultural beliefs can influence how women perceive and cope with menopause, some cultures may be negative towards the menopause because of ignorance and superstition
- m) Women may be prevented from seeking support from family and friends because of male dominated ideology within their community.

## 2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

The challenges for Women from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds need to be recognised acknowledged and addressed.

This conference therefore calls upon the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Survey women members about their experiences, barriers at home and within the workplace.
- 2) Work to raise awareness about the challenges faced by minority women and advocate for greater support, resources and education.
- 3) Update UNISON's national menopause guidance to reflect the learning from 1. and 2. above.
- 4) Advocate for greater public awareness and education about menopause and its effects on minority groups and culture, emphasising their uniqueness.
- 5) Seek support through Labour Link to raise awareness with our parliamentary work.

*Leicestershire Police*

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### 25. Long Covid

According to the Gender and Public Health emergencies working group, by August 2022 long COVID had negatively impacted over 100 million people worldwide with residual symptoms that could persist many months or potentially a lifetime after having the acute infection.

Symptoms of long COVID include shortness of breath, chest pain, brain fog, fatigue, myalgias, and gastrointestinal issues. While research is limited regarding this condition, a systematic review revealed that more than half of those who had SARS-CoV-2 infection experienced long COVID for up to six months.

Gender differences have been evident since the pandemic's birth, as women are more likely to be infected with COVID, whereas men with acute infection exhibit higher mortality rates. However, the working group have highlighted that women are four times more susceptible to long COVID than men.

Women and girls may be more susceptible to long COVID due to their stronger immune responses. Women have been shown to have heightened IgG antibody production, which is protective in the early phase of COVID-19 but can prolong inflammation if persistently elevated. Studies have also found that inflammatory marker IL-6 is elevated months after COVID-19 infection, especially in women. Immune T cells are more active in women than in men. Women have two copies of the X chromosome, which contains many genes coding for the immune system, whereas men have only one. Also, women of reproductive age have stronger immune systems because they have adapted to support pregnancy. Ultimately, all of these factors contribute to a hyperactive and prolonged inflammatory reaction in

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

women that leads to the persistent fatigue, myalgias, cognitive changes and other symptoms that characterize long COVID. Women may also face persistent complications in cardiovascular and pulmonary function due to long COVID. In addition to multiple physical symptoms, women also experience psychological manifestations of long COVID. Depression, anxiety, memory issues, and sleep disturbances are common psychological consequences of long COVID. A survey reported an increase in depression during the pandemic among 83 percent of working women compared to 36 percent of working men. Financial stressors during the pandemic significantly impact women and compound mental health concerns.

Doctors also think that long COVID worsens the symptoms of perimenopause and menopause. Lower levels of oestrogen and testosterone appear to be the reason. The symptoms of both the menopause and long COVID can be very hard to tell apart and it's important that women get the right diagnosis and treatment.

The long-term symptoms of COVID-19 will impede women's ability to work. Women already face a high percentage of job loss in society, but now many women have reported difficulty entering the workforce due to brain fog, pain, and chronic exhaustion from long COVID. There is a fear of unemployment as more days are taken off to recover from symptoms. This further exacerbates COVID-19's disproportionate impact on women even beyond the health sphere. Unison need to be at the forefront in supporting and representing women members who are experiencing long COVID symptoms. Thanks to Unison many employers, have or are introducing policies, procedures and guidance relating to the Menopause and there should now be some dialogue about doing the same with regards long COVID.

With the above in mind, we are asking the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Conduct a survey of women members to identify workplace issues that are affecting those with long COVID.
- 2) Look into existing research on the impact for women of long COVID which can inform the producing of Unison guidance and factsheets for members.
- 3) Work with regional committees, branches to support representatives in negotiating a long COVID policy in the workplace.

### ***South East Region***

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#### **26. The Impact of the rise of the far right on Black women**

Conference notes that the rise of the far right, and the planned protests taking place at the end of October, presents a health and safety risk to Black Workers, in particular Black women in the workplace.

Misogynoir is used to describe the discrimination against those who have the intersection of being Black and a woman. During periods of heightened racial tension, Black women face unprecedented risks travelling to and from work, when lone working and within workplaces. There have been several reports of Black UNISON women being targeted by fascists as they travel to work. The threat of

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

violence is real and far too common. The presence of psychologically unsafe work environments is real. This is racism, but it also contains threat and risk, and it is a Health & Safety matter.

During the previous riots, UNISON Scotland produced a Black Worker safety action pack. The packs were sent to every branch in Scotland and workshops were delivered on how to utilise them. The pack included key actions that every branch and steward needed to undertake or call on employers undertake. These included:

- a) Asking branches to start allyship sign ups to show solidarity to Black workers.
- b) Asking branches to reach out to Black workers to let them know they are not alone and the branch can help raise concerns about safety with employers.
- c) Ensuring employers conduct proper risk assessments, which take all concerns seriously and properly mitigate risks.
- d) Asking employers to create safe spaces at work for people to talk about how this is affecting them (a good space for allies to learn how to support Black workers)
- e) Asking employers to issue statements to reassure Black workers on how they will keep them safe.

Conference calls upon National Women's Committee to work with:

- 1) National Black Members Committee to host webinars aimed at branches providing advice on how best to support Black women members
- 2) Regional women's committees to encourage branches to be proactive in working with their employers to help keep Black women safe during times of heightened racial tension.

***Scotland Region***

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### **27. Supporting Migrant Women Workers**

Conference recognises that UNISON recruits and seeks to support and organise migrant workers and that the most vulnerable of these workers are women, with a large percentage of these working in health and social care environments.

These members are being charged deductions for their accommodation and living costs which are not properly itemised on payslips, creating detrimental impacts on their finances and uncertainty of what the deduction are attributed to.

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

Members are often afraid to raise an issue for fear that they might lose their job and their right to residence.

Rapid staff turnover leads to difficulties with recruiting and organising these vulnerable workers who, usually, have no access to a tribunal as they have less than two years employment, often their employment depends on them being employed so a loss of employment could lead to a loss of residence.

Employers will continue to take advantage of the position until employees gain rights from day one, Meanwhile, the more training, knowledge, and awareness UNISON Women activists have, the better UNISON will be in supporting these members.

Conference calls on the National women's committee

To work with other bodies of UNISON and other appropriate partners to identify members this affects and to support them as far as possible; and,

To work with Learning and Organising Services to make appropriate training available for all UNISON stewards to assist in supporting and representing these vulnerable members.

### ***West Midlands Region***

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#### **28. Working Women, with joint mortgages and the lack of support to flee domestic abuse.**

The majority of survivors of Domestic Abuse are forced to leave the house they share with the perpetrator to access safety but securing new or even temporary accommodation can be complicated, expensive or, in some cases, impossible. Especially if the survivor is named on a mortgage.

One in eight UK women who held a joint mortgage in the last two years experienced joint mortgage economic abuse from a current or former partner – equivalent to over 750,000 people, according to a new report by the charity Surviving Economic Abuse.

- a) Over three quarters (78%) felt unable to leave their partner or an unsafe living arrangement due to abuse through the joint mortgage.
- b) Nearly half (49%) had to cut back on utilities or go without essentials, such as food, clothing, or toiletries, to cover monthly mortgage repayments.
- c) Almost nine in 10 (89%) experienced negative mental health impacts because of the abuse, such as anxiety, depression, panic attacks, or suicidal thoughts.

A recent Women's Aid Hidden Housing Crisis report sheds light on survivors' complex housing journeys and the barriers they face this includes a shortage of housing stock and high Cost of Private Rent.

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

Victim-survivors owning their own home meant they can't access the housing benefit required to cover the rent while remaining contractually responsible for mortgage payments on the unsafe home they had to flee. While some victim-survivors have been forced into immediate and long-term homelessness to escape the abuser, others shared that their only option was to return to the abuser,

Conference we call upon the National Women's committee to work with Labour Link, Regions and Branches to lobby MP's and Local Councils to make refuges and housing more accessible for women with joint mortgages or joint tenancy agreements.

***UNISON Northern Energy***

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### **29. Sexual Harassment has no home in the Workplace**

Sexual harassment is sadly a common issue in the workplace. A 2023 poll by the TUC showed that 3 in 5 women have experienced harassment at work, rising to almost two-thirds of women aged 25 to 34. It can manifest in many ways from inappropriate comments to telling sexually offensive jokes to serious sexual assault.

Sadly, there are too many incidents that go unreported.

This conference believes that we have the right to feel safe in our work environments as well as feel valued and respected. It is the responsibility of employers, employees and leaders alike to make sure our workplace is somewhere that has zero tolerance for harassment.

On the 26th of October 2024 the law changed and all employees now need to take positive steps to prevent sexual harassment, but how many workplaces actually have policies in place?

- 1) A Sexual Harassment Policy should clearly define unacceptable behaviours, outline how to report incidents and guarantee protection for those who come forward.
- 2) All staff should have regular training to recognise what it looks like and how to prevent sexual harassment happening in the workplace.
- 3) Support systems should be put in place including counselling services. Raise awareness where possible and have an ongoing dialogue with all sectors.

Conference calls upon the National Women's Committee to work with the NEC to produce guidance for branches on the new legislation and on how to negotiate a Sexual Harassment Policy with employers.

Sexual harassment has no home in the workplace and it is the responsibility of every individual to ensure safe and inclusive environments for all our employees.

***Surrey County (L)***

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

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### **30. Stalking**

Conference notes that stalking affects approximately 1 in 5 women during their lifetime. Despite the prevalence, many women do not report stalking incidents to the police. It's estimated that only about 20% of stalking cases are reported, often due to fear of not being believed or concerns about further victimisation.

While stalking does not always involve physical violence, it can escalate into more severe forms of violence. In many cases, stalking is perpetrated by someone known to the victim, often an ex-partner or acquaintance. Research indicates that about 60% of women stalked are targeted by former intimate partners and are at a heightened risk of harm.

Conference, studies have shown that women who are victims of stalking experience high levels of psychological distress, with many reporting anxiety, depression, and trauma. The persistent nature of stalking can create a cycle of fear and disruption for women that significantly impacts quality of life, sense of safety at work and at home.

Conference, concerningly, in UK law there is not a clear legal definition of stalking, and this can make it difficult for women to seek protection and justice, often leaving them feel powerless.

We call on the National Women's Committee to:

Work with the NEC and all the relevant structures in our union, including labour link to advocate for a clear legal definition of stalking in the UK.

Work with LAOS to develop information materials for members and branches to raise awareness of stalking and signpost to organisations that support victims of stalking.

***South Tyneside Local Government***

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### **31. International Women's Day**

Conference recognises the significance of International Women's Day (IWD) as we mark the 50th anniversary of its official commemoration by the United Nations on the 8 March. As trade unionists and advocates for women's rights, we must take this opportunity to reflect on the progress made, the challenges that persist, and our collective responsibility to advance gender equality in our workplaces and communities.

International Women's Day celebrates women's achievements, raises awareness about gender inequality, and promotes women's rights across the globe. Over the past five decades, we have witnessed significant strides in many areas, including workforce participation, legislative reforms, and increased awareness of gender-based violence. However, despite these advancements, women continue to face systemic barriers, including unequal pay, discrimination, and insufficient representation in leadership positions.

## 2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

We call on the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Work with the relevant structures in our union to promote International Women's Day across all structures of the union.
- 2) Work with LAOS to create a set of webinars that promotes the progress that has been made on women's equality over the last 50 years and the work that is still to be done.

### *South Tyneside Local Government*

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#### **32. Women and Children are Paying the Price in Haiti**

Haiti became the world's first black-led republic and the first independent Caribbean state when it threw off French colonial control and slavery in the early 19th Century. But independence came at a crippling cost. It had to pay reparations to France, which demanded compensation for former slave owners. Chronic instability, dictatorships and natural disasters in recent decades have left it as the poorest nation in the Americas.

Conference notes with concern that the socio-economic situation of the population of Haiti continues to deteriorate. For the past three years, Haiti has been facing an upsurge in acts of violence of all kinds organized by armed gangs fighting for control of territories. Armed gangs in Port-au-Prince occupy the neighbourhoods, looting, raping, killing, and burning houses.

Haiti has the largest number of internal displacements globally due to crime-related violence. The UN records that 578,074 internal displacements happened in the first half of 2024, which is more than double the figure from 2022. Among those forcibly displaced are 310,000 women and girls and 180,000 children. The UN also highlighted that most camps for displaced people have no lighting or locks in key areas such as bedrooms and toilets, while residents are exposed to daily threats from the gangs. The constant danger of stray bullets and other security risks further underscore the urgent need for improved protection in these sites.

Gender-based violence has reached alarming levels, with aggression against women and girls, and more specifically rape, being used in most internally displaced persons camps as a deliberate tactic to control access to humanitarian assistance. Children live in an environment that is ill-suited to their needs; they find themselves out of school, malnourished, and exposed to the unhealthy acts and behaviours of adult predators.

Conference is concerned that millions of foreign dollars has been pledged to support military intervention. This money should be spent on rebuilding strong public services to serve the people, not on military adventures. It would be better spent providing security and safe haven for women and children.

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to

- 1) Work with the International Committee of the National Executive Council (NEC) and National Black Members Committee to raise the of plight Haitian women and children within UNISON and the wider trade union movement
- 2) Ask that the NEC consider making a financial donation to the Haiti Emergency Relief Fund
- 3) Work with Labour Link to raise the plight of women and children in Haiti with the UNISON group of MPs

***Scotland Region***

# 2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

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## Motions Ruled Out of Order

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Beyond Remit of the Conference

### **Upskilling for an Ageing Workforce**

Conference – recent reports have highlighted how older women are hitting a glass ceiling. According to BUPA over 900,000 women have left their jobs because of the menopause and the lack of workplace support. However, there is a more subtle pressure. Older women increasingly feel they are missing out on promotion or managerial posts because they are not considered to be up to speed with IT and AI skills, and don't understand the needs of a younger workforce. Often, this is at a time when their body is under immense pressure from the menopause and they are suffering from a lack of self-confidence and unable mentally to fight their corner for promotion.

We therefore ask conference to:

- 1) Work with national women's committee and unison academy to develop courses specific to supporting menopausal women to learn new skills eg beginning with a confidence and assertiveness and leading to the offer of courses involving IT and AI learning and other courses deemed necessary
2. To encourage branches to instigate mutual mentoring sessions for reps so that individual skills are shared and valued, and to look at the role learning reps could play in this.
3. Encourage women's officers to work with employers to develop promotion development courses to enable staff, especially women, to learn and to become qualified.
4. To Report back to National Women's Conference 2026

***North Cumbria Northumberland &  
Tyne & Wear Health***

### **Improving Delegate Safety at Conference Accommodation**

A Women's fringe event at the 2024 National Delegate Conference heard alarming first-hand testimonies and experiences from several lone, or first-time, female delegates who had been placed in unsafe or substandard accommodation. Unsuitable accommodation potentially places lone delegates in vulnerable situations and at risk of assault.

As an inclusive lay-led union of over one million women members we should be looking to break down barriers to activism and conference attendance for all members, but especially for women, and low paid women members. Unfortunately, some current practices work against that aspiration.

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

This motion calls on the National Women's Committee to create and disseminate best practice guidance to Branches to use when choosing accommodation for conferences and seminar meetings.

Guidance will include but not be limited to;

- Placing safety of delegates as the first consideration in decision making when considering travel and accommodation options.
- Choosing accommodation at, or in close proximity to, the event venue.
- Preferring not to use private room rentals whenever possible.
- Guidance on Branches' ability to issue expenses prior to travel rather than requiring delegates to apply for reimbursement after their costs have already been incurred and borne.

Raising awareness that Branch Executives have;

- a responsibility to choose suitable delegate accommodation considering safety as well as cost.
- the discretion to choose delegate accommodation above the prescribed Rule Book price limits where no suitable accommodation is available within the limit.
- Additionally, this motion calls on the National Women's Committee to investigate the possibility of a conference buddying scheme, and if viable, publicise that scheme, along with ways of raising concerns once at conference, particularly out of hours.

***Teesside University***

### **Impact of Lone Working on Disabled Women**

Conference notes the impact of lone working on disabled women can be particularly significant, as they face unique challenges related to accessibility, safety, health, and mental well-being.

Lone working refers to situations where individuals work in isolation, without direct supervision or immediate colleagues, which can be in various settings such as remote work from home or in physical environments (e.g., retail, healthcare, or caregiving roles).

Key areas where disabled women may be disproportionately affected:

- a) Safety and Security Risks
- b) Physical Vulnerability: Disabled women may face greater risks when working alone, especially if they have mobility impairments or other disabilities that limit their ability to respond to emergencies or potential threats. This could involve physical risks in the workplace (e.g., falls, accidents) or threats from clients or the public in more exposed job roles (e.g., in care work or customer-facing environments).

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

ii. Lack of Emergency Support: In situations where quick action is needed, disabled women working alone may not have immediate access to help. This lack of support can lead to heightened anxiety and an increased sense of vulnerability.

### b) Mental Health and Isolation

- i) Increased Loneliness: Working alone can exacerbate feelings of isolation, which is particularly impactful for disabled women who may already face social isolation due to disability. This can lead to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, or stress.
- ii) Challenges with Remote Work: Remote working environments, while offering flexibility, can limit disabled women's opportunities for social interaction and collaboration. If appropriate accommodations are not in place, this isolation can contribute to a sense of detachment and disconnection from the workplace.

### c) Accessibility Challenges

- i) Workplace Adaptations: Lone working might make it harder for disabled women to request or access reasonable adjustments in their work environments. Whether working remotely or in physical spaces, they may not have access to the same resources (e.g., assistive technology, physical accessibility) that would be available in a typical office or team-based setting.
- ii) Technology Barriers: Disabled women working alone may face difficulties accessing or using certain technologies required for their roles, particularly if those technologies are not designed with accessibility in mind. Without immediate support, these challenges can lead to frustration and underperformance.

### d) Health and Well-Being

- i) Managing Health Conditions Alone: For disabled women with ongoing medical conditions, lone working can make it harder to manage health needs. Without coworkers or supervisors nearby, taking breaks or managing symptoms may become more difficult.
- ii) Workload and Pressure: Lone workers often face increased pressure to manage their responsibilities without the same support as team-based workers. For disabled women, this can lead to overexertion, stress, and burnout, especially if they feel they need to compensate for their disability or prove their capabilities in isolation.

### e) Workplace Discrimination and Inequity

- i) Lack of Representation: Disabled women working alone may struggle to advocate for themselves, particularly in environments where they are isolated from coworkers. This can lead to experiences of workplace discrimination or unequal treatment, such as being passed over for promotions or denied reasonable accommodations.
- ii) Gendered and Disability Discrimination: Disabled women may face compounded challenges due to both their gender and disability. In lone working environments,

## 2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

where oversight and accountability may be reduced, they could be more vulnerable to unfair treatment, harassment, or lack of support.

### f) Reduced Career Development Opportunities

- i) **Fewer Networking Opportunities:** Lone working often limits informal networking, mentoring, and professional development opportunities, which are essential for career growth. Disabled women, in particular, may miss out on these chances to connect with colleagues, receive feedback, or access leadership opportunities.
- ii) **Difficulty in Highlighting Achievements:** In lone working environments, disabled women may find it harder to showcase their work, advocate for promotions, or receive recognition for their contributions, which can hinder career progression.

### g) Lack of Accessible Support Systems

- i) **Inadequate Reporting Mechanisms:** If disabled women experience difficulties or harassment while working alone, they may have limited avenues to report these issues. A lack of support structures can make it difficult for them to raise concerns and have them addressed.
- ii) **Insufficient Mental Health Support:** Lone workers often have fewer options for mental health support in the workplace. For disabled women, who may already experience higher rates of mental health issues due to discrimination and isolation, this lack of support can exacerbate their struggles.

### h) Impact on Work-Life Balance

- i) **Blurred Boundaries Between Work and Personal Life:** For disabled women working from home, lone working can blur the lines between professional and personal life, making it harder to manage time effectively. Disabled women may also struggle to balance caregiving responsibilities or medical needs with the demands of work in isolated settings.
- ii) **Overwork and Fatigue:** The pressure to perform independently can lead to overwork, especially for those with disabilities who may need more rest and recovery time. Without a clear division of work hours, disabled women working alone can face increased fatigue and burnout.

Conference calls upon the National Women's Committee to work with the National Executive Council, the National Disabled Members Committee and other appropriate parts of the union to:

- 1) Support regions and branch workplace conveners to make employers ensure that disabled women working alone have access to sufficient support systems, including regular check-ins, accessible reporting mechanisms, and mental health resources
- 2) Lobby employers for access to accessible technology for lone workers and adapted workspaces to accommodate their disabilities.

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

- 3) Work with employers to implement clear safety protocols for disabled lone workers, including emergency procedures, personal alarms, or access to immediate assistance.
- 4) Campaign for Flexible Work Options, including offering more flexibility in terms of work hours and locations which can help disabled women balance their health needs with their work responsibilities.
- 5) Develop and update training resources to enable UNISON, in partnership with employers, and advocacy groups to raise awareness about the specific challenges faced by disabled women in lone working conditions and ensure policies are inclusive and protective

Conference, by addressing these challenges, employers can create safer, more supportive, and equitable working conditions for disabled women in lone working environments.

### ***National Disabled Members Committee***

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#### **Beyond the Remit of the Committee**

#### **Violence against women in the workplace**

Conference notes that sexual harassment primarily affects women and girls, disproportionately targeted at the most vulnerable workers. Young, disabled, Black and LGBT+ women are most at risk as they are more likely to be marginalised in their workplace and lack power.

Conference welcomes the publication of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) consultation on the technical guidance on sexual harassment and harassment at work.

Research undertaken by the TUC has shown there is a link between working in a public facing role or public facing sector and being exposed to third party harassment. Where the perpetrator is a third party, studies further show that women are even more reluctant to report the incident because they believe it will not be dealt with in the same way as it would were the harasser an employee.

Between 2018/19 and 2022/23 violence against women related crimes rose by 37%, with these crimes becoming more complex and multiplied with online incidents of harassment, revenge porn and stalking becoming more common.

Conference acknowledges the introduction of the Online Safety Act but more need to be done to target online driven misogyny and violence against women in order to rid society of sexism and sexual violence. Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology is being used to copy women's faces from their social media or LinkedIn profiles to then create deep fake porn photos/videos which look extremely real and only an AI specialist would be able to tell they are fake.

Currently there is no legislation in the UK to protect women from this as it the technology is so new and not properly understood.

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to:

- Produce guidance for women suffering from harassment in the workplace and /or from home outlining assistance available and signposting to relevant support agencies.
- Produce a model violence against women policy for use by branches and encourage them to work with employers to sign UNISON's Violence at Work Charter
- Produce a model policy for use by branches encouraging them to work with employers to negotiate guidance to protect women workers from harassment and abuse via AI.
- Work with Labour Link to ratify the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 190, which recognises the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment.
- Work with Labour Link to lobby and work with government to draft appropriate legislation to protect women from AI abuse.

### ***Yorkshire - Humberside Region***

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Could Place the Union in Legal Jeopardy

### **Women and the impact of neurodiversity**

Not printed on the advice of the legal officer

### ***Yorkshire - Humberside Region***

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In Breach of Rule D.2.12 Employment of Staff

### **PTSD Awareness**

This conference notes that PTSD can occur to any person regardless of ethnicity, nationality, gender, occupation, culture and at any age.

Trauma can be triggered by events such as road traffic incidents, experiencing life threatening illness; bereavement witnessing suicide or attempted suicide, natural disasters, or terrorist attacks.

The myth is that only those who serve in the military or emergency services will be affected. Evidence disproves this.

50% of people will experience trauma at some point in their life. The majority will only experience short term distress due to a traumatic event however 20% of people will go onto develop PTSD (equivalent to 1 in 10 people)

Women may experience PTSD differently from men and will experience symptoms for a longer period before diagnosis and treatment.

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

Women who experience abuse whether physical, emotional, verbal, sexual can suffer long term impact on their mental health, such as depression, anxiety, hypervigilance, disassociation, and avoidance. They are more likely to be given a diagnoses of Emotionally Unstable Personality disorder than men.

PTSD is associated with impairment in a person's ability to function in social or family life including occupational instability, marital problems, family discord, and difficulty parenting. This can lead to women not seeking help for fear of losing their children and their employment.

Many PTSD sufferers feel emotionally numb, have trouble communicating with others about what they are feeling. It can lead to problems with memory and cognition and increased risk of maladaptive coping strategies including drug or alcohol misuse and self-harm

The treatment for PTSD is not a one size fits all and specialist treatment and support is difficult to access.

We call upon conference and the National Women's committee to:

Raise awareness of how PTSD affects women.

Campaign for accessible treatments that are person centred for women.

Work with officers to produce guidance for women on PTSD awareness.

Promote a campaign of PTSD awareness and how it impacts women within the wider union, regions and branches.

### ***South East Region***

#### **Women's health inequalities: It happens every month!**

Period poverty is on the rise, with an estimated 2.8 million people affected.

We know that good menstruation health is important and is a valuable marker for overall health. It's no secret to us women and people who menstruate that we can sometimes feel shame about menstruation, and the stigma about periods prevents people from talking about this topic. This creates barriers and a dread that people may face when managing their periods because they do not have the means to do so, with consequences for their life opportunities and gender equality.

In 2025 no one should be suffering from Period Poverty and yet statistics show this is the case as the cost-of-living crisis continues. We want women and people to feel supported when managing menstruation and this should be done with dignity.

UNISON Newcastle City Branch is investigating menstrual dignity at work. Our campaign plans to reduce the shame, stigma and taboo of periods.

## 2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

Some Key facts from Binti Period Organisation:

- 41% of women affected by period poverty keep sanitary pads or tampons in for longer to save money.
- The average person who menstruates spends between £10-£15 per month on period products, not including those who also have to supply for any dependants.
- Many of those affected by period poverty said they were prioritising other everyday basics over the period products they need. 60% said they needed to prioritise food and 48% having to prioritise gas/electricity.
- 24% sacrificed period products for themselves so they could afford period products for their dependant.
- 14% of those affected said they have avoided or missed work during their period.
- Women spend a significant proportion of their lives in ill health and disability when compared with men. (Department of Health and Social Care).

We at Newcastle City Branch asked our members how menstruation impacted on them when in the work. We did this by creating a survey. We had an immediate 127 responses. The quickest response time for any survey we have produced in the branch. Indeed, whilst this is an amazing response when the Department of Health and Social Care put out a call for evidence in 2022, 100k responses were received from Women across the country. And over 400 written submissions from organisation and experts in Health and Care. The Women's Health Strategy for England policy paper recognised that not enough focus is placed on women-specific issues and women are underrepresented when it comes to important clinical trials. Over 80% of women's pain is dismissed by a health care professional.

Did people in Newcastle follow the national statistics?

What did Women from Newcastle City Branch tell us? – Well, there was no new statistics or facts. We heard harrowing stories and pressures put on people who have regular menstruation. 81% told us they have monthly or regular heavy periods and 58% have had to ask a colleague or friend at work for period products as they have been 'caught short'. People went further to share their experience.

- 26% of people left a sanitary produce in place for longer than they should have and hoped it would last.
- 35% of people used something else such as toilet paper.
- 38% Left work to purchase products.

And over half of the people we spoke to said that when they leave work to purchase products it can take up to 20 minutes. This is a significant loss to the employer and service delivery adding further stress to our members. Surprisingly, members who completed our survey said they didn't struggle to buy products as it is not a financial pressure for them, they did say that having sanitary products available in the

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

workplace would provide greater support their health and wellbeing. 98% said YES, we need to see free sanitary products in the workplace. Why shouldn't we! It happens every month.

Toilet paper is free at work – why shouldn't period products be free!

We know that when using toilet paper at work instead of period products women become distracted and feel uncomfortable. In fact, 46% of women said they worry about bleeding through their clothes.

**FACT:** When free sanitary products are provided in public toilets and/or workplaces it reduces the overall cost of toilet roll supplied.

When it happens every month, it is a different experience for people. The monthly pressure impacts vary however no one should have to be in a position of stress and anxiety about a naturally occurring menstruation whether this is cost, missing work, or being overlooked for opportunities.

We therefore call on National Women's Committee to work with LAOS, Branches, regions, and regional women's networks/committees as appropriate to:

- Encourage branches to work with regional Officers to investigate and research what is available to women members in their region. Share these findings with women to help reduce inequalities in relation to menstruation dignity.
- Support branches to reach out to women members in their branches and collate their views and experiences to normalise conversations about menstruation and give women the confidence to talk about period dignity.
- Encourage branches to collate any evidence they have which supports links between poverty and health inequalities; specifically, the impact of women's menstruation on their ability to carry out their role in the workplace and share good practice.
- Campaign to raise awareness of period dignity. Let's stamp out the shame, stigma, and taboo of periods.

## 2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

- Support branches to work with employers around BSI standards to improve provision for women within the workplace.
- Bring findings to UNISON Women's conference 2026.

*Newcastle City*

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Not Competent

### **Tackling the Dangers of Online Pornography**

Conference recognises that the rise of online pornography is proving to have a severe detrimental impact on young people and how they view relationships.

Information from a survey of 1,000 young people aged 18-21 undertaken by the Children's Commissioner for England shows the following:

Most children have viewed pornography as young as 13, and some are seeing it at the age of 8 or 9. These children are likely to have lower self-esteem as adults. By age 9 10% of children have seen pornography, 27% by age 11 and 79% have seen content including sexual violence by the age 18. Most of this is viewed on social media. This leads to the real danger of young people viewing their relationships through the lens of, often sexually violent, pornography.

47% of young people stated that girls expect sex to involve physical aggression, and a further 42% stated that most girls "enjoy" acts of sexual aggression. With the increase in online pornography and the ease in which it can be viewed it is increasingly becoming the starting point for young people when it comes to sex - how to have sex and what to expect.

Pornography is not limited to dedicated adult sites; X (formerly Twitter) is the online platform where young people are most likely to view pornography. In today's world of online pornography depictions of degradation, sexual coercion, aggression and exploitation are commonplace and are disproportionately targeted against teenage girls. This is why this is an important issue for conference to address.

The Online Safety Bill was passed in October 2023. However, it only takes a few minutes searching on X to find hard core pornography so clearly more needs to be done.

Artificial Intelligence is fuelling a rise in deepfake pornography. Since 2019 there has been a 550% increase in the volume of deepfake pornography – a staggering 99% of the individuals targeted are women. Nearly 48% of surveyed US men have viewed deepfake pornography at least once and 74% said they do not feel guilty about it. Seven out of the top ten pornography websites host deepfake content. Whilst the majority of deepfake pornography videos feature celebrities, there is nothing to stop someone creating a deepfake pornography video with the image of any woman or young girl. It is obvious that more needs to be done to tackle this epidemic and it needs to be done now. Tech companies cannot be trusted with our children's welfare

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

as they will always put profits first, so regulators must do more as a matter of urgency.

Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Work with our Labour Link committee to lobby for much stronger regulations than the Online Safety Bill contains.
- 2) Work with all appropriate sections and groups within our union to campaign to raise awareness of the harm that online pornography causes.
- 3) Work with appropriate sections of our union to educate young people on this issue.

### ***East Lancashire Health***

#### **Stats and the impact upon Female Workers**

The economic impact across the country has seen many companies having to make cuts to workforces and streamline systems. As companies take these steps to ensure they are able to carry on operating, employees face increased pressure to meet the demands of the business and customers.

Companies use the sharing of statistics within a business to drive productivity and a way of monitoring efficiency. The stats could be used to show how many calls are handled, emails answered, tasks completed throughout the day.

Whilst we see the importance of ensuring a business is able to monitor its performance. It is clear that when these statistics are shared openly within a team setting, it can have a negative impact upon the employees. By sharing these statistics, it can lead to increased pressure within the dynamics of the team and a lack of understanding for the individuals.

For the individual they could be somebody who has a long-term health condition, neurodiversity and many other personal situations which impact upon their performance. Women often work part-time to balance caring responsibilities and many are impacted by changes through the menopause. All of which should be supported through Reasonable Adjustments.

By openly sharing statistics this can be applying pressure on the employee to disclose their personal circumstances to other employees when they may choose for this to remain confidential. Their situation should be something that they feel supported in and not isolated or pressurized further for those differences.

Conference we ask that the National Women's Committee issues guidance to help support Stewards and Branches to eliminate the open sharing of statistics where this is highlighting individuals' performance to more than the individual themselves.

### ***South West Utilities***

# 2025 National Women's Conference

## UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

### Black Women's Maternity Care

Conference is extremely concerned that in 2024 Black women are still five times more likely to die in childbirth or shortly afterwards. Women of mixed ethnicity have 3 times the risk, and Asian women almost twice the risk. Black women are also at an increased risk of having a pre-term birth, stillbirth, neonatal death or a baby born with low birth weight. The government acknowledges these facts, along with the fact that the disparity in maternal death between Black women and white women is widening<sup>1</sup>.

Data from 2019-2021 used in a study by Mothers and Babies: Reducing Risk through Audits and Confidential Enquiries across the UK (Mbrace UK) found that maternal mortality rates for Black women have been largely unchanged for the last decade or more<sup>2</sup>.

Conference is appalled that despite pledges from the Minister for Equalities, Kemi Badenoch, and the Minister for Patient Safety, Suicide Prevention, and Mental Health, Nadine Dorries, the Health Secretary Steve Barclay, said in 2023, "We do not believe a target and strategy is the best approach towards progress"<sup>3</sup>.

Conference applauds the work of the Women and Equalities Committee, which hit back at the Government decision to ultimately not set racial targets and accused NHS leadership of underestimating the extent to which racism plays a role in perpetuating inequalities. Chair of the Women and Equalities Committee, Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP, said: "The Government's commitment to ending maternal health disparities is welcome, as is its promise to scope out a review of maternity staff training and update us on the progress of the Maternity Disparities Taskforce. However, I am afraid its response stops short of the significant action we need to end these appalling disparities in maternal deaths."

An article in the Lancet in January 2023 acknowledged that "the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to the racial reckoning that took place in the summer of 2020, has placed racial disparities at the forefront of contemporary discourses. Mounting research suggests that Black women bear a disproportionate burden of global maternal mortality and morbidity rates. These disparities in maternal health have persisted through the coronavirus pandemic...". Conference believes that epistemic injustice, defined as unfairly preventing someone from properly communicating their ideas or making sense of their experiences, is endemic in the NHS<sup>4</sup>. Examples of this in maternity care include patients having concerns about their health and their pregnancy dismissed or treated as trivial, being passed off as "dramatic", questions being brushed aside or not taken seriously, and practitioners not taking patients' pain seriously. This happens even in severe cases, such as instances where c-section stitches are bleeding and infected.

Conference recognises that the impact on migrant women may be worse. Research by the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) found that exemptions from charging were not working. Vulnerable women were being wrongly invoiced for care and Trusts were aggressively pursuing debts from women who are manifestly unable to pay. This is despite the fact that, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), one in four migrant women is a survivor of sexual violence, and forced migration, or may be a survivor of female genital mutilation (FGM).

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

Conference believes that the time for action is now, and calls on the national women's committee to:

- 1) Work with the National Black Members Committee to gain a deeper understanding of Black women's experiences of maternity and post-natal care.
- 2) Work with NHS employers to develop comprehensive strategies in respect of diverse recruitment. (probably not realistic, but welcome comments or changes).
- 3) To campaign with Maternity Action to protect and improve maternity care and support for Black women.
- 4) To encourage branches and regions to affiliate to Maternity Action and ask that they consider inviting a speaker to their Branch / Region to highlight the work of Maternity Action.
- 5) Work with Labour Link to lobby the UK Government to implement a comprehensive strategy to address the issue.

### ***South East Region***

#### **Oppose the silencing of women in Afghanistan by the Taliban**

Conference agrees that the subjugation of women in Afghanistan by the Taliban rule is abhorrent. Freedoms such as how to dress, where to work and to be educated have been forcibly removed from the women of Afghanistan.

In August 2024 a new raft of "Vice and Virtue" laws (<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/article/2024/aug/26/taliban-bar-on-afghan-women-speaking-in-public-un-afghanistan>) were announced by the Taliban, further stripping women of their freedom. In this new law women are now no longer able to speak or have their voices heard in public. They even can be punished for being overheard speaking or singing in their own family home. This is a violation of fundamental human rights, entrenching gender inequality and curbing women's participation in public, social, and political life.

On October 5th 2024 the European Court of Justice ruled gender and nationality alone are sufficient for Afghan women to seek asylum in EU countries. At the time of writing the UK government has not followed suit.

By preventing women from speaking in public, the Taliban are silencing women's voices. It is the position of Conference that all women's voices should be heard, raised and celebrated, so it is our responsibility to speak out against these injustices and take action to support Afghan women in reclaiming their rights and their voices.

Therefore conference calls upon the SGE to

- 1) Publicly condemn the Taliban's Vice and Virtue laws restricting women's speech and public participation.

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

- 2) Work with Labour Link to lobby the government to bring asylum guidance around women from Afghanistan in line with the ECJ ruling in October 2024

*University of Sunderland*

### **Women In Gaza**

This Conference notes the report produced by Oxfam in October 2024 that stated, “more women and children have been killed in Gaza by the Israeli military over the past year than the equivalent period of any conflict over the past two decades.

Conservative figures show this to be more than 6,000 women and 11,000 children. This is also highlighted the UN Children and Armed Conflict reports over the last 18 years, which demonstrate no other conflict resulted in such high numbers of children killed.

Data from Action on Armed Violence, also cited by Oxfam, shows that the Israeli army hit civilian infrastructure across Gaza with explosive weapons on average once every three hours since the conflict started. Outside the 6 day ‘humanitarian pause, there have only been 2 days without bombing in Gaza up to 1 October 2024.

Israeli explosive weapons hit on average homes every 4 hours, tents and temporary shelters every 17 hours, schools and hospitals every 4 days and aid distribution points and warehouses every 15 days.

The impact on women has been immense. Many have suddenly become single parents and carers for wounded family members. The collapse of health provision as hospitals are attacked and unable to function has had a devastating impact on pregnant and breastfeeding women.

Throughout the last year, the Israeli government has committed serious violations of international law. Infrastructure essential for civilian survival has been targeted, with Gazans being forcibly displaced numerous times to safe zones. These safe zones have failed to meet basic humanitarian needs such as food, clean water and shelter, and are regularly bombed.

The record number of women and children killed in Gaza does not include the many thousands unidentified, missing or believed to have died under the rubble of bombed buildings.

Conference believes that although there has been the suspension of about 10% of arms licences, the UK government continues to allow the export of arms to Israel despite knowing that they risk being used to continue this bloodshed. In particular, by continuing to allow the delivery of F-35 components for Israeli fighter jets, the UK is potentially complicit in the plausible genocide being committed in Gaza.

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to work with the International Committee and any other relevant bodies in UNISON to continue to campaign for:

- an immediate, permanent ceasefire
- the release of all hostages, including Palestinians unlawfully detained by administrative detention
- an end to arms sales and export licences to Israel
- effective boycott, divestment and sanctions

### ***Camden UNISON***

#### **Women's Health Inequality in the North East**

Conference, the report by Health Equity North highlights the vast health inequalities faced by women in the North of England, exacerbated by socio-economic factors, geographical disparities, and systemic discrimination.

Key findings of the report indicate that women in the North experience significantly poorer health outcomes compared to their counterparts in other regions, including higher rates of mental health issues, chronic illnesses, and barriers to accessing healthcare services.

Conference, the impact of these inequalities is not only detrimental to the health and wellbeing of women but also affects their economic stability, employment opportunities, and overall quality of life.

Conference believes that health is a fundamental right, and all women should have equal access to quality healthcare services, regardless of their geographical location or socio-economic status. The findings of the report underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions to address these inequalities and ensure that women in the North are not left behind.

Conference, we have a critical role to play in advocating for policy changes that promote health equity, including increased funding for healthcare services, improved mental health support, and greater investment in community health initiatives.

We call upon the National Women's Committee to work with Labour Link at both a regional and national level to campaign for fair and proportionate funding for women in the Northeast.

### ***Northern Region***

#### **Women's Health is a Workplace Issue**

Conference is concerned that while awareness of menopause as a workplace issue is improving, other women's health issues are still not recognised in the same way.

Health and wellbeing issues such as cancer testing and Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD) are dismissed as 'women's problems' and not a workplace issue.

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

Early diagnosis and treatment of cancer can save time, money and, most importantly, lives but many employers don't offer paid time off for appointments for vital tests like mammograms and cervical screening.

These tests are essential but for some of our members, including disabled members with conditions such as Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) or cystic fibrosis, they can be painful and distressing.

When you're called for a test, you need to go as soon as possible. But this is difficult if your employer doesn't offer paid time off to attend these appointments during working hours.

Some employers allow paid time off for hospital appointments but not for travel, waiting or recovery time. A mammogram takes around 10 minutes but with travel, waiting and recovery time you may need to be away from work for up to half a day.

Most employers won't allow paid time off for a 'doctor's appointment', insisting that these can be made outside of 'normal' working hours. Cervical screening tests are usually carried out at a GP surgery and employer's unfairly treat them as doctor's appointments. But while a GP surgery may be open early, late or even at the weekend this is usually only for general appointments. Specialist clinics like cervical cancer screening are usually carried out by a nurse during 'normal' working hours.

Some women, especially low-paid women, are delaying or ignoring these appointments because they can't afford to take time off work, while others are being forced to use annual leave. This is not acceptable.

PMDD is a severe form of premenstrual syndrome (PMS) that affects between 3-8% of menstruating people. It is not just stomach cramp and mood swings. It causes extreme physical and mental symptoms including anxiety, depression, fatigue and cognitive problems. People with PMDD can be considered as disabled under the Equality Act.

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) affects how ovaries work. PCOS symptoms include irregular periods, severe pain, even when the person is not menstruating, dizzy spells and confusion. It can also cause other conditions including obesity, sleep apnoea and type 2 diabetes. There is no cure and only limited treatment for PCOS. People with PCOS can be considered as disabled under the Equality Act, especially if they have other linked conditions.

Many employers don't treat people with PMDD or PCOS as disabled. Even if an employer does have a Disability Leave policy this is unlikely to apply to people with PMDD or PCOS.

Employers rarely recognise PMDD or PCOS as a workplace issue. Instead, they are often dismissed as 'women's problems' or the subject of 'workplace banter'. This attitude increases the stigma around menstruation and reproductive health leading to increased mental health issues including work related stress and anxiety for people with these conditions.

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

We know that some of our members are reluctant to tell their employers that they have these conditions. If they need to take time off work, it is recorded as general sickness absence rather than disability related leave. This can lead to them being sanctioned under sickness absence procedures and can have a detrimental impact in redundancy selection procedures. This is not acceptable.

Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to work with the National Disabled Members Committee to:

- 1) Campaign for paid time off for all health screening appointments including for travel, waiting and recovery time
- 2) Launch a campaign for PCOS and PMDD to be treated as a workplace issue
- 3) Produce guidance for Branches to use to negotiate women's health policies that includes issues relating to health screening and menstrual and reproductive health

### ***National Disabled Members Committee***

#### **Supporting Women Members in the negotiation of non-disclosure agreements following workplace discrimination**

This NW women's conference recognises the excellent work of the representatives at workplace, branch and regional level who all contribute to the support for a member who has experienced or is going through any form of workplace discrimination.

Frankly, we couldn't do it without them.

Good support is particularly required where a member's mental health is additionally negatively impacted. In these cases, further support, understanding and careful management will be required, to recognise the fragility of the member's mind, in relaying information relating to the case management, its negotiations, and acceptance of advice regarding the most appropriate ways forward. Previous motions to National delegates conference have noted that it would aid both member and representative to have a source of professional support regarding mental health, to call upon at such times. For women who have been survivors of abuse and where there is misogyny, this may be doubly, and triply, impactful. Where there is a dimension of race (e.g. misogynoir), we see the double whammy of intersectionality as described by Kimberly Crenshaw.

The Worker Protection Act 2023 (Amendment Equality Act 2010) outlines a new duty on employers to provide safer working environments and that reasonable steps must be taken to proactively prevent sexual harassment.

With this in mind, as a member strives to have their point of view heard, it can be perceived that the employer recommendation to negotiate a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) as part of a settlement, evades the justice the members truly seek. NDA's silence the member, preventing them from 'speaking out' in the process, and this can exacerbate the mental ill health impact as they move forward with their lives post job exit.

## 2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

As the process ends the member is left with nowhere to turn. What do we offer to heal this broken member who feels unable to face the workplace again? We need to move to discourage the use of NDA's where a financial settlement is so dependent upon it. Recent landmark cases cross union show this is possible. If it has been argued that the silencing clause does not have to be any part of the agreement.

Further, anecdotally, in many cases of discrimination, there are those who speak about the settlement as being onerous to their future prospects, with some members being clearly instructed to seek permission to have future dealings with people from the same industry without their previous employer permission and an almost 'blacklisting' taking place, aspects which have been left unchallenged. The ability to continue in friendship with previous colleagues has been restricted and even prevented. All of which diminishes their ability to heal, as they must remain in the state of 'unresolved' by not being permitted to 'speak out'. The U.S. "Me Too" movement has documented the overall long-term impact of 'keeping the silence'.

Many people use the terminology 'silence is compliance' and there is real concern and even guilt, that by doing what's best for themselves in exiting a workplace silently, that the behaviour experienced within that workplace will continue, something that a woman has to live with. We need to know more about women's experiences following discrimination, with an aim to establish how we might further meet their need allowing those workers to return to the workplace with confidence. We know of cases where the NDA requires the member to stay away for periods of up to two and even four years before they can work again.

This northwest women's conference feels we can do more for women, and therefore asks

- 1) National women's conference to agree to work with National women's committee and NEC to conduct further research as to women's post workplace discrimination experience
- 2) To specifically note the experience of discrimination where there has been an NDA, to ascertain what support would be most beneficial for members.
- 3) To conduct research work (as practicable) nationally and regionally with self-organised groups, so the impact of intersectionality can be clearly seen, best practice noted, and areas of improvement identified.
- 4) National women's committee, NEC and LAOS, to carry out discussions, to identify and consider a programme of further training for UNISON representatives to better deal with intersectional issues present in discrimination cases, especially where there is a mental ill health impact.
- 5) To publicise via the website or other, appropriate national guides of support organisations regarding various types of discrimination and its mental health impact. And for regions to create similar signposting for members to the services UNISON does not provide but that would support a member in their ongoing work journey allowing them to return to work sooner.

## 2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA

- 6) To make members aware of the Croyde Bay resource as a recuperative tool following workplace distress.

### *North West Region*

#### **What are the current plans for the Labour government for our Trans sisters?**

The new Labour government needs to maintain open dialogue with the transgender community to ensure changes to the Gender Recognition Act genuinely reflects their needs and contributes to their empowerment and well-being.

Changes to gender recognition laws that enable self-identification can significantly impact the lives of trans women by streamlining and simplifying the process of legally recognizing their true gender identity.

Self-identification refers to the ability to change legal gender markers based solely on an individual's self-declaration, without the need for medical diagnosis or intervention.

The Gender Reassignment Bill, if inclusive and affirming, can bolster legal protections and simplify bureaucratic procedures for trans women, granting them greater autonomy over their identities.

Legal recognition solidifies the social status of trans women, combating stigma and discrimination.

By simplifying the legal recognition process, trans women can have documentation that aligns with their gender identity, helping eliminate discrepancies between their lived reality and their paperwork.

Legal recognition can improve access to gender-specific services and protections, such as healthcare, housing, and employment.

With appropriate documents, trans women are better protected against discrimination and can enjoy the rights afforded to their gender. Self-identification can facilitate smoother social interactions and integration.

When official documents match a trans woman's gender presentation, interactions with institutions like banks, employers, and government agencies can become more respectful and less problematic.

Legal recognition through self-identification can positively impact mental health by reducing gender dysphoria and stress associated with legal and social transition processes. It reinforces a supportive environment that acknowledges and respects an individual's gender identity.

Allowing self-identification empowers trans women to take control of their identity and legal status. It recognizes their ability to determine their gender identity without needing validation from medical or legal authorities.

Key provisions in the bill must ensure equitable access to healthcare services, including coverage for gender-affirming treatments necessary for trans women.

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

Addressing potential gaps in healthcare accessibility is essential for the physical and mental health of trans women.

Progressive legislation can help shift societal perceptions, promoting acceptance and understanding of trans identities.

Ensuring trans voices are included in the drafting process of the bill will help align its objectives with the needs of the transgender community.

By advancing initiatives that promote inclusivity, healthcare access, and legal recognition, the government can create a more equitable society for trans women.

We call upon the National Women's Committee to:

- Work however possible with the Labour Link, at every level alongside the National LGBT+ Committee to build on the legacy of year of the LGBT+
- And lobby this Labour government to review the current policies and commit to supporting our Trans- sisters in UNISON

***North West Region***

### **Menopause**

Menopause Is an Equality Issue

Conference notes that the menopause is an important but overlooked work and equalities issue that was widely discussed at last year's, as well as previous, women's conferences.

Upon my return to work, myself and for other women reps in our branch came together and drafted a menopause policy for our Trust, as quite shockingly we didn't have one, even though there is much discussion around this subject. At the time of writing this motion, we still do not have a Menopause Trust policy.

So, there is much work still to be done around the subject.

Moreover, as was discussed at last year's women's conference, the menopause is still not covered under the Equality Act and should be.

As NHS England notes, there is an estimated 13 million people who are currently peri or menopausal in the UK, which is equivalent to a third of the population. So, the menopause (to varying degrees) will affect a significant proportion of the workplace. It includes younger women who experience premature ovarian insufficiency, medical or surgical menopause, Perimenopause, Post-menopause, Trans man, Trans woman and non-binary people.

Quite rightly, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has raised serious concerns over the number of women leaving their jobs due to adverse menopausal symptoms. Research shows that one in 10 women surveyed (who worked during menopause) left their role due to symptoms that can include anxiety, mood swings, brain fog, hot flushes and irregular periods. Two-thirds of working women between the ages of 40 and 60 with experience of symptoms said they have

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

had a mostly negative impact on their work life. Many women report being forced out of a role due to their menopause-related symptoms many say they don't feel safe enough to request the workplace adjustments they need.

Yes, menopausal discrimination can be legally challenged under the Equality Act 2010 (and there are some cases where this has happened). However, even though the employer is under a legal obligation to not discriminate against women in work (and make reasonable adjustments where appropriate), there is no clear legislation around the menopause.

This can make managing the menopause in the workplace difficult and highly dependent on where you work, who your manager is, their knowledge about the menopause, and a person's confidence in tackling this subject. Also, some managers may not fully understand their responsibility to protect their staff going through the menopause,

It's important, therefore, that the Menopause is covered under the Equality Act, as this could prevent a lot of issues escalating, women being forced to work less or leave their job, and it avoids a lot of unnecessary stress. Managers and staff are both winners.

This is long overdue and is an important next step in Unison's valuable existing work around the menopause.

Conference believes that the menopause needs to be covered under the Equality Act, so there is clear legislation, policy and guidance that protects working women affected by this unavoidable life stage.

Conference resolves to campaign to get the menopause is adequately recognised and covered under the Equality Act.

Conference resolves to call on the Unison's Labour Link to use its influence in the Labour Party and lobby for the menopause to be recognised under the Equality Act.

***Greater Manchester Mental Health Branch***

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Received Twice

### **Scrap The Cap**

This Conference notes:

- That an estimated 4.3 million children in the UK live in poverty.
- The two-child benefit cap, introduced by the Tories under David Cameron, which means that families with three or more children are denied approximately £3000 per child compared to families where all the children were born before 2017.
- That this policy has led to around 1.5 million children living in families where their benefits have been reduced.

## **2025 National Women's Conference UNISON PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

- The report by the Institute of Fiscal Studies which found that removing the cap would lift over half a million children out of poverty and would be the “single most cost-effective way” to bring children out of poverty. This would cost £2.5bn a year.
- That Child Poverty Action Group data shows “10,000 children have been pulled into poverty by the two-child limit since the government took office” in early July.
- That there have been repeated calls on the new Labour government to scrap the cap, but this been refused.

This Conference believes:

- That children of lone parents are amongst those most likely to be in poverty because of this cap. Women are more likely to be lone parents, and therefore bear the brunt of this.
- Because women are most likely to be primary care givers to children, it is women who are also most likely to ‘go without’ so that children have food, clothing and as secure a home as possible.
- That a Labour government should make commitments and take action to eradicate child poverty. This includes ending the two-child benefit cap as a matter of urgency.

This Conference calls upon the National Women’s Committee to work with all relevant bodies within UNISON such as but not limited to the NEC, the Labour Link committee, and campaign for an end to the two-child benefit cap.

***Camden UNISON***