



**2024 National Disabled Members'
Conference**

**RECORD OF DECISIONS AND
BALLOT RESULTS**

**2024 National Disabled Members' Conference
Decisions**

**National Disabled Members Conference 2024
Ballot Report**

1. There were 15 nominations for two delegates to National Delegate Conference 2025.
Lola Oyewusi and Hasina Hamid were elected, with Tansaim Hussain-Gul as the reserve.
2. There were three nominations for the news sheet member at National Delegate Conference 2025
Toby Morrison was elected, with Marcelle Quinn as the reserve.
3. There were 11 nominations received for four seats on the Standing Orders Committee by the advertised deadline for nominations.
Tania Earnshaw, Stuart Green, Katharine Wylde and Avril Young were elected, with Heather Briggs as the reserve.

Five nominations were received for the LGBT+ general seat on the Standing Orders Committee.
Alex DeWinter was elected.

Two nominations were received in the meeting for LGBT+ members for the second reserved LGBT+ seat on the Standing Orders Committee.
Ann Cameron-Burns was elected.

Two nominations were received for the two reserved Black members seats on the Standing Orders Committee.
Hasina Hamid and Tara Thomas were elected unopposed.

SOC for conference 2025 will therefore be made up of the following members:
Open seats: Tania Earnshaw, Stuart Green, Katharine Wylde and Avril Young
LGBT+ seats: Ann Cameron-Burns and Alex DeWinter
Black members seats: Hasina Hamid and Tara Thomas

4. There were 11 nominations for one delegate to TUC Congress 2025.
Lola Oyewusi was elected, with Maggie Griffin as the reserve
5. The two motions to National Delegate Conference chosen by ballot are:
 - Motion 2 – Assisted Dying
 - Motion 7 – Hate Crime Equality
6. Service Group election results are as follows:

Community Conference delegates	Adrian Jackson Maria Jerrard
Energy Conference delegates	Jane Brookes Stephen Lowery (reserve - Stephen

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	Dixon and Julie Parkin)
Health Conference delegates	Hasina Hamid Avril Young (reserve – Nick Porteous)
Higher Education Conference delegates	Gayle Darlington-Shaw Carly Garratt
Local Government Conference delegates	Bertha Kanyangu Tara Thomas
Police & Justice Conference delegates	Adam Hillier Debbie Kirrane (reserve – Katrina Gillman)
Water, Environment and Transport Conference delegates	Karen Brown James Robinson (reserve – Antony Hill)

7. Six nominations were received for two delegates to Labour Link Forum and Labour Party Conference.
Tansaim Hussain-Gul and Maggie Griffin were elected, with Lola Oyewusi as reserve.
8. Three nominations were received for the two reserved LGBT+ members seats on National Disabled Members Committee.
Carl Phillips was elected to the reserved LGBT+ general seat. Pauline Bacon was elected unopposed to the reserved LGBT+ women's seat.
9. Four nominations were received for the two reserved Black members seats on the National Disabled Members Committee.
Tansaim Hussain-Gul and Lola Oyewusi were elected.
10. Two nominations were received for the two reserved Deaf (native BSL) members seats on the National Disabled Members Committee.
Neil Ridley and Atinuke (Tina) Igbintade were elected.

Susan Mawhood
Ballots officer

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- M1** Challenging the stigma – disability is not a bad word
- M2** LET'S TALK ABOUT ASSISTED DYING
- M3** Help with hidden disorders
- M4** Equity for all disabled members; tackling inconsistent and inequitable approaches to disability leave across public sector employers
- M5** Black disabled members cannot be left behind
- M6** HIV has changed – Unionising against HIV Stigma
- M7** Hate Crime Equality
- M8** Disabled LGBT+ marginalisation in the LGBT+ community
- M9** Young Members Mental Health Matters!
- M10** Recognising and Addressing the Impact of Long Covid
- M11** Challenging poverty in employment.
- M12** REASONABLE TIME LIMIT FOR DISABLED PEOPLE
- M13** ABOUT TIME ALL DISABILITIES WERE EQUAL
- M14** Winning for disabled workers in 2025 – holding Labour to account

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Motions

1. Challenging the stigma – disability is not a bad word

Carried

At a time where there are over 14 million disabled people in the United Kingdom, and with the impact of recent events increasing these numbers due to long Covid, it is time conference for us to challenge the perception of disability being seen as a bad word.

For many non-disabled people there is often the fear of causing offence in using the words “disabled” or “disability” and they will substitute these with words such as “special needs”, “physically challenged” or “differently-abled”. While language does evolve over time and vocabulary changes to present as more inclusive, this in effect backs up the stigma of the words disabled and disability as if they are something that should not be said and negates the identity of disabled people.

Being disabled is not offensive, nor something to be ashamed of, and in a population where many more millions of people may end up disabled through aging, accident or illness, we, as a union, need to promote the identity of disabled people as worthy, functioning, and capable members of society who often, with the support of reasonable adjustments, are able to lead fulfilling lives both personally and within the workplace.

Conference, disabled adults need to be seen as positive role models so that disabled children can have goals and aspirations, alongside their non-disabled peers, and by reclaiming the words disabled and disability we confront and challenge the negative connotations that many people associate with these words.

Of course, conference, disabled people do have the choice of how they want to be addressed and there may be some who prefer to not be known as disabled, but in these instances, this should be down to the individual choice of the disabled person and not decided by non-disabled people who believe that they are promoting equality with the use of “differently-abled”

This motion therefore requests conference, that where ever possible, throughout the union, from the presidential team, to national committees, regional committees, branches and self-organised groups, we continue to promote disabled people as valued members of the union, as positive role models and that we endeavour to use the words disabled and disability as positive vocabulary and not exchange them for other patronising labels.

Conference asks

- 1) NDMC to work to raise the profile of Disabled Members in the Union.
- 2) NDMC to Work with all sections of the union to explore how the participation of disabled member can be increased.

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2. LET'S TALK ABOUT ASSISTED DYING

Carried

Conference, assisted dying is an emotive and complex issue which people hold differing and strong views about. The issue can be polarising.

But what is meant by assisted dying is often unclear. Is it do not resuscitate (DNR)? Withdrawal of treatment? Assisted suicide? Or, voluntary euthanasia?

Common arguments against assisted dying are based on appealing to the rights of disabled people, and are based on religious, moral, and political arguments.

In 2009, UNISON's retired members discussed the issue at its conference seeking to campaign for 'physician assisted suicide' based on an individual's right to dignity and choice to end life, and this motion was carried (as amended). However, UNISON has no policy position.

A poll in 2021 by YouGov, noted that 73% of those polled supported a form of doctor assisted death for those terminally ill; 50% supported similar for people who experienced unbearable suffering but were not terminally ill.

A survey in 2022 by Public Medical Central, of disabled rights organisations in the UK noted that organisations took different stances: 84% remaining silent on the issue, 4% remaining neutral, and 4% opposed. This reflects the sensitivities around the issue, and possibly not wanting to be on the wrong 'side' of the discussion rather than reflect strong opposition per se.

In 2021, the British Medical Association changed its policy position from opposition to neutrality.

In a poll by the disability charity Scope, two-thirds (64%) of disabled people noted they would be concerned by a change in the law as it stands. In 2018, Scope voiced concerns regarding 'relaxed' guidance by the Director of Public Prosecutions on assisted suicide, which it felt blurred the clarity of the present legal position.

Assisted dying can result in criminal charges in all parts of the UK. The issue has previously been debated, and defeated, in the Scottish and UK parliaments.

In May this year, Jersey's States Assembly debated this issue and approved assisted dying for those with a terminal illness 'causing unbearable suffering'. Legislation will progress and is anticipated to come into force in 2027. Scotland is progressing down a similar route with an Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill recently being introduced.

Conference re-affirms its commitment to the Social Model of Disability. This itself raises questions as to whether support for the Social Model of Disability and support for assisted dying are mutually exclusive.

However, the debate on assisted dying is happening, whether we're part of that, or not. Given disabled people are among those people most vulnerable to abuse of legalised assisted dying, then isn't it important that as disabled members we have a clear policy position, and that our voice shapes a future wider debate?

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Conference calls on the National Disabled Members Committee:

- 1) To work with the National Executive Council to compile and conduct a study of disabled member views as a starting point to an informed discussion within the union.
- 2) To consider submitting this motion to the 2025 National Delegate Conference, using the study's findings as the basis for a thoughtful, respectful and considered debate within our union with a view to achieving a national policy position.

3. Help with hidden disorders

Carried

Conference we are becoming more aware of the barriers faced by members with neurodiverse conditions that may be hidden and we note the great work done by Unison to raise issues around this with members and employers.

There are many hidden disorders that may affect our members health and wellbeing such as eating disorders, type two diabetes, post traumatic stress disorder and many others. These may or may not be considered to be linked to neurodiversity.

These conditions can be very impactful on people's health and may affect the way they interact with others in the workplace.

Once again education is the key and raising awareness will help those with these conditions to feel more comfortable when at work and for those around them to understand and assist.

It would be beneficial if work could be started to provide information and advice around identified suitable topics. Clearly the number of fact sheets that can be produced will be limited to the time and resources available to produce them.

Conference requests the national disabled members committee to look to

identify any disorders that may be suitable and look to produce a fact sheet on the subject to raise awareness and seek to provide assistance in these matters.

- 1) Seek suggestions from regional disabled members committees for suitable subjects that could be appropriate for a new fact sheet and request assistance where possible to help with the work needed to produce them.
- 2) Begin producing fact sheets on these issues when time and resources are available to do so.
- 3) Report back to disabled members conference 2025 on any fact sheets that may have been produced and how many further may be produced regularly taking into account the national committees annual workload

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4. Equity for all disabled members; tackling inconsistent and inequitable approaches to disability leave across public sector employers

Carried

Conference notes that, for many UNISON disabled members, barriers still exist in the workplace, making it as difficult as ever to sustain their employment. In spite of legislation in the form of the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty, and despite the pioneering efforts of the 30+ signatory bodies to the first Disability Employment Charter, the lived experience in the workplace continues to be one of battling for the right to reasonable adjustments, dicing with the almost constant threat of formal sickness action, being forced through medical redeployment and ultimately, for some, losing their employment, because they are disabled.

Conference also notes that somehow, this is not the experience of all disabled members, and that some employers have put in place supportive policies and disabled members consistently benefit from a much more inclusive work environment as a result.

The differences in approach can be damaging to the working relationship, and difficult to understand for disabled members and their union representatives.

Conference wants to try to close the gap, where possible, between the employers leading the way, and those apparently falling behind, and look to build foundations on which more and more of our members can expect consistently positive and inclusive experiences with their employer, when dealing with matters arising from their disability.

Conference calls upon the National Disabled Members' Committee to work with branches and regions to:

- 1) Identify and share good practice from employers, where policies are in place and are consistently delivering tangible support to disabled members.
- 2) Explore how many employers have specific disability leave or disability-related special leave policies, and identify how these are implemented in reality for our members, for example through a survey to disabled members.
- 3) Share knowledge, skills and resources with our networks of shop stewards, reps and branch officers, some of whom may not have any lived experience of being a disabled worker, to upskill them and equip them for negotiating for disabled members, including promotion of the existing materials on the UNISON website, which stewards may not know about.
- 4) Promote the take up of the Disability Employment Charter by encouraging Branch Disabled Members' Officers and Equalities Officers to negotiate with employers in their branches.
- 5) Increase the opportunities for stewards to access specific training on representing disabled members and bargaining for disabled members, for example, training with Thompsons Solicitors on disability discrimination.

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5. Black disabled members cannot be left behind

Carried

Black disabled people have faced, and continue to face, marginalisation within our society.

We need to take action to address Black disabled members specific needs, allowing our voices to be heard and for us not to be left behind; we need to call out existing inequality.

Despite progress in promoting diversity and inclusion, Black disabled members often find themselves disproportionately disadvantaged in the workplace.

UNISON needs to work with employers to affirm their commitment to fostering an inclusive, diverse, and equitable workplace that values the contributions of all its Black disabled workers.

Employers need to take proactive steps to address the needs and challenges faced by Black disabled members in the workplace.

Conference calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to work with the NEC, the National Black Members Committee and any other body it feels appropriate to work with branches, to:

- 1) Promote UNISON's model policy and encourage branches to negotiate the policy with employers, to offer flexible working arrangements and reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of Black disabled workers
- 2) Work with employers to improve representation of Black disabled workers within their organisations
- 3) Set up branch disabled networks that provide Black disabled members a safe space for networking, sharing experiences, mentorship and seeking advice.
- 4) Conduct regular reviews of policies, practices, and initiatives within their workplaces to provide effective support to Black disabled members

6. HIV has changed – Unionising against HIV Stigma

Carried as Amended: 6.1

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) and AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) remains one of the most stigmatised long-term health conditions. Our members living with HIV often face stigma, discrimination, prejudice, bullying and harassment in the workplace, in healthcare settings, and in their daily lives.

HIV stigma – negative attitudes and beliefs about people living with or affected by HIV – continues to blight the lives of thousands of people.

Conference notes that more than 100,000 people in the United Kingdom (UK) are living with HIV, and many of these are from lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus (LGBT+) and also Black communities.

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Although there is currently no cure for HIV, medical treatment known as antiretroviral therapy (ART), available since the mid-1990s, can help people living with HIV to remain fit and healthy, and prevent them from developing advanced HIV or AIDS.

Conference acknowledges the millions who have died from HIV and AIDS globally, and the work done to treat people living with HIV through development of effective antiretrovirals, as well as advancements in prevention with PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis).

Some 98% of people with diagnosed HIV in the UK are said to have an undetectable viral load. This means they are successfully treated with antiretrovirals, and the level of virus in their blood is so low that it cannot be measured at their regular checkups. This also means they are unable to pass the virus on to their partners through sexual contact, which is known as U=U – or Undetectable equals Untransmittable.

For most people in the UK, especially if diagnosed early, HIV is no longer the 'death sentence' it once was and is now considered a chronic but manageable health condition.

People with HIV are automatically covered by the protections accorded to disabled people under the Equality Act 2010, although many employers and workers are not aware of this.

Conference notes the Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) campaign 2030: HIV Time's Up! THT believes the UK can be the first country in the world to end new cases of HIV.

Conference acknowledges there are many people living with HIV who do not know it. THT's campaign is about finding and testing everyone living with HIV in the UK, so that they can be offered treatment. People with HIV who are successfully on treatment can't pass the virus on, so this would help to reach the goal of no new cases.

Conference notes the Unionising against HIV Stigma campaign, initiated by the Greater London Region LGBT+ Committee, who have held three sessions on HIV awareness and the law, and a fringe event at the 2024 National Delegate Conference.

UNISON can play an important role in helping to end a global epidemic that has claimed 38 million lives, and support people living with HIV to thrive. By adding our trade union strength to this campaign, we can help end new cases of HIV in the UK by 2030 and reduce stigma for people living with or affected by the virus.

Conference instructs the National Disabled Members' Committee to work with the National Executive Council and other parts of the union as appropriate to:

- 1) Encourage the adoption of the Unionising against HIV Stigma campaign, initiated by Greater London Region, across all regions of UNISON
- 2) Review UNISON's guidance on HIV in the workplace with a view to publishing an updated version, to include best-practice use of language around HIV and AIDS

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- 3) Raise awareness that people with HIV are entitled to protections under the Equality Act 2010 and under the Data Protection Act 2018 (General Data Protection Regulation)
- 4) Raise awareness within UNISON that HIV stigma not only affects people living with the virus themselves, but also their friends and relatives, and other people they are closely associated with
- 5) Support the Terrence Higgins Trust's 2030: HIV Time's Up! Campaign

7. Hate Crime Equality

Carried as Amended: 7.1

Conference is concerned that the current Hate Crime Laws are in disarray, and the recording of crimes that are 'hate' motivated is inconsistent. The manufactured culture wars have enabled malicious players to twist the rhetoric to make some groups 'less deserving' of protections than others.

This has manifested via the latest College of Policing (CoP) guidance on the recording of non-crime hate incidents (NCHIs). These are incidents that don't reach the threshold of a crime but may be precursor indicators of deteriorating behaviour and increased victimisation. The distressing death of Fiona Pilkington and her disabled daughter contributed to the development of NCHI recording. Police failed to connect dozens of separate calls about local youths targeting the family. However, when Harry Miller challenged the recording of NCHIs in the courts after making transphobic comments, the CoP revised its guidance. Now the details of perpetrators will not be recorded on NCHIs. This renders the recording worse than useless at identifying deteriorating behaviour. A perpetrator's pattern of behaviour will not be recognised until it escalates into abuse, assault, or worse.

Conference is further troubled that if a hate crime does reach the arbitrary threshold to be recorded, only perpetrators of crimes which are defined as hate crimes, involving religious or racial motivation, can be charged with aggravated assault. There is the option of uplift in sentencing where it can be demonstrated that perpetrators were motivated due to the disability, sexual orientation, or transgender identity of their victim, but this is not a given. So, while a crime may be recorded as a 'hate crime', it will only be prosecuted as such if evidence of hostility is submitted as part of the case file.

Conference is aware that in 2021, subsequent to a consultation which UNISON responded to, the Law Commission recommended the creation of parity between protected characteristics in relation to hate crime, but this has not been implemented by government.

Gov.uk reports Key results: In year ending March 2023, there were 145,214 hate crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales (excluding Devon and Cornwall). Although this is a 5% decrease on the height of 2021/22, it is attributed to improvements in crime recording by the police and better identification of what constitutes a hate crime. Conference questions whether this is better identification, or the dismissal of hate crimes that don't 'fit the mould'.

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Since 2019 disability hate crime has increased 71%, transgender hate crime has increased 110%, and homophobic hate crime has increased 70%.

Conference believes that hate crimes involving the disabled community should also have the elevated charge of aggravated assault available to the police service to charge perpetrators of these crimes. This should also be extended to LGBT+ hate crime where it is also worth noting that the prescribed protected characteristics do not include hate crime against non-binary and gender variant people. Conference is also committed to ensuring that anyone engaging in behaviour that may be a precursor to a hate crime should be recorded as such.

Hate crimes are personal; they target vulnerable people and send the message 'you are not welcome.' They reinforce stereotypes, long-term prejudice and patterns of discrimination against certain groups of people and communities. Often, people are targeted due to multiple characteristics and the law does not always acknowledge the intersectionality of victims.

Conference believes that all hate crimes are equal. Disability and LGBT+ hate crimes should be treated equally with parity in the way perpetrators can be recorded and charged.

The Labour Party manifesto 2024 stated that if elected a Labour government will "protect LGBT+ and disabled people by making all existing strands of hate crime an aggravated offence" but disappointingly this commitment was not specifically mentioned in the King's Speech.

Conference instructs the National Disabled members committee to:

- 1) Work with the National LGBT+ Committee to raise this issue with the National Executive Council (NEC) and Labour Link;
- 2) Request that the NEC and Labour Link lobby around this unfair issue using the appropriate channels available to them;
- 3) Write to Labour Link and the General Secretary and ask them to lobby for the manifesto commitment on hate crime to be implemented as soon as possible.

8. Disabled LGBT+ marginalisation in the LGBT+ community

Carried as Amended: 8.1

Conference notes that Disabled LGBT+ people face a double burden: discrimination based on both their sexual orientation/gender identity and their disability.

This marginalisation within the LGBT+ community happens in a few ways:

- a) Invisibility: The LGBT+ community often has experiences that are seen as more "typical," which can exclude disabled and Black people. Events might not be physically accessible, or the focus might be on aspects of LGBT+ life that don't consider disability. This can vary depending on the disability and how the individual copes with it.

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b) Ableism: Preconceptions about disability can lead to assumptions that disabled people aren't sexual or don't experience same-sex attraction. This can be particularly harmful for transgender and gender non-conforming disabled people. The disability rights movement might prioritise issues like physical accessibility, while the LGBT+ rights movement might focus on marriage equality. This can leave the specific needs of disabled LGBT+ people unaddressed.

c) Lack of representation: Disabled and Black LGBT+ voices are often missing from leadership positions and discussions within the LGBT+ community. This means their specific needs and experiences aren't being addressed.

d) Isolation and loneliness: Feeling unwelcome or misunderstood in both the LGBT+ and disability communities can lead to social isolation.

e) Mental health: The double marginalisation can contribute to anxiety and depression.

f) Difficulty accessing resources: Support services might not be equipped to handle the specific challenges faced by disabled LGBT+ people.

These issues can happen inside or outside our union.

Stonewall has many resources on this topic on their web site www.stonewall.org.uk

1) Conference we ask the National Disabled Members Committee to work with: UNISON's National LGBT+ committee to raise awareness of disability within LGBT+ communities

2) UNISON's national LGBT+ committee and other self-organised groups to provide guidance for the wider union on the issues faced by intersectionality

3) Other self-organised groups, young members forum and retired members to consider training allies to recognise the issues faced by members who intersect between the difference self-organised groups.

9. Young Members Mental Health Matters!

Carried as Amended: 9.1, 9.2

Conference notes that mental health is consistently one of the most pressing issues cited by young workers, including Black young workers, when surveyed about their experiences of work.

A 2022 survey of young UNISON members found that 80% of young workers had experienced a mental health problem in the last year.

Similarly, in 2023 the Mental Health charity Unmind found that 56% of 16–24-year-olds have taken time off work due to stress, anxiety and depression.

Conference is aware that poor mental health disproportionately affects those who identify as LGBT+, and the most recent Office for National Statistics (ONS) Annual Population Survey (APS)(2022/23) found that almost 1 in 10 (9.2%) 16-24 year olds

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identified as LGBT+. A 2016 Stonewall study found that 1 in 8 people aged 18-24, identifying under the LGBT+ umbrella, had attempted to end their life, and almost half of trans people have considered the same.

While mental health problems may not necessarily be defined as disability under the terms of the Equality Act 2010, many are, as an 'impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities'.

People with mental health problems may qualify for reasonable adjustments in the workplace, or disability leave related to their mental health problem.

However, many young workers may not be aware of the full protections under the Equality Act to be protected from disability discrimination and to have reasonable adjustments in the workplace. This can have a disproportionate impact on LGBT+ young workers who are also struggling with self-acceptance, and social acceptance.

Conference welcomes the UNISON National Young Members Forum's new campaign, Young Members' Mental Health Matters!

Conference believes the new campaign materials and videos are helpful in educating young and new members on the successes that UNISON has in supporting members with mental health problems in the workplace, including in negotiating reasonable adjustments and bargaining over issues shown to negatively affect mental health.

Conference asks the National Disabled Members Committee:

- 1) To promote the NYMF's campaign Young Members Mental Health Matters! to disabled members and activists in UNISON, and to encourage regional Disabled Members groups to promote the campaign;
- 2) To work with the National LGBT+ Committee to promote the National Young Members' Forum campaign, and to work with the National LGBT+ Committee and NYMF to identify the mental health challenges that affect LGBT+ young workers;"
- 3) To work with the National Young Members Forum to campaign on the importance of UNISON and trade unions in securing reasonable adjustments and other support for workers with mental health problems;
- 4) To publicise and promote UNISON's other resources on mental health, such as the Bargaining on Mental Health Policies guidance;
- 5) To work with the National Young Members Forum to inform and educate young UNISON members about their employment rights regarding mental health problems and all forms of disability, including the Proving disability and reasonable adjustments guide and the Reasonable Adjustments bargaining guide;
- 6) To share best practice in negotiating policies and achieving individual support for members with mental health problems;

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- 7) To continue campaigning for improvements to mental health provision and funding on the NHS so that help is available more quickly and in more areas.

10. Recognising and Addressing the Impact of Long Covid

Carried

Long Covid, a condition that emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic, remains a poorly understood medical issue, even among clinicians. The severity of initial symptoms does not necessarily predict the likelihood of developing Long Covid, with individuals experiencing mild initial symptoms still at risk for long-term complications. Recovery from Long Covid varies greatly among individuals, with some experiencing symptoms for three months, a year, or even longer after initial infection.

Long Covid is not defined by a single symptom or a set of symptoms but is a complex medical condition linked to COVID-19 infection. Its symptoms can affect multiple parts of the body, including but not limited to:

- Autoimmune-like symptoms (muscles/joints aches and pains)
- Respiratory issues (breathing difficulties)
- Neurological symptoms (headaches, dizziness, vision and hearing issues)
- Psychological disorders (anxiety, depression)
- Digestive and bowel problems
- Cognitive issues (confusion, brain fog, concentration difficulties)

These symptoms can fluctuate, worsen or improve over time, making the condition unpredictable and difficult to manage. Currently, there is no cure for Long Covid.

Long Covid has had devastating effects on many people, particularly those with pre-existing disabilities and other health issues. Disabled members, often among the lowest paid in sectors such as health, social care, and other public services, face additional burdens due to Long Covid. They struggle to maintain their employment and face increasing financial difficulties. Additionally, assessments for benefits like PIP and DWP disability benefits often fail to accurately recognise the impact of Long Covid, further compounding these challenges.

There is widespread misunderstanding about disabilities, particularly non-apparent ones. People with Long Covid are frequently told they are "fine" and should return to work, with the condition often being dismissed as akin to a bad cold or flu. This prejudice and lack of awareness exacerbate the difficulties faced by those experiencing Long Covid.

To address these issues, we call upon the National Disabled Members Committee to:

- 1) Liaise with the NEC to organise more workshops within UNISON aimed at explaining the effects of Long Covid.

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- 2) Develop and distribute comprehensive guidelines to branches to better support members experiencing long-term symptoms of Long Covid.
- 3) Advocate for greater public awareness and education about Long Covid, emphasising that it is a legitimate and serious medical condition.

By taking these steps, we can help ensure that those suffering from Long Covid receive the understanding, support, and accommodations they need.

11. Challenging poverty in employment.

Carried

Conference, over the past 10 years Unison has worked hard to push the agenda of a real living wage, challenging parity in pay by gender, ethnicity, and disability. The pay gaps in the UK are continuing to grow further and further apart. The covid pandemic has had an impact on this and is used as a cop out by our Tory government to cover up their systematic failures.

We are living in a society where people working 40 hours a week are needing to access benefits to be able to sustain themselves and their families. Given the 2022 – 23 energy and cost of living crisis, inflation being the highest in our lifetime, the cost of living continues being driven up despite falling inflation and many of our members are struggling to survive.

Conference, some of our members are still having to choose whether to use energy or to eat again! Each winter has the potential for more lives to be lost unnecessarily. No member working 40hr weeks, raising a family, or claiming in employment benefits from the government should be in this position. Members still continuing to use food banks to feed their family or themselves.

Statistics are showing that poverty wages in the public services sector for disabled members, are one of the reasons for leaving. The higher cost of disability shows that disabled can not afford to come to work.

Conference there has never been a more important time to push for change. The status quo is not good enough.

Conference asks that:

- 1) The National Disabled Members Committee, work with UNISON Welfare 'there for you' to develop a range of support resources and quick link sign postings for support and access to help for this coming winter. Ensuring this is accessible to all and presented in inclusive formats including BSL.
- 2) National Disabled Members Committee to work with Regional Disabled Members Committees to develop with branches, resources that assist branches to challenge employers and highlight the issues faced by our disabled membership.

12. REASONABLE TIME LIMIT FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

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Carried

Government initiatives must deliver support within a reasonable time limit and Disabled people should not experience delays in obtaining identified support required in work as part of their reasonable adjustments.

In 2019 Disability and employment statistics (Office of National Statistics) show that over 4.2 million disabled people were employment in the UK. While this figure illustrates an appetite for employment among disabled people, it is sobering and disappointing to report that disabled people are still less likely to be employed than non-disabled people, with an employment rate for disabled people (aged 16 to 64 years) of 53.2% in 2019, compared with 81.8% for non-disabled people.

In Supporting Disabled People, the Equality Act 2010 states that employers must make 'reasonable adjustments' for Disabled Employees. The UK Department for Work and Pensions Health Passport and Access to Work Scheme provides support for people with disabilities. Here Disabled People can find help identify what support is required and obtain financial support in the form of a grant to help pay for the practical support. It is important to place emphasis here that employers should not be using this as a substitute for their legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments or to pay for them.

Currently (June 2024), Access to Work (ATW) are working to a 26-week response rate to Applications for support. This is alarming and waiting on a response for over 6-month is ridiculous. As a result, unscrupulous employers are taking their time in stalling on providing 'reasonable adjustment' support to disabled employees that has been found, and that is needed for disabled people in supporting them whilst in employment. Employers waiting for a response from ATW towards supplying approval towards the cost support identified as being reasonable adjustments that have been previously agreed.

Conference believes that Disabled People should be supported by their employers without delay throughout their employment journey and that more needs to be done to increase the employment rate for disabled people. It is about time Disabled People were provided with the equal opportunities in gaining and keeping meaningful employment.

This Conference calls upon the National Disabled Members Committee to:

- 1) Continue to promote and support UNISONs disability passport and bargaining guide on reasonable adjustments in regions and branches.
- 2) Campaign with the support of the National Executive Council to reduce response times to reasonable adjustment requests and decrease time taken to implement by employers.
- 3) Work with UNISON National Labour Link to explore the wider adoption of 'reasonable adjustment passports' across all employers.

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13. ABOUT TIME ALL DISABILITIES WERE EQUAL

Carried

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

Created in 1968 by a design student called Susanne Koefoed through a design competition by Rehabilitation International and adopted by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the International Symbol of Access (ISA) has served as a global icon for accessibility for almost 57 years. This sign, the white icon of a person in a wheelchair set against a blue background is known worldwide. This is found on toilet doors, painted onto parking bays, and seen on public transport signage and indicates that a facility is accessible for those with disabilities, or solely for their use.

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

The symbol has helped so many people in wheelchairs and had such a positive impact on how they navigate around public spaces, but it has also caused a deflection issue for disabled people who don't use wheelchairs. These people already struggle, and they receive public judgement on top of that. People who question those with invisible disabilities have good intentions, but they are all too often very misinformed. This is an education and awareness challenge that presents us with an opportunity for improvement. We need to address this issue now, 57 years is a long time for your disability not to be recognised and those with disabilities are entitled to better recognition, provisions, and equality.

This Conference believes that it cannot be beyond the wit of human capacity to design a new and representative universal symbol of disability that will be more representative of disabled people that can be used to indicate access, facilities, and provisions available for disabled people covering a wide range of disabilities. In fact, some work has already been done on this issue by interested organisations.

Pushing for a healthier respect for disability, and in supporting the revision of the disability symbol to become more inclusive presents a fantastic opportunity to get people thinking and to unconsciously absorb a more positive concept of disability. Let's not forget that a person's attitude may be a little thing, but it makes a big difference, this conference supports the push for a change in attitude through supporting the need for a more inclusive symbol of disability.

Conference believes that it is about time all disabilities were equally recognised and that these organisations need to be progressing ways to achieve this by adopting an updated, more inclusive symbol for disability in a drive towards changing attitudes to improve the lives of disabled people in becoming more included.

Conference calls upon the National Disabled Members Committee to:

2024 National Disabled Members' Conference Decisions

- 1) Seek to work with the National Executive Council, Trade Unions Congress (TUC), other National UNISON groups to develop a campaign and create an alternative logo.
- 2) Consider working with other appropriate National Disability Organisations throughout the UK.
- 3) Work through UNISON Labour Link to lobby the Labour party for endorsement and to develop a realistic and supportive plan.
- 4) Report back any progress to the Disabled Member conference 2025.

14. Winning for disabled workers in 2025 – holding Labour to account

Carried

Conference notes that UNISON was one of the founder members of the Disability Employment Charter which:

- a) Sets out nine demands of government, including a two-week deadline for responses to reasonable adjustment requests
- b) Has been signed by over 180 employers in the public, private and community sectors, disproving the Tory lie that disability rights are “red tape” and a “burden” on businesses.

Conference welcomes Labour’s National Policy Forum (NPF) agreeing the following charter demands:

- i) Simpler and more timely access to reasonable adjustments
- ii) Mandatory disability pay gap reporting
- iii) Time off for trade union disability reps
- iv) Extending access to statutory sick pay
- v) Taking equality policies into account in government procurement

Conference believes there is still work to do after securing some, but not all, of these commitments in Labour’s manifesto. We want the new Labour government to commit to including these charter demands in its policy programme during their first term in power.

The charter also calls for further changes including reform of Access to Work and Disability Confident and raising the statutory sick pay rate.

Conference therefore calls on the National Disabled Members Committee to work with the National Executive Council, National Labour Link Committee, Service Group Executives and other Self Organised Groups to:

2024 National Disabled Members' Conference Decisions

- 1) Encourage employers, particularly those where UNISON organises, to sign the Disability Employment Charter
- 2) Lobby the government to include the charter demands as a priority in their policy programme
- 3) Write to the new Labour Minister for Disabled People to hold Labour to account on delivering the commitments on disability rights in their election manifesto and the wider charter demands
- 4) Lobby the Labour government to reinstate the Access to Elected Office fund
- 5) Call for the creation of a programme similar to the Bernie Grant Leadership programme and the Jo Cox Women in Leadership programme to support and encourage disabled people to stand for elected office.