

Issue 1, Tuesday 19th June 2018

## Welcome to Conference 2018

The impact of the Government's social and economic austerity measures have resulted in significant consequences for public service delivery across the Region. The disastrous Tory policies of austerity which are about making some of the most vulnerable people pay for an economic crisis not of their making have been exposed as not delivering for the majority of people. The Labour Party manifesto which is a vision to deliver opportunity and equality is one which UNISON absolutely supports. In the Northern Region we have felt the impact of Tory policies in our workplaces and communities acutely and have consistently campaigned for alternative policies which have been soundly supported across the Region. We must use our strong relationship with the Labour Party to ensure we get the best deal for our members and public services. We must use this to recruit to our union, and to mobilise more of our members into activity.

Regional Committee, Regional Council and Labour Link are working together to strengthen the Region's political organising agenda in the current context. The industrial and political work are now aligned into a comprehensive political organising strategy. We continue to work well with Northern Group of Labour MPs, Councillors and MEPs to not only promote UNISON's manifesto, but also to influence Regional campaigning. The local elections across the Region in May in which UNISON produced a manifesto for candidates to sign up to as well as writing to members outlining the importance of voting and voting Labour saw an increase in the number of UNISON candidates elected as Councillors.

This year we celebrate 25 proud years of UNISON and a key debate at this year's Conference, in which the Region will play an important role, is about the need to refocus the Union's resources to reflect the significant changes in how public services are now delivered. The Conservatives' self-imposed Brexit is fast approaching and again this is set to be a significant debate at Conference incorporating the Region's own motion calling for a worker's Brexit and the need for an economic investment strategy.

Northern Region delegates, have a good record of making valuable and informed contributions to debates as the Region and Branches have been at the forefront of the campaign in workplaces and communities to defend public services. Delegates and their Branches will also have contributions to make on learning, health and safety, equalities and other debates where the experience of Branches and delegates can provide valuable information and ideas.

The Region will have a direct interest in motions outlining attacks on democracy and austerity and our local communities; and similarly international work with particular debates on Colombia, the Middle East and Palestine.

UNISON Northern is the leading union in the Northern Region and has a high and influential profile within the national union. Branches and delegates have an opportunity to participate in debates and bring their experiences to the floor of Conference to inform and determine UNISON policies.

We are sure UNISON Northern delegates will play a full and active role – participating in debates, attending fringe meetings and writing for the Regional newsletter and of course enjoying the social life! If there is anything you are unsure about please just ask Clare, Linda or Debbie.

Clare Williams  
Regional Secretary

Linda Hobson & Debbie Lydon  
Regional Delegates



## Motion 97—Delivering the Promise of the Good Friday Agreement

This year April 10<sup>th</sup> marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, over 40 years of our trade union campaign for peace and justice and 25 years of unswerving support for that campaign from UNISON, it's NEC, Regions and branches.

The Agreement has led to relative peace in Northern Ireland in comparison to the years of conflict that preceded it. However it should be recognised that since the Agreement was reached there is increasing concern around regression from its principles and the non-implementation of its provisions relating to equality and human rights.

It is extremely concerning that the Good Friday Agreement has now become a target of those pursuing a “hard exit” of the UK from the EU and it is very worrying that the politicians, including a former Tory Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, are advocating the view at this time that the Good Friday Agreement has ‘failed’ or is ‘not sustainable’.



Their reckless view that dismantling the architecture of the peace process is a price worth paying to achieve their own ideological ambitions and such views must be robustly challenged.

The lack of political will from the co-guarantors of the Agreement and from some Northern Ireland parties has led to a regression away from the letter and spirit of the Agreement.

In the years that followed 1998 the opponents of equality and human rights within Northern Ireland were effectively

given a veto on progress as seen through the continuing opposition towards marriage equality, a woman's right to choose and the weak or missing commitment to action in relation to promoting equality and human rights for all of the groups covered by section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

This motions calls for the NEC to support Northern Ireland in its continuing campaign to protect the Peace Agreement and secure full implementation. It also call on the NEC through Labour Link to press the Labour Party to take all actions necessary to protect the Good Friday Agreement, particularly in the context of the UK exit from the EU.

**Linda Hobson & Debbie Lydon, Regional Delegates**

## Motion 12 – Promoting the Union as an Organising Union

Whilst other unions have reported difficulties in attracting young members, UNISON continues to increase membership on a year by year basis.

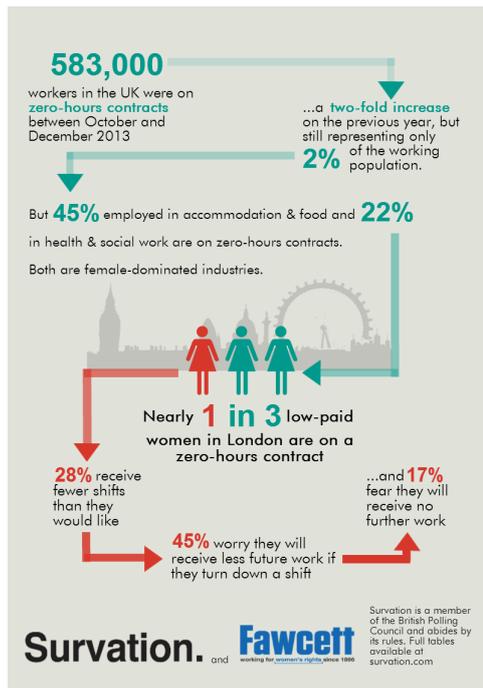
Where public service workers are being transferred for TUPE'd to private organisations our increase in private sector membership shows the need to follow this up. There are differences in density across branches and employers so we need to become much more effective.

We need to promote UNISON policies and utilise our Self-Organised Groups and migrant networks and of course develop our activists across the private sector and under-represented groups.

We also need to develop best practice and meet the challenge of fragmented workforces and membership.

Lynda Hardie, Newcastle City

## Motion 19 – Low Pay and Women in UNISON



As this motions states Conference celebrates the fact that the hard work of our low paid women members has been central to the many successes of our union. But despite the recognition of the hard work, the recognition of the pay rate of those same women workers is not realised. When thinking about low paid women, what springs into your mind? – Catering Assistants, Cleaners, Care Workers, Dental Assistants, Admin Workers, Business Support – the list is endless.

In Local Government a third of workers fall into the low paid category, which means they earn less than £19,124.56 a year or £448.60 a week. Yet as a union we struggle to fill the seats on various bodies, such as Regional Council, National and Service Group Conferences which are specifically reserved for low paid women, Why? Is it because there is a stigma attached to low pay? Are people frightened to be identified as low paid as some people may think that if you are low paid then you are uneducated? Maybe re-branding would help

We as a union must remove this stigma from the minds of everyone. We must investigate the barriers to engagement by our low paid women members; promote, support and encourage women members to take up seats where they can be effective and their skills recognised and seek election to senior roles within the union. We need to educate all our members around the vital role low paid women can play in securing the future of our union.

**Janet Green, South Tyneside LG**

## First Time Delegate

I'm Alexandra Patton, a domestic from Newcastle Hospitals. This is my first National Delegates Conference and I'm not too sure what to expect. I only found out I was coming on Monday as one of our delegates was unable to make it.

I have been a member of UNISON for years but hadn't been particularly active. I used to come into the office now and again but last year my Branch Secretary asked if I'd ever consider doing the Reps training and so last October I completed my training. Since then I've attended Health Conference and completed Job Evaluation training. It's been an exciting time, I've attended my first demonstration and had my photo taken – a lot!

I have particularly enjoyed the NHS Pay consultation as this has been a great opportunity to get the members more involved in the union. As a domestic the majority of women I work with are low paid; we're all looking forward to our 3% pay rise this year and the back dated pay hitting our pay packets in July.

Looking forward to meeting new people and having a good conference,  
Alex, Newcastle Hospitals.



## Motion 53 and amendment 53.1:- Crisis in Local Government

Welcome to the Conference – for those have been to the Local Government Conference (2 down 4 to go) .

This is an excellent motion that sets out the current crisis faced by all local authorities with increasing demands but dwindling finances caused by this government's ideologically led austerity campaign. Local authorities that provide or commission services that are needed for society including lifelong education, wellbeing, transportation , libraries, youth provision, refuse collection and social care to name but a few are under considerable pressure and some near or at breaking point. We also heard in the Local Government Conference regarding the funding crisis in Education particularly in primary schools but this does not mean that Adult Education is free from the war on education being waged by this Government.

With increasing Council Tax the public are demanding more from local authorities struggling to stand still with ever increasing responsibilities divested from central government but funding does not follow.



Staff are struggling to provide services with the mantra of more for less with over half of all local government workers looking to leave for less stressful work elsewhere according to a survey published today (18/06/19). Local services are collapsing and council workers are being left to pick up the pieces and do the best they can amid the chaos. This disturbing survey should ring alarm bells in Whitehall and also alert ministers to the crisis happening in councils up and down the country. Local

authorities have had to cut so many vital services that they have now reached a point where vulnerable children and the elderly struggle to get the help that they need, entire communities are suffering, and the public are being put at risk.

I will be moving amendment 53.1 on behalf of the NEC which points out a couple of inaccuracies in the motion but is meant to strengthen and improve this otherwise excellent motion from Aberdeenshire Branch. The amendment also sets out to point out what we all know – we need to reverse the discredited and failing privatisation agenda and promote our agenda of in-sourcing which evidence shows leads to more cost effective and higher quality services.

As is stated in the motion we need to be proud of the services that Local Government provides, either directly or indirectly, and say that our services matter and it is time society recognises, values and respects these services.

Support Motion 53 as amended by 53.1 Enjoy your conference

**Edwin Jeffries, NEC**

This year's Regional Social will be happening on:

**Thursday 21st June**

**From 7.30 pm**

**At THE WALRUS**

**10 Ship St (The Lanes) BN1 1AD**

It's an opportunity for Northern Delegates to get together informally for a drink and a bite to eat from the buffet. With a DJ playing some tunes it will be a relaxing and enjoyable evening and we hope you can join us.

If any delegate requires a copy of the Regional Newssheet in an alternative format please contact Allison Jackson direct.

## On The Fringe...

**Lunchtime: 12.45—1.45**

**Solidarity with Turkey:  
Defending rights, democracy  
and decent work  
Room 1 A/B**

**Educating against racism—  
UNISON's role in combating  
racism in the workplace over  
25 years  
Syndicate 2 Ground Floor**

**The future of social care  
Syndicate 3 1st Floor**

**Health & Safety  
Syndicate 4 1st Floor**

**Welfare AGM  
Auditorium 2 1st Floor**

**Evening: 5.15—6.15**

**Cuba and Venezuela: Another  
world is possible  
Auditorium 2 1st Floor**

**Key speaker at this lunchtime's  
Show Racism the Red Card Fringe is  
Regional Secretary, Clare Williams**

**SHOW RACISM THE RED CARD  
Challenging Racism in the workplace**

Speakers Include:



Clare Williams,  
UNISON Northern  
Regional Secretary



Stephen Cavalier,  
CEO Thompsons  
Solicitors



Roger McKenzie,  
Assistant General  
Secretary UNISON



Kevin Maguire,  
Political Editor  
The Mirror



Luther Blissett,  
former England  
International



Elizabeth Cameron,  
UNISON - NEC Black  
member

**Tuesday 19th June**

**12:45 - 13:45**

**Syndicate 2 - First floor, Brighton Centre**

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**STANDING UP FOR YOU**

Hi , for those delegates staying on for National Conference are you interested in running as part of a Unison relay team??  
The race is on the evening of Wednesday 20th. It's a good laugh and post race drinks are (almost) compulsory!  
See link below.....anyone interested get back to me, Steve Scott on 07794427443.

Thanks, Steve

<http://brightonsports.co.uk/the-weakest-link-relay-run>

## Your Newsheet Needs You!!

**You're here at Conference! Is it your first time? Are you speaking in a debate? Got something to say about your time in Brighton? Let us know your thoughts, opinions and views through our Regional newsletter.**

**See Allison in the Newsheet Room (3rd Floor) or e-mail her  
a.jackson2@unison.co.uk**

