

Northern News

National Delegate Conference



Wednesday 15 June 2022



Motion 58: Campaigning for a National Care Service

By Paul Thompson

The Covid-19 pandemic had a severe impact on the social care sector. The death rate among care workers has been particularly high. The pandemic has disproportionately affected Black and migrant workers, who make up a large part of the social care workforce.

Care workers often had a lack of access to appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), no access to adequate sick pay when self-isolating, a failure to ensure sufficient availability of COVID-19 tests, and then being marked out as the first staff to be subject to mandatory vaccination (in England). We called care workers in the region using our phone banking system which was welcomed by members. They told us about the pressure they were under at the start of and throughout the pandemic.

Despite everything that care workers have been through over the past two years, far too many are still receiving poverty pay and a quarter of staff in England are on zero hour contracts, with half of

Wednesday Fringes

UNISON College
(Syndicate 2)

Speakers:
Christina McAnea; Mark Winterbotham, Director IFF; John Jones, NEC (Chair)

Wednesday lunchtime 12.45 - 1.45

Refreshments/food provided

Colombia's Elections: What Next for Peace and Human Rights
(Syndicate 2)

Wednesday evening 5.15 - 6.15

Speakers:
TBC

Celebrating UNISON's Year of Disabled Workers Rally and Reception
(Auditorium 2)

Wednesday evening 5.15 - 6.15

Speakers:
Special guest speakers

those employed in the domiciliary part of the sector.

The motion notes the support for a much more fundamental overhaul of care provision based on a number of key elements: a massive increase in funding; substantial and sustained pay rises (recognising that UNISON is calling for a national minimum wage of £15 per hour); and a comprehensive workforce strategy for the sector, amongst other things. The ultimate aim should be to seek parity with the NHS, with free care at the point of use and for social care to be seen as a crucial part of the economic infrastructure.

The motion asks the National Executive Council to intensify the union's demands for a National Care Service, in line with the principles outlined above and backed by campaigning, lobbying and research.

The motion also asks to ensure that the union works across each part of the UK and with service users to share best practice in campaigning and developing the National Care Services, calling for substantial changes to the delivery of care services.

Please support the motion.

We need you!

The Northern National Delegate Conference Newsheet Team needs you!

Do you have an article you would like to write? It could be on an upcoming motion, reporting back on a fringe you attended or anything else conference related.



Paul Foy, Nicky Ramanandi and Linda Hobson will be around if you would like to talk to them about your article or you can contact Paul Riley, who is producing the newsheets, by emailing him at p.riley@unison.co.uk.

The team is on hand to help you write the articles too!

Looking Forward to NDC 2022

By Denise Ward

No-one can deny how well activists adapted to electronic meetings and communications within UNISON, but isn't it wonderful to have an 'actual' National Delegate Conference this year?

For me it started by travelling down from Teesside University with my colleague, friend and activist, Catherine Elliott. It was wonderful to have a good discussion on the way down from the Northern Region about the various conference motions and fringe meetings we were interested in.

It all got even better when we bumped into other delegates from the Northern and Scottish regions on the train from London to Brighton, where further lively discussions took place.

At our evening regional pre-conference meeting help was on hand to explain how conference runs, whilst offering assistance on practical matters such as printing speeches etc, encouragement regarding speaking and support to new delegates and those attending on their own. It was lovely to see new faces as well as the familiar ones.

After this a few of us went to eat together and chatted about our local work in the branches and how much we were looking forward to Conference. On our way back to our hotel we came across more of our colleagues and yes - you've guessed - another lively conversation took place.

This all demonstrates that whilst meetings on-line do work, they cannot replace the benefits of getting together and the added advantage of the ad hoc conversations and discussions that take place when doing so.

Here's to a great 2022 National Delegate Conference and a big hello to everyone attending.

TOGETHER WE RISE IN UNISON

Motion 67: Levelling Up

By Nicky Ramanandi

This is a Northern Region motion and will be debated on Wednesday afternoon.

Boris Johnson has called "levelling up" the "defining mission" of his government. The aim is to give people and communities that feel they have been left behind a chance to catch up. However, we know that this is not the reality and we know that the policies pursued by the Tories have resulted in the UK becoming one of the most unequal countries in the World, and with some of the greatest divides between regions. This has led to far greater social inequality, widening gaps between rich and poor, white and black.

The reality is that the funding for levelling up pales into insignificance compared to what has been lost due to years of austerity and that the package announced by the Government doesn't even replace cash that poorer regions used to receive through the EU.

The impact of austerity is particularly evident in our region. We have high levels of unemployment, growing in-work poverty, some of the most used food banks in the country, and life expectancy falling. The motion rightly highlights that if anyone is qualified to identify the criteria for levelling up and effective of policies to achieve this - it is UNISON, along with the wider trade union and labour movement.

Please be in the hall to support the motion.

Motion 46: The Future of the National Minimum Wage

By Linda Hobson

On Tuesday we debated a motion on UNISON at 30, celebrating the successes of our union whilst looking forward to the next 30 years. One of those successes must be the implementation of the National Minimum Wage (NMW) under the last Labour Government in 1999. UNISON's General Secretary, Rodney Bickerstaff, played a pivotal role in establishing the NMW.

UNISON members shared their experiences of low pay and were able, through our campaigning and organising structures, to take their issue, make it UNISON policy and work with the Labour Party to get it implemented. The Low Pay Commission was established, and the National Minimum Wage became a reality. This improved the lives of UNISON members across our whole union. Now, as we see the impact of over 10 years of Tory austerity, the cost-of-living crisis and wage depreciation, it is timely that we call for a review of the NMW and the National Living Wage.

The Tory Government have consistently eroded the value of the NMW, whilst poverty rates, including in-work poverty, have grown and are set to increase further still as the price of everything soars. Families earning NMW levels of pay are struggling to make ends meet. As Helen Firman, our Northern Region NEC rep says, "there's too much month at the end of my wages". Barley enough to cover the essentials, like food and energy costs, rent and childcare, let alone to think about a much-needed family holiday.

We've seen our members targeted by unscrupulous money lenders, both legal and illegal loan sharks and the impact this has on them at work. More and more of our casework includes an element of financial well-being and our Branch Welfare Officers are doing a fantastic job supporting our members, but this should not have to happen as regularly as it does. Our members should be paid a decent wage that gives them the dignity they deserve and a review of the NMW and the NLW will give us the evidence we need to take our campaign for decent pay forward for all our members, no matter where they work. This needs to sit alongside our campaign

for more secure work, what is the use of an NMW/NLW if you can't get a secure contract that guarantees you the hours needed?

I'm an NHS worker and in March this year, I had to ask my employer what their plans were to prevent some of our staff from falling below NMW levels in April. The Tory Government didn't even realise, but why would they, low pay doesn't impact any of them! The Government have put NHS Trusts at risk of legal action and reputational risk from their inability to address this appropriately.

This motion calls for us to review the current NMW/NLW and the operation of the effectiveness of the Low Pay Commission. It also asks us to develop policy proposals and work with other organisations to change the current system. We need employers to act responsibly and ensure their workers are paid a wage that can meet the rising cost of living. A fair and liveable wage that gives employees a chance to lead a dignified life, with access to opportunities and choices needed to fully participate in society.

Comp B: Public Sector Pay, Finance, Taxation and the Cost of Living Crisis

By Miriam Mafemba and Neville Hancock

The worsening of the cost of living crisis, inflation at the highest rate for 30 years and a record increase in household energy bills, is putting working people under increasing financial pressure. According to the Office of National Statistics data inflation using the government's preferred measure of the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) rose by 5.4 percent in the 12 months to December 2021. This is the highest rate since 1997. The more representative Retail Price Index registered an increase in inflation of 7.1 percent.

There is a disproportionate impact of inflation on the low paid who have to spend a greater proportion of their income on essentials such as food and energy bills, which are rising at rates faster even than indexed inflation. Meanwhile the Office of National Statistics figures estimates that inequality is so pronounced in the UK that the wealthiest 10 percent hold around half of all wealth.

The public sector workforce should not be facing a post pandemic cut in their living standards. Public sector wages represent an effective form of economic stimulus. Providing growth that has a tangible effect in local communities. The below inflation wage rises and pay freezes which have been the norm over the last decade have contributed to slow growth, worsening inequality and a recruitment and retention crisis in key sectors of public services.

Pay is failing to keep up with the cost of living effects on pensions in later life and today's pensioners are facing rising bills too with fixed incomes. Furthermore, the government has suspended the triple lock on the state pension. We need to acknowledge that more needs to be done to engage members in pay consultations to ensure that pressure can be brought on the employers to offer real pay increases and not below inflation ones. Activists need to "empower our own members," to get them to believe taking action will result in an improved pay offer.

Also when we are pursuing national pay claims, we are doing so in a hostile environment. This motion asks the NEC to:

- 1) Co-ordinate support across the union in support of fair pay rises which will defend members' standard of living;
- 2) Provide maximum support to our members submitting pay claims and embarking upon industrial action including, where appropriate, co-ordination of campaign activity with sister unions across public services and the TUC, WTUC, STUC, and ICTU;
- 3) Produce briefings of the key facts and issues of the campaign and to provide this to branches along with info graphics and visual materials that can be used on social media and newsletters;
- 4) Issue case studies/examples that can be used to demonstrate and humanise campaign material;
- 5) Work with regions to support the running of regional activist workshops as part of the pay campaign to help spread good practice and to further inform future publicity and campaign events;
- 6) Assist in securing decent pay awards by lending the weight of our entire union to proactive campaigns on pay that start from an expectation of

employer and government hostility and seek to organise and mobilise members across service groups to capitalise on pressure points such as local elections or high-profile events;

7) Work with the National Retired Members' Committee to build an alliance across the generations on cost of living issues.

Motion 87: Review of the Equality Act

By **Jenny Black**

The Equality Act 2010 has now been in place for over ten years and doesn't meet the needs of a modern society. It fails disabled people as well as people across the equality spectrum and there are still no plans for a review.

The government's recent Disability Strategy, published on 31 July last year, is a very thin document made up of re-heated promises and very little additional funding. Even worse, as far as Disabled Members are concerned, it does not include a commitment to updating the Equality Act. Unsurprisingly, the government's Disability Strategy has now been found to be illegal and based on an illegal consultation.

Since Brexit, equality legislation that came from the European Union has been transferred into domestic law but there is no guarantee that this won't be repealed as the government review their position on EU law.

Some sections of the Equality Act, such as dual discrimination, have never made it onto the statute books leaving some Disabled Members at increased risk of discrimination. A 2021 government response to a consultation on sexual harassment in the workplace mentioned looking at protections against third party harassment in the workplace by customers, contractors and members of the public. For example, no concrete steps have been taken and it seems unlikely this will happen any time soon. In the same consultation response, the government rejected calls to reintroduce the repealed power of Employment Tribunals to make broader recommendations such as requiring an employer to make reasonable adjustments.

Although the call for reform and a review is much needed, we need to be careful that any call for the Equality Act to be reviewed is robust so the Government can't use the review as a way to water down the rights of those from minority groups.

Other groups, such as carers, still have no legal rights or protection against discrimination under the Equality Act, except in relation to discrimination by association.

The motions asks the NEC to work with the National Disabled Members Committee and Labour Link to:

- 1) Campaign for a full independent review of the Equality Act 2010 which involves meaningful consultation with disabled people and considers whether there are other groups, such as carers, who need to be offered additional protection;
- 2) Lobby for the parts of the Equality Bill that were never implemented to be revisited, reviewed and brought into law;
- 3) Support the TUC campaign to fully implement all Equality Act provisions including the socio-economic duty, dual and multiple discrimination and the publication of impact assessments;
- 4) Campaign for the introduction of protection against third party harassment in the workplace as a matter of urgency;
- 5) Campaign for the Disability and Employment Charter to be recognised as the starting point for radically improving the government's Disability Strategy, which should be based on robust consultation with disabled people and should include improved support for disabled people to enforce their rights, including the right to reasonable adjustments, provided by the Equality Act.

Please support this motion.



Comp A: Supporting Low Paid Women to be Active in Our Union – Lift as You Rise

By Pat Heron

Our women members are our greatest asset.

In January 2021 UNISON members elected our first woman General Secretary, Christina McAnea. Representing more than a million women working across a range of public services, UNISON, with a commitment to lay democracy, proportionality and fair representation enshrined within our rule book, are in a unique position to ensure that women's voices and experiences are heard at all levels of government as representatives, negotiators, and leaders.

The pandemic has clearly demonstrated the varied and important roles that women have in the workplace. Whilst some worked from home, others were in schools, people's homes and healthcare settings, and were reliant on UNISON to ensure that they were safe, protected and appropriately rewarded. It became clear that the experiences of women workers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were different to those of England as restrictions differed in the four countries.

No service can exist without the cleaners, caterers, clerical and care workers that are predominately women and they are often overlooked and go unrecognised.

Additionally, the experiences of Black women, disabled women, LGBT+ women, young women and older women became more distinct as the impact of the pandemic illustrated the risks and dangers that women experience.

UNISON's structures try to ensure that low paid women are represented at all levels of the union. However, more work needs to be done to remove the barriers that stop low paid women becoming involved in our union. Barriers can include work life balance, caring commitments, employer frustrations and some reasons are cultural. There is a piece of work to be done to ensure that women are



supported and empowered to challenge and change our union. The Membership Engagement Project and the exploratory work that has been done with women who meet the earnings limit for UNISON's reserved seats will help address these barriers.

The motion calls for the NEC and other areas of the union to do the important work of reviewing the involvement of low paid women in the union, which includes:

- Working with all low paid women elected onto the NEC and Service Group Executives to consider proposals to improve involvement.
- Developing support and mentoring for women activists.
- Recognising that the different experiences of women in all 4 countries of the UK need to be reflected in all work plans at a UK level.
- Developing a strategy for recruitment, organising and campaigning around issues relevant to low paid women.
- Considering a commission to look at the barriers to low paid women's involvement.

Please support this motion.

Motion 44: White Ribbon Accreditation

By Ed Whitby

White Ribbon UK is the leading charity working to end men's violence against women, and preventing it before starts, by ensuring that men understand that they can be part of the solution and can make a positive difference.

Newcastle City UNISON, as well as our council, are accredited organisations and we are urging UNISON to sign up nationally.

7975 incidents of domestic abuse were recorded in Newcastle in the year ending March 2021, this is a increase of 18% over the last 5 years. But we know too many incidents go unreported or sadly where women and girls are not listened too or supported properly.

For all members, especially men, to make the White Ribbon Promise - to never use, excuse or remain silent about men's violence against women. For each UNISON branch to identify a White Ribbon Ambassador or Champion.

I'm a White Ribbon ambassador at Newcastle City Council and if anyone wants to ask about how to get involved and what it means, come and talk to me.



Workplaces can establish a positive culture that ensures there is equality, safety and well-being for all staff. White Ribbon supports this by raising awareness and promoting culture change, so that everyone knows that they are part of change, that men can be allies in ending violence and harassment.

This motion asks UNISON to affirm White Ribbon and to promote it throughout the union. Especially marking WR Day on 25th November.

It's not all
WORK
WORK
WORK

Socials

There are socials most evenings organised by different Regions and most will be advertised in the Northern daily newsletter.

Northern Regional Social

Join delegates from across the Region for drinks, nibbles and a private DJ

Thursday 16th June 2022 @ 7.30pm

The Walrus, 10 Ship Street, Brighton, BN1 1AD

UNISON Northern NDC Word Search

L F R I N G E M E E T I N G K Q W E
Y F R E E B I E S R L B A T T S X Z
I L O C A L G O V E R N M E N T H U
I A R T I C L E Y T H E S N A K E E
S E R V I C E G R O U P E L T M U B
T P U B L I C S E R V I C E S G Q R
E L E C T E D D N M S U A U J J B A
I J B N S E L F O R G A N I S E D N
K T H I G H E R E D U C A T I O N C
S T A N D I N G O R D E R S T N T H
W I Q G N E W S S H E E T Y E I S J
G X C A B G P D R R W A T E R T J W

Find the following words in the puzzle.

Words are hidden → ↓ and ↘ .

How many can you find?

ARTICLE
BRANCH
ELECTED
FREEBIES
FRINGE MEETING

HIGHER EDUCATION
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
NEWS SHEET
PUBLIC SERVICES
SELF ORGANISED

SERVICE GROUP
STANDING ORDERS
THE SNAKE
WATER