

**2025 National Delegate Conference
Decisions**

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Motions

5. Industrial Action Better and Stronger in UNISON

Carried as Amended: 5.1

It would also be useful to learn from Scotland's Regional Plan, that delivered effective campaigning and successful industrial action ballots and strike action in Local Government, Scottish Water and Higher Education, utilising modern organising tools and lay activists and staff working to deliver positive outcomes; building membership and recruiting activists in social care; organising around violence in schools and pay grading in the NHS.

industrial disputes - better and stronger in UNISON!

Context:

- 1) The Labour government's Employment Rights Bill means strike laws are set to change dramatically, lifting the restrictions that have stifled industrial action and, since 2016, have prevented some UNISON disputes progressing beyond ballot stage.
- 2) The union must use these changes in strike laws to deliver not just more but better and stronger disputes in support of the union's bargaining objectives.

Rationale:

- a) Used effectively, consultations, formal ballots and industrial action are powerful tools to support our bargaining objectives. This has been apparent in the disputes taken under the Organising to Win campaign, where high levels of member support at ballot and strike stage have driven significant settlements. Even in our larger bargaining groups, where action has grown ever more complex to deliver, approaching ballots and action strategically has resulted in industrial action that has improved outcomes for significant numbers of members.

Conference notes and supports the ongoing Winning for the Future project which has been laying the groundwork for the union to improve ballot and dispute planning, including through:

- i) Embedding ballot readiness in the annual Organising Framework;
- ii) Developing and rolling out of activist training;
- iii) Sharing learning to strengthen decision-making and strategic planning;
- iv) Generating access to consistent, reliable and accurate information about the status, outcomes and impact of disputes.

This work, coupled with learning from Organising to Win disputes, must be consolidated in order to respond to and capitalise on the legal changes to come.

By doing this, the union can protect against creeping complacency and a performative approach to disputes. Otherwise, we risk low levels of participation in consultations and ballots, a drop in focus on organising and action being taken that

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is not well supported or sustainable and therefore not an effective tool in winning disputes.

Low levels of participation undermine members' confidence that ballots and industrial action can deliver results. If we want our union to be a fighting union, where we continue to use industrial disputes as an effective tool, we must ensure UNISON is in a position to adapt quickly to the legal changes and anticipate and respond to a potential increase in volume of requests to run ballots and take action.

Actions:

A) Conference therefore asks the National Executive Council to work across the union including with service groups and regions to consider the implications of the changes to strike laws. Topics will include (but not be limited to):

- I) UNISON's internal processes and protocols related to industrial action;
- II) Interaction between different decision making bodies on industrial action matters;
- III) Implications for collective bargaining;
- IV) Practical support for ballots and action.

Findings, and changes made or recommended from this work, will be set out in a report to National Delegate Conference 2026.

In undertaking this work, it will be particularly useful to learn from colleagues in Northern Ireland (where action has not been subject to the current restrictions in place across Great Britain) as well as the Winning for the Future project and the successful Organising to Win campaigns.

6. Lasting Legacy for Self Organised Groups

Carried

Conference notes that the year of LGBT+ workers finished at the end of 2024. This year followed the years of young members, disabled members and in 2023 the year of Black workers. In a union of one million women workers, we have seen how intersectionality is woven into our very fabric and is throughout our existence.

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 disabled workers, Black workers, young members, and LGBT+ workers. During these 'years of' 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 the union and allows everyone to have a place, and a voice in our union.

We have seen how celebrating the contributions and achievements of disabled workers, Black workers, young members, and LGBT+ workers is essential to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment. Organising for change whilst

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linking with UNISON's national and local campaigns are 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 have strengthened our ability to advocate effectively for all members, ensuring that no one is left behind. In the fight for equality nobody will be left behind, as equality for one is equality for all. By celebrating the achievements of disabled workers, Black workers, young members, 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.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to work with all sections of the union to:

- 1) Continue to celebrate and highlight the achievements and contributions of disabled workers, women workers, Black workers, young members, and LGBT+ workers within UNISON;
- 2) Continue to prioritise intersectional approaches in all organising, campaigning, advocacy and support efforts, ensuring that specific needs of those with intersecting identities are addressed;
- 3) Organise events, campaigns, and educational initiatives that promote awareness and understanding of intersectionality and its importance in the fight for equality and inclusion;
- 4) Encourage 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) Work with all sections of the union so that the organising to win strategy is closely aligned with our equalities agenda and intersectionality is welcomed as a powerful tool in all UNISON campaigns.

7. Engagement, Education and Retention of Apprentices

Carried

Conference notes that the engagement and retention of Young Members can be challenging. However, engaging with young apprentices can often present additional challenges, with there often being little to no education on what a union is, while also feeling that their employment is tentative. Despite the fact there are approximately 135,000 Young Members in UNISON, only 1,911 of these are apprentices (1.42 percent) and have been entered on WARMS, and it is possible that this information is not up to date or accurate.

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Conference notes that the engagement and retention of Young Members can be challenging. However, engaging with young apprentices can often present attentional challenges, with there often being little to no education on what a Union is, while also feeling that their employment is tentative. There are less than 2,000 apprentices in UNISON that have been entered on WARMS, however it is possible that this information is not up to date or accurate.

In the year 2022-2023, public sector targets were that 2.3 percent of all public sector employees should be apprentices. At this same time, according to the most recent UK Parliament report on apprentices, in England alone, the majority of apprentices for the academic year 22-23 were under the age of 25, while there is a very similar story in Wales, this meaning that there are a significant number of Young Workers who are likely without representation.

Conference notes that the quality of apprenticeships offered often varies across different sites within the same employer. UNISON is keen to push employers to take a strategic approach so that there is consistency across all apprenticeships. Conference also believes that training for apprentices is best provided through well funded Further Education colleges, rather than by public providers, and recognises the need for adequate funding of FE in order to meet this aspiration.

UNISON's Apprenticeship charter details the rights that all apprentices should have, along with the responsibilities of employers to the apprentices that they employ. These include providing a safe and healthy working environment and payment at the rate for the job. Conference notes that further effort is required to encourage and support employers in engaging with and implementing the charter.

On UNISON's apprenticeships page, there are a large number of resources, including a model apprenticeship agreement, and toolkit for negotiators and reps. Our Apprentices in Health page also explores the issues facing apprentices in Health, in more detail. UNISON Learning and Organising Services have developed a course for branches and reps who would like to support apprentices through a mentoring scheme, covering a wide range of topics.

Conference calls for the National Executive Council to:

- 1) Work with regions and service groups on campaigning activities to encourage our apprentices to be active in our union, and speak on issues that affect them in their workplace;
- 2) Work with regions to promote UNISON in colleges and sixth forms where possible to recruit apprentices prior to starting employment and inform them of their workplace rights;
- 3) Work with regions, service groups, and National Executive Council to develop a yearly campaign dedicated to recruitment and engagement with Apprentices.
- 4) Work with relevant service groups to identify how many employers have signed onto UNISON's Apprenticeship Charter and encourage more employers to sign up;

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- 5) Work with UNISON College to promote UNISON mentoring for apprentices training across every region in order to engage with apprentices more effectively;
- 6) Work with branches to survey apprentices on how best to engage with them, as well as any issues that they are currently experiencing for more targeted support.

8. Support for Young Single Mothers

Carried

Conference believes that it is imperative that UNISON takes proactive steps to support and empower young single mothers in the workforce. The union should recognise the vital role that this group of workers play in the workforce and acknowledge the unique challenges they face.

The increasing number of young single mothers in various sectors highlight the need for specific policies and initiatives to ensure they are more active in the union, and that their well being, job security, and professional growth is also looked after.

Conference applauds the union for its relentless campaigns on equal pay and several other campaigns to help workers fight for fairness and equality in the workplace and beyond.

However, to engage women who are young single mothers, there is need to:

- 1) Ensure that young single mothers are adequately represented in union leadership and decision-making bodies;
- 2) Establish targeted training programs that equip young single mothers with skills and qualifications necessary for union leadership and career advancement;
- 3) Continue to promote flexible working arrangements, including homeworking options and part-time positions, to help young single mothers balance work and family responsibilities;
- 4) It is beneficial to foster a supportive and inclusive environment for young single mothers, ensuring that they have the resources and opportunities needed to thrive both personally and professionally. This will not only benefit young single mothers but also contribute to a more equitable and resilient union and workforce.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to:

- a) Continue to advocate for and promote flexible working and work-life balance, and to promote the work done by the National Women's Committee on these issues;
- b) Consider setting up support groups within the union, working with the National Women's Committee and the National Young Members Forum, to provide mentorship, counselling, and peer support for young single mothers;
- c) Develop a strategy, working with the National Women's Committee and the National Young Members Forum to improve the representation of young single mothers in UNISON's leadership and decision-making structures;

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- d) Encourage branches and regions to make available information on how young people can have access to creche for their children or claim back the cost of childcare from their branches and regions when attending UNISON meetings and events to enable wider participation of young single parents.

9. Support for Branch Activists

Carried as Amended: 9.1

Being a branch officer and being able to support your colleagues is undoubtedly a privileged position and one that can be extremely rewarding. However, anecdotally we hear that many branch officers, particularly workplace stewards and branch secretaries are suffering from burn out. Workloads are high but not measured or capped, casework is complex and often have a heavy emotional load and, in many branches, there are simply not enough activists to do all the work. And the reality of the work that we do in our workplaces is listen to problems, support demanding situations, and challenge decisions, all things which take an emotional toll. Reps do not have the support of their line managers from their substantive posts in these situations and regional UNISON support is not tailored to the emotional needs of our branch officers. It is our view that there is a gap in UNISON provision for meeting the emotional well-being of activists.

This motion calls on the National Executive Council to undertake further investigation and research into this topic including by means of a survey of all activists to understand better the totality of workloads branch offers undertake and to consider, if there is a gap in provision of support to branch activists. If the outcome indicates that there is a gap, that resource should be allocated to develop a ranges of services that can support our activists including in being able to support emotional and physical well being.

11. Neurodiversity Training for UNISON Activists

Carried as Amended: 11.1

UNISON stewards have observed an increase in casework involving members with a wide range of neurodiverse conditions. Many stewards lack the necessary education and understanding of the challenges faced by our growing number of neurodiverse members. Without proper knowledge and training in this area, many stewards feel ill-equipped to effectively support our members in matters such as disciplinary actions, reasonable adjustments, and performance capability.

As activists, it is essential that we provide practical advice, support, and strategies to help identify barriers that workplaces and working conditions present to neurodivergent workers, as well as measures to remove or reduce these barriers. Additionally, we need to pinpoint workplace changes that would benefit neurodivergent employees.

Many of our activists are neurodivergent themselves – some only being diagnosed later in life – it is also important that their fellow branch officers and reps are aware of their needs.

Stewards are witnessing more members undergoing formal processes due to neurodiversity. Given the current lack of understanding and training among some stewards, both we and our members would greatly benefit from professional training.

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Conference calls on the National Executive Council to provide accessible professional training related to neurodiversity for all activists and stewards.

12. All We Ask is to be Treated with Dignity and Respect

Carried

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

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

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

13. Kinship Care and Fostering

Carried

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 step parent, stepbrother or stepsister, or someone who is not 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 percent 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, 4,249 children in Scotland and 2,199 in Northern Ireland. It is estimated more than one-third of kinship carers are experiencing an income drop of more than 50 percent 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

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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.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to work with the National Women's Committee:

- 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;
- 4) To work with Labour Link to raise the profile of Kinship Carers and the issues they and foster carers face with the Labour party.

14. Sexual Harassment

Carried

Conference is proud of the work that UNISON has achieved prior to and following the #MeToo movement in highlighting and tackling the pervasive and unacceptable culture around sexual harassment.

However, UNISON's own surveys in 2024 show how much further there is to go, with one in ten healthcare workers reporting that they have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace and one in ten female support staff in schools. It is clear that it continues to be prevalent despite high profile campaigning and widespread public condemnation.

In 2023 a TUC poll also found that in two out of five (39 percent) recent incidents, victims were sexually harassed not by a colleague, but by a third party. Over half of younger women reported that they were the victim of a third party.

For public sector workers, and for those women who may be working in public facing roles or lone working in the community, those working unsocial hours or shift workers are at greater risk because it can also mean traveling alone to and from work, often in the dark, which increases their potential vulnerability from third parties. In UNISON's 2024 survey of healthcare workers, two fifths experienced sexual harassment from their patients rather than their colleagues.

We know that it is not only women that experience sexual harassment, whilst men may be less likely to be a victim, it can be equally devastating, and they may also face stigma in reporting incidents.

We must continue to acknowledge and address the different experiences of women, including the disproportionate harassment of and differing experiences of Black, Young, and Disabled women. As part of the legacy of the Year of the LGBT+ worker,

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we are shocked to hear that nearly seven in ten LGBT+ workers have been sexually harassed at work.

Lower paid women in the public sector face a secondary factor caused by serious power imbalances with figures of authority such as doctors, teachers and senior managers leading to fear and intimidation in reporting. For those working for private or outsourced companies, such as those in social care or childcare, they may not have access to HR support, sexual harassment training or policies to protect them.

Conference welcomes the Worker Protection Act that came into force on 26 October 2024 which introduced a new proactive obligation on employers to take preventative steps to eliminate workplace sexual harassment. Employers will still be expected to take 'reasonable steps' to prevent sexual harassment by any perpetrator, including third parties such as patients, customers, clients, service users, contractors and members of the public. However, the Act does not include liability for third party harassment.

There is still much to do to ensure that the new obligations are effective and that employers take this responsibility seriously and that public sector workers and UNISON members are protected from everyone in the workplace, no matter who they work with or where they work. Conference also welcomes the work that the TUC has been undertaking following the #MeToo movement and believes that as trade unionists we must continue to model best practises and a zero-tolerance approach when it comes to all forms of harassment.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to:

- 1) Promote UNISON's existing model policies on combatting sexual harassment, including the 'Sexual Harassment is a Workplace Issue' guidance, which can be found on the UNISON website;
- 2) Provide information to and support for branches to identify employers without a sexual harassment policy, to enable them to campaign to tackle sexual harassment in every workplace, utilising UNISON's guide including the checklist for branches and model sexual harassment policy;
- 3) Ensure guidance is updated to reflect the new 'Worker Protection Act' with practical steps and guidance on steps employers should take to tackle third party sexual harassment;
- 4) Encourage all branches to ensure all employers review existing sexual harassment policies and risk assessments to include third parties, working with relevant sections of the union to ensure that it is suitable for all public sector workers, including for remote and lone workers, as well as those in outsourced or private companies;
- 5) Work with LAOS to update existing training to include the new 'Worker Protection Act' and ensure that activists are equipped to hold employers accountable;

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- 6) Continue to campaign to strengthen the existing laws regarding sexual harassment, including liability for third party harassment and through the Labour Link, lobby the government to do so;
- 7) Work with the national self organised group committees to continue to highlight the different experiences of different groups of workers, building on the legacy of recent 'Year of the' SOG campaigns, such as Year of the LGBT+ worker;
- 8) Promote UNISON's zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment within UNISON and ensure that there is appropriate support and policies in place for all members within UNISON, utilising TUC guidance and information.

17. Universal Credit

Fell

21. Gender Pensions Gap

Carried

We note that UNISON has been at the forefront of fighting for Equal Pay and tackling the Gender Pay Gap. However, the experience in pensions is very different. Government Actuary's Department statistics indicate that the Gender Pension Gap in England and Wales is 63 percent in the NHS Pension Scheme, and 49 percent in the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Research has shown that the reasons behind this gap are varied, but include:

- 1) Different working patterns (for example taking time off work for caring responsibilities, or working part time);
- 2) Different earnings (women on average earn less than men);
- 3) Women being more likely to work in contracted out jobs with poorer pension schemes;
- 4) Women being more likely to work part time and so earn below the lower threshold for auto-enrolment;
- 5) How divorce settlements treat pensions.

We believe that women deserve equality in retirement as much as they deserve equality in their working lives, and public employment and public sector pension schemes should be at the forefront of removing this discrimination.

Therefore, we call on the National Executive Council to work with service groups, self organised groups, and Labour Link to:

- a) Publicise the existence of the Gender Pensions Gap to members;
- b) Campaign for the Gender Pensions Gap injustice to be rectified;
- c) Issue materials to members to help educate them about this;
- d) Raise this issue with employers;

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- e) Write to pension schemes covering UNISON members asking them to research and disclose their Gender Pension Gaps.

28. Campaign Against Racist Reform UK

Fell

30. Don't Take Our Winter Fuel Allowance Away!

Carried as Amended: 30.1

Conference expresses its concern at the shocking announcement at the end of July 2024, by the Labour government, that those State Pensioners not entitled to benefits will no longer get the Winter Fuel Allowance from autumn 2024.

The Winter Fuel Allowance is specifically designed to help cover winter heating costs. Many pensioners rely on this payment and are amongst those most likely to be affected by the cost of fuel and rises in energy costs.

It is not part of the Pensions Triple Lock, which is designed to cover the rise in the cost of living. It has been estimated that under the Triple Lock mechanism the new state pension will rise by £460 per year in April 2025, and the old state pension by £353. Conference notes that this means a pensioner over 80 on the old state pension will (after compensating for the loss of the Winter Fuel Payment) will be better off by a guinea a week in 2025/6.

It is estimated that 10 million pensioners in England alone have lost their right to this annual payment from autumn 2024 worth between £100 and £300.

Conference notes that although the decision initially only applied to England and Wales, further constraints placed on the Scottish government's funding resulted in similar restrictions on the Pension Age Winter Heating Payment in Scotland being announced on 14 August 2024.

Conference notes the government won a vote in the House of Commons to go forward with this change on 10 September 2024, despite there being no Impact Statement on the consequences of the proposal being made available, no mandate for the proposal being contained in the 2024 Labour General Election manifesto, and, at Prime Minister's Questions on 1 May 2024, Sir Kier Starmer asking Rishi Sunak, "Will the Prime Minister rule out taking Winter Fuel Payments off them (pensioners) to help fund his £45 billion black hole?"

Conference further notes that the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) stated it had received 38,000 new applications for Pension Credit in the five weeks following the announcement of 29 July, however in an "equalities analyses" released by the DWP after Freedom of Information requests on 14 September 2024, the DWP estimated a further 780,000 people were eligible for Pension Credit but had yet to claim it. Conference notes that this matter is not helped by the DWP application form for Pension Credit which runs to 24 pages and 243 questions.

Pension Credit (which in itself needs change) is an 'all or nothing' benefit. If your income is a few pounds under the limit, you get the benefits but stray even a few pounds over and you get nothing. This change will penalise those who are the poorest in society removing their small cushion of finance at a time when extra heating is required at the coldest time of the year.

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Age UK has estimated that more than two million people who are only just above the eligibility threshold for Pension Credit will no longer qualify and who will be hardest hit by this decision. A means tested benefit has more than a whiff of Conservative dogma about the myth of the wealthy pensioner.

Many State Pensioners who are members of UNISON, particularly those that gave a lifetime working in low paid public sector jobs, with little or very poor work pensions, will be caught up in this situation. Many pensioners live alone in poorly insulated homes where there is an increased need for need heating to overcome the cold, and now face the double hardship in the loss of this payment at the time the cap on energy prices has been raised. It will undoubtedly lead to a rise in cold related illnesses, such as flu and bronchitis, and inevitably more winter deaths.

Conference notes that this shock decision has been met with fury by pensioners' organisations such as the National Pensioners' Convention, the Scottish Pensioners' Forum, Age UK, Independent Age as well as vocal opposition from unions such as Unite, GMB and CWU. Silver Voices launched a petition which at the time of writing had acquired over 50,000 signatures.

Whilst Conference recognises that it could be argued that, in the early stages of a new government's life, there is an option to criticise privately rather than express public disapproval in a statement or campaign, but if such as strategy was adopted it clearly failed as the vote in the House of Commons on 10 September showed. Conference believes the time for UNISON to stand idly by in mute disapproval of the abolition of the Winter Fuel Payment has passed. Whilst UNISON is generally supportive of the Labour government, it is now time for UNISON to campaign against this targeted and punitive attack on pensioners.

Conference notes UNISON's response to the removal of the winter fuel allowance has included signposting members to support services, publicly condemning the removal on multiple occasions, lobbying government ministers on the issue, and calling for the reinstatement of the winter fuel allowance in our poverty strategy submissions. Conference believes we must continue to call for the reinstatement of the winter fuel allowance publicly in our anti-poverty work. Conference notes UNISON's support of a Unite motion at Labour Party conference 2025 explicitly calling on the government to reverse the decision. Conference believes we must campaign against this attack on pensioners

Conference notes that, despite the Commons vote of 10 September (which was called for by opposition parties), the changes to eligibility for Winter Fuel Payments has been made through secondary legislation, which means it is far easier to amend or repeal than if it were enshrined in primary legislation such as an Act of Parliament. Conference therefore believes the issue is far from determined and the fight against it must continue.

UNISON needs to show all retired members across the UK that they are concerned about their welfare and this dire situation by utilising all their powers to demand that this government retracts such an appalling decision. This is not how our members expected to be treated by a Labour government. Conference believes that the

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decision to remove the Winter Fuel allowance was unfair and calls upon the National Executive Council to take this matter forward as a matter of urgency.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to:

- 1) Campaign on this issue and raise our concerns with:
 - a) The Labour Party via our Labour Link;
 - b) The TUC.
- 2) Work with Labour Link to call for the immediate reinstatement of the winter fuel payment, including payment of any arrears in the strongest possible terms;
- 3) Work with Labour Link to lobby the Labour government to institute a fair, equitable and simple system to help pensioners with winter fuel costs which ensures the poorest and most vulnerable pensioners in society have the necessary funds to stay warm in winter;
- 4) Campaign with other relevant pensioner organisations for the abolition of restrictions on the Winter Fuel Payment for 2024/5;
- 5) Work with regional and branch retired members groups to highlight this issue, raise awareness of the issues amongst retired members, encourage such groups to raise the matter of Winter Fuel Payments at branch and regional levels and provide regular campaign guidance and updates on progress;
- 6) Encourage retired members to participate in and support branch, regional, and national UNISON initiatives and campaigns by pensioner organisations to reinstate this essential benefit, and to lobby their MPs on the need for immediate reinstatement of the Winter Fuel Allowance for all those in receipt of the state pension.

32. Public Services, Living Standards, and the Economy After the 2024 General Election

Carried as Amended: 32.1, 32.3

Conference notes the damage to public services caused by 14 years of austerity and Tory Government.

Local government, the NHS, education, social care and police and justice have all been starved of the funding and investment they need to serve our communities. School and hospital buildings have been left to crumble. Jobs have been lost. Pay and terms and conditions have been cut in real terms.

Conference agrees that the legacy of Tory government is not only felt by public service users and workers themselves, it also has an impact in the wider economy. The decline in public expenditure, public service jobs and careers and real terms pay has also had a chill effect on local high streets and the availability of decent work in our communities.

Conference recognises that the election of a new government in July 2024 has resulted in a limited change of direction for public services and the economy. Despite

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inheriting dire public finances, one of the incoming government's first acts was to implement the recommendations of the pay review bodies. Its first budget, in October 2024, delivered substantial increases in public spending and investment, funded through higher taxes and increased borrowing.

In addition, new fiscal rules, also announced in the budget, will reclassify government borrowing for capital investment and infrastructure, which will deliver new schools and hospitals, as well as important rail, energy and housing projects.

However, Health and Social Care Secretary Wes Streeting is threatening an expansion of the role of the private sector in the NHS, something we are still paying for from last time. And the start of 2025 brought speculation about further cuts to a public sector that is already at breaking point.

Conference takes the view that government needs to be bolder and more radical if it is to reverse over a decade of destruction before it can successfully transform public services and the economy for the better. In addition, Conference is concerned that:

- 1) The increase in spending announced in the budget is front loaded, resulting in uncertainty about what might come later in the government's term of office;
- 2) The additional funding for local government is, after years of cuts, still only a sticking plaster;
- 3) Increases in interest payments on government debt caused by volatile global bond markets jeopardise further spending increases;
- 4) The decision to rule out increases in income tax for the highest earners and other progressive taxes has removed important sources of future funding, which could cause problems in future years;
- 5) The emphasis on the need for economic growth to fund future increases in spending on public services suggests that the government fail to properly recognise the virtuous circle whereby more spending on day to day public services itself contributes to growth;
- 6) The decisions relating to the two child benefit limit welfare and disability benefits cuts, and the removal of universal winter fuel payments may lead to increased poverty levels and greater pressures on public services.
- 7) the decision by the government to commit to increasing military expenditure at the cost of properly funding our public services and overseas aid

Conference also notes that the government seeks efficiency savings (which could lead to cuts) and reform. Previous experience suggests that such initiatives can be counter productive. The starting point for our public services must be increased funding so that we can provide the services our communities desperately need and deserve.

Conference believes that well funded public services are vital to increasing living standards and the alleviation of poverty. Conference firmly believes that public services and the welfare state must be rooted in the belief that we share a collective

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duty to each other, and that it should exist to serve and protect every citizen, regardless of background and identity. Conference further believes that the challenge of solving poverty is complex, with both properly remunerated work and well-funded social security being central to the eradication of poverty. The management of living costs, mitigation against poverty, and economic growth are also central to reducing poverty levels across the UK.

Conference welcomes the limited initial steps the Labour government has taken to reduce poverty and improve living standards in the UK, including beginning the rebuilding of public services, the extension of the Household Support Fund, the introduction of free breakfast clubs in schools, a significant increase in the National Minimum Wage (with rates for 18 to 20 year olds seeing a 16 percent rise), and the introduction of the Employment Rights Bill. However, Conference believes the Government has also made a number of mistakes in seeking to place the burden for financial divisions on children living in poverty, pensioners and WASPI women and migrants. It has also indicated that workers, many of them UNISON members could be made to accept unacceptable pay restraint, rather than impose genuine wealth taxes on those who continued to grow ridiculously wealthy. Conference opposes such decisions and believes it is essential to continue to push the government for bolder steps to improve living standards.

Conference agrees that UNISON, as the UK's largest trade union, is the voice of public services and has a major role to play in championing the case for sustained investment and explaining the benefits this will provide, not just to public service users but to the economy too. This is a role that the union will play in all four nations of the UK, recognising a wider political context in which the Tories, Reform UK, the right wing media seek to undermine public services at every turn.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to:

- a) Work with both sections of the political fund to support a campaign for long term, sustainable funding for all of our public services;
- b) Campaign for a compassionate welfare system that prioritises alleviation of hardship, decent living standards for all, and a well-resourced social safety net, including the return of winter fuel allowance provision of properly funded disability benefits and the abolition of the two-child benefit cap and the abolition of No Recourse to Public Funds;
- c) Support service groups to engage with proposals for public service reform and address particular challenges faced by different sectors;
- d) Work with the TUC, STUC, TUC Cymru and Northern Ireland Committee of ICTU to ensure a cross union/cross UK approach to our campaign, at Westminster, Holyrood, the Senedd and Stormont;
- e) Undertake research in support of the campaign, demonstrating the challenges still faced by public services and public sector workers, making the case for further commitment from the government, setting out proposals and their economic benefits;

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- f) Highlight the implications of Tory and Reform UK policies on UK public services;
- g) Provide campaign resources to branches, to support local level activity to engage MPs in discussions about investment needed in public services at constituency level;
- h) Conduct research into the experiences of UNISON members with regard to poverty, living standards, and the cost of living crisis;
- i) Help members in need by promoting UNISON's There For You charity, both by encouraging donations from branches and members, and by connecting struggling members with the charity's grants and support services;
- j) To call and organise a high profile national demonstration early in 2026 to demand the significant increases in spending on public services by taxing the rich, and business. Asking for support from TUC other unions and anti cuts campaigns.
- k) to oppose government proposals to ramp up military spending from 2.3 percent to 2.5 percent of national income by 2027.

33. The Future of Public Services

Fell

34. Campaigning for a Bailout for Public Services

Carried as Amended: 34.1

Conferences notes:

- 1) Public services have been left to crumble. Tens of billions of pounds of funding shortfalls for NHS, education, housing and local authorities exacerbate the enormous detrimental impact of years of underinvestment and privatisation of key services;
- 2) All of these services have been significantly worsened as a result and many are on the brink of collapse. One in four local authorities in England may go bust by 2026-2027, the NHS is constantly in crisis near full capacity, and the privatisation of rail has left the travel and shipping infrastructure in tatters;
- 3) Universities are facing a specific funding crisis with many in deficit, some at risk of bankruptcy, and most carrying out cuts and course closures affecting our members' jobs;
- 4) Corporate profits in the UK are at an all-time high. A 2024 study of 17,000 companies found that profit margins have increased by 30 percent since the pandemic, fuelled in part by profiteering off of the inflation crisis. A September 2024 statement by the Bank of England stated that the high level of corporate profiteering was actually fuelling the continuation of the cost of living crisis. At this time of an immense cost of living crisis and decaying services for the working class, companies in energy and water are prioritising record dividend payouts to shareholders.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to:

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- a) Initiate a campaign calling for the government to organise a bailout for public services;
- b) That this campaign call for a £500billion investment in public services, over the remainder of the current and next Parliament funded by a tax on corporations and the super wealthy, an international tax on speculative financial transactions, a Land Value Tax to capture the value of and increases in the value of land which currently only accrue to landowners renationalisation of all public services and insourcing of all associated work, and a mass recruitment and training programme for all understaffed services.

35. Public Service Funding - a Time to Be Brave

Fell

39. Respecting Our Police Staff Members

Carried

Conference notes the vital work which UNISON's police staff members undertake for police forces in England, Scotland and Wales. Police staff work alongside police officers to solve crime, catch criminals and keep us from harm. They are not police officers, do not have powers of arrest and cannot carry firearms, but can be awarded most of the powers of their officer colleagues. Police staff perform many operational, operational support and organisational support functions. Our police staff members long ago rejected the derogatory name of 'civilian staff'.

Conference understands that the roles carried out by our police staff members, like many jobs in the public sector, are poorly understood and therefore under appreciated by the public, politicians and the media. The first voice you will hear if you call the police in an emergency will be a member of police staff working as a call-taker in a police control room. That call taker will assess the emergency and pass details to a police staff dispatcher who sends police officers. A police staff scenes of crime officer will then visit the scene to gather forensic evidence to help identify any perpetrator. Digital forensic staff will comb through phone and other records to help catch those responsible. A file preparation clerk will put the papers together to go to the Crown Prosecution Service. A witness protection officer will help victims and their families through the court process. There are literally hundreds of other specialist police staff roles, like these, involved in keeping our communities safe. 60 percent of police staff are women and bring a very important gender balance to policing, given that the officer workforce is predominantly male.

Police community support officers are also police staff and proud UNISON members. PCSOs were the backbone of neighbourhood policing under the previous Labour Government. They reconnected police forces to their communities in a way that police officers were unable to do. The community focus of PCSOs encouraged a far higher proportion of Black applicants to join the police service. But years of Tory cuts between 2010 and 2024 have seen the PCSO workforce cut by 55 percent.

Conference further notes that by 2019, Tory police cuts had left the Conservatives' reputation as the party of law and order in tatters. Boris Johnson tried to repair this reputation by promising to recruit 20,000 police officers to replace those cut previously by his own government. Police force budget deficits mean that 6,000 of these officers now sit in police staff jobs, as police forces hold staff vacancies open to manage their deficits.

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Conference welcomes UNISON's 'We Are Police Staff' Campaign which seeks to raise the profile of our police staff members and to educate the public, politicians and media on the vital work that our members carry out to keep communities safe.

UNISON has a long history of challenging misogyny, sexism, racism and homophobia in the police service. Policing is no different to other parts of the public sector in these respects; many other public bodies having accepted that their internal culture requires serious reform. UNISON's police staff members and police branches are part of the solution to re-setting police culture. UNISON's self organised groups are strongly organised in policing and are part of the vital process of creating a police service which is more representative and more respectful of the communities it serves.

Conference therefore calls upon the National Executive Council to:

- 1) Support UNISON's 'We Are Police Staff' Campaign;
- 2) Raise awareness of UNISON police staff members' work and vocation;
- 3) Champion the work of police staff in UNISON's internal and external media;
- 4) Work via the Labour Link and Campaign Fund to give MPs, MSPs, Senedd members and local politicians a much better understanding of the work of police staff;
- 5) Promote respect for our police staff members in UNISON.

42. Higher Education in Crisis – Save Our Universities!

Carried

Conference notes:

- 1) The failure of central government and devolved national administrations to fund higher education properly has led to a major funding crisis across the UK. Many higher education institutions are struggling financially, and some are likely to be close to bankruptcy if student recruitment and retention does not improve;
- 2) The £9,000 tuition fee for UK undergraduate students, introduced a decade ago, temporarily gave universities financial stability at the expense of a generation of students, many of whom now have thousands of pounds' worth of debt hanging over their future prospects in life;
- 3) However, this money was not passed on to university workers, with many institutions choosing to spend it on buildings, marketing and vanity projects to entice future students to enrol. Marketisation of universities has created colossal amounts of waste and duplicated effort when public services could be so much more efficient if not forced to compete with each other;
- 4) Since the introduction of the £9,000 fee, it has increased twice. Once to £9,250 and then more recently, to a maximum of £9,535 for eligible institutions. This will leave more students in more debt, but will not solve the underlying funding problem, as the real fee value has been eroded by inflation and government teaching grants have been systematically cut in real terms;

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- 5) University leaders are reacting by making cuts – closing down courses, campuses and limiting research and student choice. Students are relentlessly ripped off by university accommodation providers or private landlords, who rake in publicly funded student maintenance loans, just as housing benefit flows to rich property owners;
- 6) Our members' jobs depend on higher education being recognised as a public service with genuine value to society and funded as such. UNISON's policy is for an end to tuition fees and for general progressive taxation to fund childcare and education at all levels, from nursery, to primary and secondary, to further and higher;
- 7) Good quality free education has the potential to benefit all, whether it's study for interest, learning skills for a profession, or quality research that advances human knowledge and understanding of the world. The Tories have sold off, privatised and limited access at all levels, making it harder for young, working class students in particular;
- 8) Our union expects and demands that this Labour government reverses the damage done and takes urgent steps to protect jobs and ensure that those working in education are properly rewarded.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to:

- a) Support all those branches and members campaigning to save jobs at higher education institutions across the UK;
- b) Reaffirm its commitment to campaign for higher education as a public service, an end to tuition fees and for general taxation to support proper funding of all universities and student grants;
- c) Publicise the situation facing universities, using its influence, including through Labour Link, to make the case for UNISON's agreed policy.

49. Artificial Intelligence in Public Services

Carried as Amended: 49.1

Conference notes that artificial intelligence (AI) and automated systems are being rapidly deployed across UK public services.

Conference recognises that AI and automation offer significant opportunities to transform public services. These technologies could help address many longstanding challenges by streamlining administrative processes, providing better data insights for decision-making, and freeing up worker time to focus on complex tasks requiring human judgment and interaction.

However, Conference notes that without appropriate intervention, the introduction of AI systems across public services presents risks to services and workers. The potential impacts of AI on workers are numerous, and include work intensification, risks to health and safety, discriminatory and unfair outcomes, lack of control over data, loss of privacy, lack of human agency and freedom over work, and the degradation of human judgement and skill.

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There is also the risk of AI to causing harm to citizens if systems go wrong, with worrying implications for equalities. When algorithmic systems are introduced into our public services, the consequences of mistakes in those algorithms can be catastrophic for vulnerable individuals reliant on services, including those with protected characteristics.

The environmental impact of artificial intelligence should also be noted and taken into account. Training AI models and operating data centres require substantial computing power, leading to increased greenhouse gas emissions and a growing carbon footprint. In addition, data centres require significant amounts of water for cooling the servers and infrastructure. These environmental impacts are another significant reason that AI should be used wisely, and not to replicate tasks that could easily be done by a worker. Instead it should be reserved for problem solving where it brings a valuable addition to a task only, and consideration be given to the environmental impact of its use.

Conference further notes that procurement spending on digital technologies continues to rise substantially across the public sector, where major contracts are being awarded to private sector technology companies. The public sector holds some of our most sensitive data as citizens, and conference believes careful consideration must be given to maintaining public control over essential infrastructure and sensitive data.

The integration of AI into public services raises important questions about governance, accountability and the changing nature of public sector work. As these technologies become more sophisticated and widespread, their impact on jobs, skills requirements and working conditions will likely increase. While some routine tasks may be automated, new roles and responsibilities will emerge. This transition must be managed carefully to ensure workers are supported to adapt and develop new skills rather than being displaced.

Conference believes that realising the benefits of AI while protecting workers and public services requires a balanced and inclusive approach. This means ensuring meaningful worker involvement in system design and implementation, so that AI complements and enhances rather than replaces human capabilities. It requires proper investment in training and support so workers can effectively use new technologies and develop their skills for the future. Clear governance frameworks are needed to maintain democratic oversight while enabling innovation, along with strong safeguards for data protection and privacy.

UNISON Cymru/Wales recognises that the successful integration of AI into public services relies on building effective partnerships between government, employers, workers and unions. These partnerships should aim to harness AI's potential to improve services while protecting jobs and working conditions. They should ensure that productivity gains benefit both service users and workers, while maintaining public control over essential infrastructure and data. This requires developing comprehensive frameworks for worker consultation, skills development, impact assessment and ethical AI use. As such it has, in Social Partnership co-produced guidance on Managing Technology that Manages People with public sector employers and Welsh government. This guidance outlines three critical elements: the checks and balances required for the purpose or development of new algorithmic

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management systems, guidance for the responsible implementation of AI as a workforce management tool and ongoing post-adoption evaluation. Implementation is being piloted in a number of public sector organisations. UNISON Cymru/Wales continues to work in partnership with Welsh government, employers and the Centre for Digital Public Services to develop wider guidance and advice for the public sector.

Conference recognises that unions have a vital role to play in shaping how AI is implemented in public services as demonstrated through the work in Wales. Through collective bargaining, consultation and social partnership, unions can help ensure that technological change benefits workers and services rather than simply driving efficiencies and cost reduction. This includes negotiating over the impacts on jobs and working conditions, securing proper training and support, establishing clear data protection safeguards, and ensuring workers have a meaningful voice in how systems are designed and deployed.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to:

- 1) Establish AI and digitalisation in public services as a key policy, campaigning and organising issue for UNISON;
- 2) Lobby UK governments for AI use in public services that prioritises the engagement, consultation and consent of workers;
- 3) Work with service groups to develop sector-specific campaigns on AI and new technologies;
- 4) Develop guidance and training for branches on negotiating on AI and data in public sector workplaces;
- 5) Campaign for procurement requirements requiring transparency, workers' rights protections and public ownership safeguards in AI contracts;
- 6) Work with the relevant self organised groups and regions to mitigate any unintended consequences, for example, diluting the quality of British Sign Language.

59. Pay Compensation to the WASPI Women Now!

Carried as Amended: 59.1

Conference welcomes the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman report dated 21 March 2024 entitled 'Women's State Pension Age' which considered the impact of the arbitrary change in state pension age and its effect on women born after 6 April 1950.

We note the level of compensation recommended by the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman recommended Level 4 compensation (£1000 - £2950) due to "the lasting impact on someone affected";(paragraph 504 of the report which is estimated to total between £3.5 billion and £10.5 billion). While recognising that this does not meet the expectations of many WASPI (Women Against State Pension Inequality) women it is nevertheless a major step forward.

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Conference expected the new UK government to instruct the Department of Work and Pensions to pay the recommended compensation as a matter of urgency. However, on 17 December 2024, the government announced that no compensation would be paid to WASPI women. The government's language unequivocally suggests that funding is unavailable to compensate the affected women. Pensions are funded through National Insurance, with contributions from workers representing deferred wages. Consequently, WASPI women are demanding what they have rightfully paid into. Any mismanagement of public funds is not the fault of those who contributed their deferred wages

This decision was a cruel blow to a generation of women, some of whom are now suffering severe financial distress. It came as a shock particularly given pre-election support from Labour for the WASPI campaign, including those in leadership positions.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to work with National Retired Members' Committee and the National Labour Link Committee to lobby and campaign for immediate payment of the compensation that WASPI women expected.

60. Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWAG)

Carried

Conference notes with alarm the 2024 National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) report acknowledging that violence against women is a 'national emergency' in England and Wales. Although their analysis revealed that two million women a year are estimated to be victims of male violence, they admitted that this was an underestimate because many if not most offences were not reported. One of their spokespersons said that the real figure for victims was more like four million.

Unsurprisingly, this report fails to mention that police violence against women has massively dented trust in the police from victims themselves. Conference also recognises the disappointingly low conviction rates for these types of violent crimes against women.

VAWAG highlights in an extreme form the oppression of women supported and enabled by sexist and misogynist ideology. This ideology is fuelled by extreme material on the internet and misogynistic 'influencers'.

In campaigning to protect and extend women's sex based rights, Conference calls on the National Executive Council to:

- 1) Campaign to ensure the effective monitoring of the prevalence and nature of domestic violence and sexual harassment, including racialised forms of sexual harassment to which Black women are subjected;
- 2) Demand that employers prevent and respond to sexual harassment and victimisation at work including in the precarious job sector;
- 3) Campaign to reverse the effective decriminalisation of rape and ensure access to justice for all sexual and domestic violence survivors;

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- 4) Campaign to ensure that migrant women can access the support, welfare systems and legal tools they need to escape abuse, and can report violence without fear of immigration enforcement;
- 5) Work with our international partners to ensure women's sex based and reproductive rights are protected globally;
- 6) Campaign for fully funded support services, staffed by women, for women fleeing violence and domestic abuse;
- 7) Campaign for measures to prevent violence against women and girls, including resources and support for schools to address harmful sexual behaviour;
- 8) Campaign to eradicate the cultural, economic and social norms that are the root causes of violence against women and girls;
- 9) Challenge any violence against our female members in public sector workplaces. Violence at work is never acceptable;
- 10) Report annually on UNISON's activities to end VAWAG.

64. Unite for More Rights

Carried

Conference notes:

- 1) 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;
- 2) Anti-Trans rhetoric leads to physical assaults. Home Office statistics in 2023 revealed that hate crime against Trans people increased 11 percent from the previous year, and 186 percent in the previous five years;
- 3) 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;
- 4) 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.

Conference believes:

- a) That Trans women are women and Trans men are men, all our LGBT+ comrades must be respected;
- b) 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;

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- c) 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;
- d) 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.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to work with the National Women's Committee and the National LGBT+ Committee to:

- i) Co-produce a myth busting factsheet, with all the self-organised groups in UNISON, to counter the idea that an increase in Trans rights would mean a decrease in the rights of others;
- ii) To work with all other relevant bodies in UNISON such as, but not limited to, 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) Work with all our intersectional self organised groups to ensure all our rights are protected, respected and strengthened;
- iv) To continue to roll out the UNISON Trans ally training into branches.

69. Developing the Migrant Workers Network

Carried

Conference notes the publication in July 2024 of UNISON's partner organisation the Joint Council for Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) report "Work it out: advancing migrant worker's rights".

This report outlines that "in the care sector in particular, we are seeing a record number of workers without enough hours or pay, having their visas curtailed due to sponsorship revocations, and at real risk of destitution and being made undocumented.

These dangers are compounded by a wider landscape of a fragmented, underfunded labour enforcement system alongside increasingly precarious, outsourced and unregulated work in which all workers, regardless of where they are from, lack adequate regulatory protections."

Conference also notes that as a result of the introduction of the Health and Care Visa there has been a surge in cases of Modern Day Slavery and UNISON activists, across a range of service groups, are finding ever increasing cases of bad practice. Migrant Workers are too often the victims of exploitation including poor accommodation and bad employment practices like the illegal deduction of wages, high agency fees, not paying the minimum wage, trade union victimisation and inadequate health and safety.

Conference additionally notes the launch of the North West Migrant Social Care Workers Charter which proposes a comprehensive response to the treatment of migrant care workers, their accommodation, victimisation/discrimination including threat of deportation if dismissed, and ethical recruitment.

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Conference recognises that a high proportion of Migrant Workers will also be Black members. For many, UNISON's structures will be new and unfamiliar, and they will be unaware that self-organised group structures are in place to support them and assist with developing their organising, bargaining, and campaigning agendas.

Conference, therefore, calls on the National Executive Council to:

- 1) Work with the National Executive Council Black Seat Representatives, Strategic Organising Unit, Bargaining Unit and other appropriate stakeholders to highlight the issues confronting Black Migrant Workers;
- 2) Work with the Service Group Liaison Committee and Private Sector Members Forum on issues of joint concern experienced by Black Migrant Workers;
- 3) Work with Regional Black Members' structures to promote UNISON's Migrant Workers Network and their inclusion within regional work streams;
- 4) Work with UNISON's Migrant Workers Network to promote Black Members' Self Organisation to their members.

73. End the Exploitation of Migrant Care Workers in the United Kingdom

Fell

EM1. Reaffirming UNISON's Commitment to Trans, Non-Binary and Gender-Diverse Rights Following Supreme Court Ruling

Carried

Conference recognises that the recent UK Supreme Court ruling [For Women Scotland Ltd (Appellant) v The Scottish Ministers (Respondent)] concerning the legal definition of sex has caused significant concern across the LGBT+ structures of UNISON, particularly among Trans, Non-Binary and Gender Diverse members. The judgment has been interpreted by some as undermining the rights and protections of trans people, especially in relation to access to single-sex services and spaces. This has led to increased and often hostile public discourse, misrepresenting the lived realities of trans people and potentially threatening the safety and dignity of all members.

Conference recognises that though interim guidance has been issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, some employers, including those within our branch, have already amended local policy which goes beyond the scope of this interim guidance, further threatening the safety and dignity of employees.

Conference acknowledges that it has been the long term policy of UNISON to advocate for Trans Equality. Part of this commitment has been that Trans rights are human rights and affirming that Trans women are women, Trans men are men, and Non-Binary people's identities are valid.

UNISON has a proud and clear policy of supporting Trans, Non-Binary and Gender-Diverse members and opposing all forms of transphobia. Now more than ever, UNISON needs to stand up in advocating for Trans, Non-Binary and Gender-Diverse equality.

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Conference resolves to ask the National Executive Council to:

- 1) Work to ensure that the unequivocal position that all Trans, Non-Binary and Gender-Diverse people deserve full equality, dignity, and respect is upheld;
- 2) Ensure that all relevant constituent parts of UNISON continue to be safe and inclusive spaces for Trans, Non-binary and Gender-Diverse members;
- 3) Develop and implement a strategy to lobby the Labour Government to ensure that UK law protects Trans, Non-Binary and Gender-Diverse people;
- 4) Work with the self-organised groups, service groups, regions, branches and wider trade union movement to actively counter transphobia in the workplace and society.

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Composites

A. Organising to Win and Delivering a Decade of Growth

Carried

2024 was a historic year for UNISON with over 215,000 new joiners resulting in net growth of 39,500. This growth of 3.3 percent significantly exceeds the minimum one percent target.

The activist base also grew in 2024 with 4,500 new workplace activists appointed and a six percent increase in Employment Relations Act (ERA) accredited stewards.

In the Organising to Win priority campaigns, member participation within aligned organising and bargaining strategies delivered significant material wins for members, amplified by digital communications to project a confident, growing and powerful union.

The new Organising Framework was launched, recognising the branch as the base organising foundation of the union with new action plan templates alongside Organising to Win guides to support activists to drive effective organising at the branch and workplace level. The Branch Support and Organising Fund has ensured additional resource with consistent reporting and evaluation for continuous improvement of the UNISON organising approach.

Significant membership growth of ten percent was achieved in social care, predominantly from migrant workers, and UNISON strengthened our partnerships with the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) and built our internal capacity to support and organise this vital but highly exploited group of UK public service workers.

Conference notes:

- 1) The positive impact Organising to Win has already had upon UNISON;

- 2) That Organising to Win approach has enabled members to begin winning improvements for themselves which was clearly demonstrated at National Delegate Conference 2024 when representatives from 27 successful disputes paraded in front of the Conference;

- 3) Members winning local disputes helps increase recruitment of new members and new lay activists;

- 4) That learning from our successes is important to help future success, recruitment and renewal of UNISON's activist base across the whole union;

Conference believes we can sustain and build on the success of recent years. The NHS Earnings Max strategy and Pay Fair for Patient Care Campaign continues to

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deliver multi million pound wins for members and enhance UNISON's strategic organising capacity. And the Labour government has brought significant new organising opportunities with commitments to a Social Care Fair Pay Agreement and National Care Service, and School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB) in England with the provision for Fair Pay Agreements in Wales and Scotland.

Conference believes that the Organising to Win strategy leaves UNISON well placed to maximise these new opportunities through aligned organising and bargaining strategies to deliver significant material wins for members and achieve a decade of growth in membership, activism, influence and resource.

Conference believes that:

- a) Both strategic organising and base organising are vital for the success of the Organising to Win strategy to transform the future for our union;
- b) Strategic organising involves organising techniques that can be learnt and applied by lay activists.

Conference calls upon the National Executive Council to continue the resourced implementation of the Organising to Win strategy, with a particular 2025 focus on:

- i) Support for priority "One UNISON" organising campaigns of NHS Earnings Max/Pay Fair for Patient Care, target English Multi Academy Trusts and wider SSSNB implementation, and building a strong and powerful UNISON across UK adult social care;
- ii) Evaluate the introduction of the new "Active Member" category which enables social care members to be active beyond their individual participation without the full activist role commitment, and support extension of the role to other areas of the union;
- iii) Encourage branches to engage in the new Organising Framework action plan process and to provide resource and support to any Organising to Win priority organising campaign covering members of the branch;
- iv) Review existing UNISON guides, resources, and activist training to ensure consistency with the Organising to Win strategy;
- v) Continue to develop the UNISON migrant worker member network and support an organising campaign to deliver UNISON's policy position of fairer health and social care visa rules;

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vi) Action the recommendations of the 2024 Organising to Win new activist report including:

A) Work with self organised groups, young members and retired members to review and remove barriers to activist development particularly from groups under-represented in UNISON activist roles;

B) Set union wide objectives to urgently improve the proportion of new stewards who attend ERA training.

vii) To action previous motions passed at National Delegate Conferences seeking to learn from successful disputes and devise a lay activist training course on winning ballots, campaigns and disputes and which called on the National Executive Council to implement the Organising to Win strategy, with a particular focus on:

I) Devising a training course for lay activists on how to win ballots, campaigns and disputes, using the organising techniques of strategic organising;

II) Making sure such training is available to all lay activists before National Delegate Conference 2026;

III) Developing the means of incorporating such training within the courses for new stewards so that such organising becomes standard practice for all new activists.

B. The Far Right

Carried

Conference notes with deep alarm an upsurge in activity by the far right, aided by the growing normalisation of far right ideas and rhetoric in politics. These range from increasing permission given to racist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, antisemitic, misogynistic as well as violent language targeting political opponents on social media and in real life. Conference notes the alarming rise of far right violence and hate crimes in the UK, particularly targeting Black communities, migrants, and asylum seekers and the increasingly hostile environment, particularly in the summer 2024 perpetuated by far right violence and ideology, fuelled by divisive rhetoric, misinformation, Islamophobia and hate speech across social media and other platforms.

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Anti-immigrant and Islamophobic rhetoric has risen to a new level with extreme language targeting particular communities being voiced by mainstream politicians. Reports from independent bodies, and government statistics highlighted that the growth of racially motivated attacks have had a detrimental impact on the safety, mental health, and overall wellbeing of Black members across the UK. Additionally, far right organisations have capitalised on economic and social hardships, exacerbating racial tensions, and fostering division. Conference notes that these ideas and language are no longer confined to the fringes of society or street violence by fringe groups but are being articulated by powerful and influential voices in mainstream politics.

Rhetoric about 'small boats' from both Tory and Labour politicians have further put the rights of vulnerable refugees at risk. Eugenicist ideas targeting disabled people, Black communities and LGBT+ people has gained greater currency. This has gone hand in hand with deeply misogynistic ideas about women, their place in society, control of their bodies and their right to choose.

The traction these populist right-wing movements have gained at the ballot box is more alarming when placed against the background of existing right-wing national governments in other European states.

Conference expresses profound concern over the disturbing rise of far right movements worldwide. While espousing nationalist politics, the far right across Europe have found common cause across national borders. Internationally, we are confronted by the threat of a growing and emboldened far right. In 2024, Europe saw a clear shift to the right, with both the European elections and national polls in France, Belgium, Germany, Italy and Austria showing a move towards right-wing and extreme-right politics. In the 2024 European Parliament elections, the far right won 150 of the 720 seats. A new and emboldened far right politics is unapologetically promoting an alarming vision of an all-white Europe with promotion of racist, antisemitic conspiracy theories about 'the great replacement'. The European far right as a movement have also gained a powerful new ally in Donald Trump and his allies in the world of business and media. The UK and its democracy has come under sustained attack by the far right, corroding our politics and endangering communities and individuals.

The specific threats in the UK include the intimidatory demonstrations targeting asylum seekers, street demonstrations, including the appalling riots in summer 2024 and the proliferation of an online post-organisational far-right. These movements, which thrive on division and conflict, pose a serious threat to the principles of democracy, equality, and workers' rights that form the cornerstone of our union values.

Yet more insidious is the rightward movement of electoral politics, spearheaded by the leadership of Reform UK, exploiting divisive narratives, whilst the Conservative Party desperately tries to keep them at bay by moving itself further rightwards.

We also face increasingly ill-informed hostility to our cohesion from 'global influencers' such as multi-billionaire Elon Musk and a range of other social media giants who seek to impose their world view via new methods of communication. Elon Musk plans to cut a third of all US government jobs under the Trump administration.

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Conference unequivocally condemns public figures like Elon Musk who fuel tensions and division by engaging in inflammatory rhetoric and demonstrating support for far right figures such as Tommy Robinson. Such endorsements seek to legitimise far right ideologies, contributing to a climate ripe for division and undermining the efforts to foster community cohesion and solidarity.

Conference recalls the horrific attacks on the community in Southport, in the North West Region, in July 2024 when an individual stabbed a total of eleven children (three fatally) and two adults - an event which came to have national resonance. Conference condemns the horrific violence in Southport where three little girls were murdered and eight other children were left grievously harmed by Axel Rudakubana. Their families and their community have been left irreparably wounded. The actions of the far right, exploiting this tragedy, attacking communities and attacks on public service workers including police and healthcare workers are unforgivable. Violence erupted in a manner that many thought consigned to history. Black people were physically attacked in public spaces. Houses where Muslim people were suspected to be residing were attacked street by street. Shops and community spaces were looted and attacked. Public service workers were assaulted. Most alarmingly of all there were attempts to burn down accommodations housing asylum seeker families who were terrified and trapped as attackers laughed and joked about killing them. The violence raged like wildfire, racing across cities and towns, organised online but emerging in the most brutal ways on our streets. HOPE not Hate research helped expose a key ring leader of the riots, a dangerous neo-Nazi who made racist and violent threats against Jews and Muslim people and attempted further escalations in local communities. Racists were emboldened, racial slurs came thick and fast on videos and graffitied on walls. Violence against "foreigners", Black people, and migrants, were not only threatened, but enacted.

Conference welcomes the unequivocal responses by communities across the UK to challenge the far-right, rebuild public spaces and express anti-racist solidarity. Conference acknowledges the spirit shown by communities supporting each other in the aftermath of terrible violence, proving that extremist beliefs are unwelcome and not representative of the unity and success of multiculturalism in the United Kingdom. Conference welcomes the initiatives led by Stand Up To Racism to oppose these riots and prevent their planned repeat the following week.

Conference further recalls that, following this event, deliberate misrepresentation and false information provoked widespread violent disorder orchestrated by far right actors which targeted asylum seekers and minoritised communities across our nations. The victims, their families and the impacted communities of our nations were supported and sustained during these events by an active, responsive, and dedicated range of UNISON members across all our service groups.

Conference is proud at the role played by UNISON at every level in supporting our members and challenging the rhetoric of hate and division. Whether it was picking up the pieces in the aftermath of the riots, supporting our members who feared being targeted by violence, taking part in rallies to defend public spaces and communities against threatened mobilisations by the far right, or strongly speaking out to challenge those who sought to defend or excuse racist violence, UNISON and its members led the way.

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Conference believes the state has a crucial role to play in counteracting this trend through the provision of strong fully funded public services. Education, health care, social welfare, and housing are essential for building strong, cohesive communities that can withstand the forces of division and hate. These services not only meet basic human needs but also promote a sense of unity and common purpose among diverse populations.

Conference notes that Reform, as well as Far Right and Fascist groups have benefited from fourteen years of Conservative government, which created the conditions for right wing extremism and Fascism to grow. These conditions include: at home, multiple crises, exacerbated by the failure of the 40 year experiment in neo-liberalism and 14 years of Tory austerity; a cost-of-living crisis; a housing crisis; a crisis in health and care; a crisis in public services; and a climate crisis, widespread and growing economic hardship; a general sense of unfairness; an almost complete break in trust with a political class that is increasingly seen as out of touch with millions of people; the constant demonisation and scapegoating of minorities, including trans people, asylum seekers and Muslims; and, maybe above all, a lack of hope. All reinforce the economic pessimism that undermines trust in politics and hope for the future.

Against this backdrop, UNISON's ongoing commitment to equality, social justice and a fairer world at work and beyond faces greater challenges.

Into this void, the populist far right seeks to sow fear and division by turning worker against worker, neighbour against neighbour. They are driven by ideological hatred or cynically seeking to gain political support or distract from the real causes of problems and their clear common, and deliberately divisive, threats of racism, misogyny, homophobia, discrimination, climate denialism and fascism.

Against this backdrop, UNISON's ongoing commitment to equality, social justice and a fairer world at work and beyond faces greater challenges.

Conference is deeply concerned at the success enjoyed by Reform in the General Election. Its attempts to divide communities, attack migrants and other vulnerable groups and claims to champion working class people obscure how its policies stand counter to the interests of working people of all backgrounds and benefit no one but those who want to slash and burn UK regulations for private profit.

Reform's hateful rhetoric especially towards immigrants and LGBT+ people will leave communities divided. The Reform manifesto's attacks on benefits and on disabled people's rights include a call for all job seekers and "those fit to work" will have to find employment within four months or accept a job after two offers or face benefit withdrawal. Reform's manifesto also calls for all assessments for PIP and work capability assessment to take place face to face.

While Farage, leader of Reform has called himself, "anti-establishment", his party seeks to attack the rights of women, Black, disabled and LGBT+ people and voted with the Tory party against the Employment Rights Bill. Rather than seeking to strengthen the rights of working people in the UK, they attack them.

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Reform's manifesto said, "scrap thousands of laws that hold back British business and damage productivity including employment laws. We must make it easier to hire and fire". It also called for the cutting of "unnecessary regulations" from the EU calling them "nanny state regulations" including Health and Safety and anti-discrimination laws. Reform also intends to scrap net zero targets leaving our future at risk. Reform would damage the NHS, with policies for vouchers for private healthcare treatment, tax relief for private insurance and job cuts for "back room" staff. Its economic policies will cost us all. Its call to leave the European Convention of Human Rights will diminish all our rights.

Conference notes with concern that Reform UK uses racist scapegoating, blaming migrants and Muslims for problems in society; proposed massive cuts to the public sector during its 2024 general election manifesto; and Reform UK's neo-liberal economic policies desire a much smaller state which would mean even deeper cuts than those made after 14 years of Tory austerity.

Reform UK's leader, Nigel Farage, stated that the Liz Truss budget that crashed the economy was "the best Conservative budget since 1986 and Reform UK is receiving serious financial support from millionaires and billionaires.

Conference believes that Reform UK is using racism to gain popularity so that it can pursue neo-liberal economic policies that are essentially anti-working class by rolling back the welfare state, destroying the NHS, and pushing 'free market' policies into other areas of the public sector; Reform UK is a threat to anyone who works in the public sector; Reform UK in government would be a massive set back for all equality policies; and that defeating the electoral threat of far right parties has been achieved in previous decades by campaigning directly against them and that the rise of Reform UK can be reversed.

The electoral growth of Reform has been mirrored by growth on the streets of Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson). Twice last year he mobilised thousands to march through central London. He called for his supporters to vote Reform and used blatantly Islamophobic language. Trade unions and anti-racist campaigners were central to organising counter protests to challenge these marches.

Conference asserts that the struggle for equality and social justice is at the core of our work. It is the foundation of a public service ethos built on the labour of workers of all backgrounds serving all communities. This has been at the heart of our commitment to tackling the far-right and the politics of hate whether at the ballot box, in our public spaces or in the workplace. As trade unionists it is in our DNA to challenge the politics of division and hate, as it threatens the interests and wellbeing of public service workers everywhere and the unity and cohesion of the communities we serve. UNISON membership is 75 percent female, more diverse than the United Kingdom (UK) as a whole, provides public services for everyone everywhere in Britain and is at the heart of sustaining functioning inclusive communities.

Conference believes that far right violence is a direct threat to the values of equality, diversity, and human rights that UNISON upholds; that the rise of far right extremism has deep roots in systemic racism, discrimination, climate denialism, and economic inequalities, which disproportionately affect Black communities; and that Black

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members have the right to live free from the fear of violence, discrimination, and harassment.

Trade unions, as international movements, have always stood at the forefront of the struggle to unite working class people across all divides, be it national, ethnic, or economic. In the face of rising far right ideologies, it is imperative that UNISON not only continue this tradition but also intensify efforts. We are uniquely positioned to educate, mobilise, and support our members, advocating for policies and practices that foster social inclusion and justice.

Conference believes that UNISON and all other affiliated trade unions, must be at the forefront of challenging racism, extremism, and discrimination in all its forms.

Conference believes that it is our job to take on this threat in partnership with others. Our members pay the price when hate comes to town and bear the brunt of pulling things back together. We have a legitimate stake and a unique insight to bring to this challenge.

Our experience of public services and campaigning against the far right tells us:

1) Essential to defeating the politics of hate is to provide more hopeful answers and support more hopeful solutions;

2) The best way to truly call out the far right is to accurately identify each threat posed and continually adapt to the ever-changing milieu to respond appropriately in each case;

3) Defeating the far right involves not just showing they are morally wrong, but that they have no answers, and their proposals will make things worse;

4) The electoral threat is posed not by most people being supportive of the far right, far from it, but by the far right building a critical mass that can give them an electoral base to build upon. 'Zero tolerance' implies securing voting patterns whereby they cannot win elections. We must mobilise those who oppose them, convince those who are unsure, and draw away those that support them by better answers and exposing the inadequacy and irrelevance of the far right to their daily problems;

5) More importantly, we do not dismiss people who agree with the views promoted by the far right. We draw away their support and isolate the extremists. We do this by addressing concerns and reassuring fears in one-to-one conversations;

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6) Solving our problems is about planning for and treating people fairly (whether there are more or fewer) rather than refusing to plan for those the far-right wish were not there and thereby creating chaos for us all;

7) UNISON activists are especially well placed to have difficult conversations with members and others to bring reassurance, hope, and alternatives. We are trusted more than politicians or other media sources.

Conference asserts that our commitment to tackling discrimination and fighting for a fairer and more equal world will not waver but instead grow stronger. This commitment includes fighting the far right and its ideas at the ballot box, in the workplace, on the streets, and in society.

Conference further asserts that strong and active trade unions bargaining and negotiating to raise pay and standards for all members at workplace level is the most effective response to the attempts by the far right to make in-roads into our communities. Linked to this has to be the clear and unequivocal demand for an end to anti-immigrant sentiment from all those connected to the labour movement. Fighting racism at the ballot box cannot be limited to supporting the least objectionable candidate. It needs to be based on support for genuinely anti-racist candidates as well as support for genuine demands that unite all workers, including measures which make it easier for trade unions to organise to win. Unity of working people in struggle, both industrially and politically, is the key to undermining the backward ideas of the right.

Conference notes that UNISON has consistently stood up against the far right. We continue to work with partners like Hope not Hate, Show Racism the Red Card and Stand Up to Racism and have actively challenged the British National Party (BNP), the English Defence League (EDL), Tommy Robinson, and the UK Independence Party (UKIP).

This proud record of partnership working to combat racism, fascism and extremism is underpinned by our commitment to continuous training, development, awareness raising and capacity building towards forging a strong, resilient and responsive anti-racist movement within our UNISON membership.

Now, more than ever, we must continue to provide that leadership and develop those partnerships with organisations and grass-roots movements which seek to combat hatred, division and the scapegoating of already marginalised communities.

Conference therefore calls upon the National Executive Council to:

a) Work with the TUC, STUC, ICTU and TUC Cymru and affiliated unions to renew the trade union struggle against the far right wherever they organise;

b) Adopt and develop a proactive strategy to tackle the far right, wrapped around UNISON's core objectives and by nurturing solidarity among workers worldwide and advocating for public policies that build cohesive, resilient communities;

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c) Campaign within our membership to raise awareness of the dangers posed by far right movements and the importance of community solidarity;

d) Have a renewed focus on collective bargaining and trade union activity, working with self-organised groups to challenge racism, LGBT+ phobia, and xenophobia in the workplace and beyond;

e) Campaign for robust public funding in essential services such as education, housing and health care to ensure they remain strong and accessible to all, reinforcing the fabric of our communities;

f) Challenge Reform's policies for the workplace and society, raise awareness of their risks, hold to account Reform's elected representatives and actively support campaigns against Reform UK in any forthcoming local or national elections;

g) Expose the anti-public sector policies of Reform UK to all UNISON members through producing publicity and communications to all members;

h) Oppose the racist scapegoating from Reform UK and work with the wider trade union and labour movement to expose both the racism and anti-working class nature of Reform UK;

i) Work with Labour Link to encourage the Labour Party to consistently and unequivocally reject the hateful narratives promoted by Reform and others, and to commit to providing progressive and inclusive solutions to the problems faced by our communities;

j) Explore with Labour Link how action can be taken to address the long term causes in far right violence and hate crimes are being discussed in the Labour Link Forum ensuring adequate resources for policing, community support, and educational initiatives aimed at tackling racism and extremism;

k) Continue our work with a wide coalition of anti racist groups at national and local level to support local community organising against racism and xenophobia. This

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includes branches affiliating and working with HOPE not Hate, Show Racism the Red Card, Tell Mama, Runnymede Trust, Stand up to Racism and local communities and faith groups who actively work within our communities to counter extreme ideologies; and promote unity, solidarity, and inclusion;

l) Continue to develop, promote and implement training materials and campaigning resources to challenge the politics of hate, discrimination and prejudice;

m) Highlight and promote successful training initiatives which can be utilised by UNISON structures to combat racism, fascism and the arguments advanced by the far-right, working in partnership with affiliate organisations;

n) Commit to raising awareness among UNISON members of the dangers of far right extremism, providing resources to empower members to stand against racism, hate speech, and violence in the workplace and communities;

o) Signpost activists to mental health support services tailored for Black members affected by racial trauma and harassment, and demand employers take their duty of care seriously in creating safe and inclusive workplaces;

p) Encourage UNISON to support campaigns and initiatives aimed at strengthening Black communities, promoting civic engagement, and addressing the systemic inequalities that contribute to the rise of far right movements;

q) Reaffirm UNISON's commitment to being an anti-racist union by ensuring that all its structures, policies, and activities reflect this commitment and work toward the eradication of racism in all its forms;

r) Share good practice across all regions to encourage use of the UNISON North West pamphlet on Tackling Hate: Advice for Branches, produced in October 2024;

s) Continue to support TUC activity to mark UN anti-racism day and engage with regions and branches to work with organisations who have signed UNISON's Anti-Racism Charter to follow up on the methodology used to implement the commitments in the charter and share best practice;

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t) Working with the International Committee, support the work of trade unions and affiliated organisations such as ILGA Europe across Europe and the world as they face the challenge of the far right;

u) Strengthen ties with other trade unions and international workers' organisations to share resources, strategies, and support, reinforcing the global labour movement's response to these divisive forces.

C. The Biggest Wave of Insourcing in a Generation

Carried

Conference welcomes the government's commitment to bring about the biggest wave of insourcing in a generation and notes the wide range of outsourcing and procurement related measures included in the Labour Party document Make Work Pay: Delivering the New Deal for Working People. These include commitments to:

- 1) End the Tories' ideological drive to privatise public services;

- 2) Extend the Freedom of Information Act to apply to private companies that hold contracts to provide public services;

- 3) Require public bodies to undertake a public interest test before outsourcing and when contracts come up for renewal to better consider the in-house option;

- 4) Reinstate and strengthen the last Labour government's two tier code to end unfair two-tiered workforces;

- 5) Ensure that the two-tier code and the public interest test apply to wholly owned subsidiary companies.

Conference agrees that for many UNISON members, the introduction of these measures is a matter of urgency.

In the last couple of years, there is a growing tendency toward insourcing across much of the public sector. This is being driven by an increasing awareness of the value of public services in supporting local economies and businesses, providing better services for residents and business and directing resources more cohesively to where they are needed.

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Within UNISON, we continue to make the case that insourcing services is a better option. The provision of high quality public services is essential to the well-being of our society in the United Kingdom. Under the Tory government, the outsourcing of public services to private companies became widespread, and most have not provided better value. The mantra under the previous Tory government claimed that outsourcing would improve efficiency, yet evidence has found that privatised services often lead to reduced quality, higher costs and reduced terms and conditions of workers and union members. In contrast, insourcing - the practice of bringing services back in-house under direct public sector control - has demonstrated that it is better for the following reasons:

- a) Is cheaper in the long run and is better able to deliver efficiencies;
- b) Gives greater scope to improve performance against benchmarked services;
- c) Delivers greater flexibility and integration with existing services;
- d) Provides better and more secure employment and leads to stronger local supply chains;
- e) Are more democratically accountable, transparent and enhances local control of service delivery.

Conference applauds the hundreds of UNISON members in East Suffolk and North Essex Foundation Trust who took industrial action as part of a legitimate trade dispute over failure to agree to UNISON's demands that they remain employed by the Trust.

Given the Labour manifesto commitments to insourcing, conference is disturbed by the call from the Chief Executive of NHS England to NHS Trusts to outsource swathes of functions to subsidiary companies (subcos) in order to make financial savings. This is despite savings through this model only coming through diluting pay and conditions and avoiding tax - which just means there is less funding available for the NHS anyway. This is why NHS England guidelines have actually restricted the use of these companies, as a result of UNISON campaigning.

For members who provide vitally important cleaning, catering, portering, security and maintenance roles right across public services, outsourcing means an unrelenting deterioration in terms and conditions. For public finances and service users it invariably leads to profit extraction and poorer services.

Conference notes that the Employment Rights Bill includes the first instalment of the Make Work Pay reforms. This includes the power for the minister to create a

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statutory code to prevent the emergence of a 'two tier workforce' when outsourcing occurs.

Whilst this is a welcome downpayment, conference agrees that problems encountered under the previous two-tier code (including poor enforcement and employers redesigning jobs to evade the code) are addressed as the regulations and code are finalised over coming months. It will also be important to think through the need for sector level considerations – how the code might need to be adapted in different parts of public services.

However, Conference also agrees that whilst the two tier code is important, the priority has to be preventing further outsourcing and bringing services back in house.

To these ends Conference calls on the National Executive Council to intensify the Bringing Services Home campaign. This should include:

i) Working with the political fund to keep up the pressure on government to ensure that the biggest wave of insourcing in a generation can be delivered as a priority;

ii) Engaging with the policy development process so that the measures proposed by the government included within Make Work Pay are fit for purpose. This should include providing case studies, demonstrating the situation faced by outsourced workers;

iii) Making support available to service groups during the development of sector specific policy, guidance and interpretation of the Code and other measures instrumental to decisions about service provision;

iv) Working through appropriate channels within the UK government, devolved nations, and mayoral authorities to enable approaches to public service procurement that maximise direct employment;

v) Keeping up the pressure on employers with contracts coming up for renewal, or contemplating further outsourcing, urging upon them the need to recognise the direction of travel;

vi) Supporting branches by providing updated information about the new measures that can be used to support local insourcing campaigns;

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vii) Discussing with National Labour Link committee how best to ensure the Labour government delivers on its manifesto pledges regarding outsourcing;

viii) Work with the Health Service Group Executive to support their campaign against subcos, developing evidence of the negative impact on the NHS and supporting local organising campaigns to prevent transfer of NHS staff to subcos and for the insourcing of staff already within these companies.

We need to campaign for more insourcing as it provides the best model for the delivery of public services in the UK for the following reasons:

A) Improved Service Quality: Public services that are insourced tend to offer higher quality because they are directly managed and monitored by public sector employees who are committed to the well-being of the community. Insourced services focus on the needs of service users over profit maximisation, resulting in better outcomes;

B) Enhanced Accountability: When services are insourced, there is greater transparency and accountability as public sector workers are directly accountable to elected officials and the public. This reduces the opportunity for private contractors to cut corners or prioritise profits over service delivery;

C) Cost-Effectiveness: While private companies may claim to offer cheaper services through outsourcing, the hidden costs - including profit margins, management fees, and inefficiencies - often make these contracts more expensive in the long run. Insourcing can lead to greater financial efficiency as funds are directed to public services rather than private profits;

D) Better Working Conditions: Insourcing gives better job security and better working conditions for public sector employees. By ensuring decent pay and terms of employment, public services can attract a dedicated and motivated workforce, leading to higher service standards and employee satisfaction;

E) Long-Term Sustainability: Public services that are insourced are more likely to be sustainable over the long term because the priorities of the service are aligned with the public good rather than the financial interests of private contractors. This creates a more stable and reliable service model that is less susceptible to market fluctuations or short-term profit pressures.

We note with concern that local authorities, some under Labour control, faced with substantial financial pressures are looking at outsourcing of essential services as a way of reducing expenditure.

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Unions and the community have a critical role to play in advocating for insourcing and holding the government accountable for the quality of public services. Together, we can ensure that public services are run in the best interests of society, with a focus on quality, accountability, fairness, and long-term sustainability.

By bringing services back under public control, we can build a more just, equitable, and efficient system that serves the needs of all citizens.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to:

I) Promote the UNISON insourcing guide and continue to campaign for more insourcing: to raise awareness of the benefits of insourcing by providing the public with clear information on how insourcing improves service quality, accountability and cost-effectiveness;

II) Advocate for policy change with MPs and politicians;

III) Support for workers campaigning for their service to be insourced back into the public sector;

IV) Develop model motions for branches to cascade to local councils;

V) To develop tools to help branches evaluate how insourcing can be used to support local economies and the environment, through jobs, skills, supply chain management and local spend.

E. Climate Change in UNISON 2025 – Turning Commitments into Actions

Carried

Conference welcomes UNISON's proactive engagement on climate change and the recognition that trade unions, and UNISON particularly, have a key role to play in combating this global, national, and local threat.

Conference also welcomes the commitments made in Motion 63 at last year's Conference acknowledging the impact on all members, service groups and equality strands and the commitment to supporting the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (NFPT).

However, for UNISON to take this activity, and this important organising opportunity seriously, words and worthy statements of intent are not enough.

UNISON's commitments can only be fully realised if adequately resourced and prioritised within the union.

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Conference welcomes the UNISON led motions passed at the 2024 TUC Congress:

1) Declaring that the climate emergency will affect all jobs and all workers adversely and is a key trade union issue for us all;

2) Calling for heat strikes in the face of rising workplace temperatures;

3) Calling for a year of trade union climate action including engagement with community and climate justice groups.

Conference also recognises that:

a) UNISON members are particularly impacted due to:

i) Public services being expected to provide the necessary social infrastructure to address the devastating immediate and future impacts of climate change; and

ii) Because of the huge workplace and workforce transformations needed to meet the UK and devolved nation government's commitment for all public services to get to Net Zero by 2050 or earlier;

iii) Workers are already at risk from extreme weather, flooding and high fossil fuel energy bills;

iv) These risks are increasing, with the 2024 floods in Spain highlighting how the UK is underprepared for climate disasters;

v) A rapid and just transition away from fossil fuels is needed globally to prevent catastrophic climate breakdown;

vi) UK national and global financial investment in climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, including the necessary public sector infrastructure, should be funded by the public purse and not thrown to the perverse profit-driven incentives of private companies.

vii) That repressive anti-protest legislation passed by previous governments has not been repealed by the current government, and that climate campaigners, along with anti-racists and Palestine protesters, have been particular targets, for example being arrested in a place of worship, refused bail or given long prison sentences for non-violent protests.

Conference believes it is imperative that the Labour government review its disproportionate reliance and investment in inappropriate new technology such as Carbon Capture (CC). While CC will likely be a necessary, short-term, option in a

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wider array of more enduring solutions, it is a project that is unproven at the envisaged scale of use with no clear evidence about long-term harms. The current proposal to invest disproportionately vast amounts of public money in CC at the cost of wider investment in proven, necessary, safer and cheaper technologies and infrastructure must be challenged.

Conference also notes with disappointment the announcements by the Labour government of airport expansion, in the name of economic growth. The airport industry is reliant on the fossil fuel industry, and so expansion is in direct conflict with UNISON policy of a rapid and just transition away from fossil fuels.

The right to peaceful protest is essential in a democratic society. Repressive measures against peaceful protesters have a disproportionate impact on those, including Black people, with reasons to fear harsher treatment by the police, courts and prison system, and if unchallenged will be used more widely against trade unionists. Elected officials to whom the police are accountable should make clear that the police should be facilitating rather than repressing peaceful and non-oppressive protest.

Conference resolves to support TUC UNISON year of trade union climate action as well as supporting and adequately resourcing, our own UNISON Year of Green Activism in 2026, with COP30 in Brazil (10-21 November 2025) as a key mobilising moment of unity.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to:

A) Bring climate issues to the forefront of the union's activity: including green bargaining in all activist training; establishing national and regional networks of green reps; identifying heat and extreme weather hazards in the workplace and working with extreme heat campaigns; establishing a National Executive Council committee to take these initiatives forward;

B) Ensure adequate internal structures and resource to support the new Environmental Officer (EnvO) role. Looking to how other branch officer roles are currently supported and specifically with reference to how the Health and Safety branch officer, and other similar branch officer role activity, is resourced and supported;

C) Support union branches in organising relevant outreach events, including in branches and in workplaces, and in joint local activities with other unions and with wider civil society groups including climate activists, healthcare campaigners, housing campaigners and anti-racist activists;

D) Work with others in the run up to and during the Brazil COP as a key mobilising moment for trade union climate action. Supporting global solidarity initiatives ahead of COP30, including: continued support of the campaign in support of a Fossil Fuel

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Non-Proliferation Treaty; supporting the 'polluter pays principle' in funding essential climate finance for the Global South, such as Brazil's proposal for a global two percent tax on billionaires;

E) Ensure that where our climate policy, and the commitments we have made by signing the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (FFNPT), come into conflict with UK or devolved nation government actions that we speak out (for example: if there is a proposal to issue new fracking licences in the UK, and against airport expansion. We will continue to campaign to save the planet regardless of who is in government;

F) Campaign for the repeal of repressive legislation which restricts the right to peaceful and non-oppressive protest over climate and other issues. Ensure that material defending the right to protest and opposing repression is available on the UNISON website and circulated to activists and members;

G) Consider what support can be provided, in line with Rules, for members arrested, charged or incarcerated under repressive anti-protest legislation.

F. Backing the Employment Rights Bill

Carried

Conference welcomes the new substantial Employment Rights Bill for Great Britain. The Bill was, as promised, published within 100 days of the Labour government being elected and is currently in Parliament.

The Bill repeals restrictions on trade union activity including our ability to take strike action and strengthens our rights to access workplaces, recruit and organise members and expand collective bargaining. For too long, employers have had all of the advantages and the balance must be shifted towards safe and secure employment that pays fairly so there is also an increase in individual employment rights too for all workers. A high wage and high skill economy should be within reach as the UK has suffered from poor employment practices for too long.

The Bill represents the culmination of years of tireless campaigning by trade unions and activists, particularly through the Labour Link section of UNISON, who championed these policies while Labour was in opposition.

The Bill implements many of the measures in the Labour Party's New Deal for Working People and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

1) The pre-election pledge to repeal of the Trade Union Act 2016, which restores balance to industrial relations and affirms the importance of trade union activity in a democratic society. However, Conference opposes the delaying of this following the election of the Labour government;

2) Ending exploitative zero hour contracts; with guaranteed hours contracts, a right to reasonable notice of shift changes and payment for cancellation of shifts at short notice;

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- 3) Introducing basic day one rights – sick pay, parental leave, unfair dismissal;

- 4) Sectoral collective bargaining – fair pay agreement and negotiating body in adult social care (England), reinstatement of the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB, England), a long-standing objective of UNISON;

- 5) Strengthening family friendly rights and flexible working, making it much harder for employers to refuse employee requests as it is too easily done at the moment;

- 6) Extension of the time limit from three to six months for all workers bringing employment tribunal claims;

- 7) Reintroducing the two tier workforce prevention code in public procurement;

- 8) Political fund opt in restored – trade union members no longer have to expressly ask to opt in;

- 9) New protections against 'fire and rehire', with it being automatically unfair to dismiss an employee for refusing a contract variation and a very limited exception for genuine need to avoid serious financial issues that may threaten the business (making it necessary to go through genuine consultation with trade unions first);

- 10) Strengthening facility time – when requests are denied the burden of proof will be placed on the employer, who must demonstrate that the time off requested was unreasonable;

- 11) Provide equality reps with facility time;

- 12) Introduction of electronic balloting;

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13) Improved access rights for trade unions to workplaces for recruitment and collective bargaining purposes, union recognition made less onerous, and thresholds reduced;

14) Protection from detriment for taking part in industrial action, bringing into law UNISON's win in the UK Supreme Court for our member, Mrs Mercer's case;

15) Protection from dismissal for taking strike action is being extended – the basic 12 weeks is being removed and instead it is extended for the length of the strike action;

16) Measures to tackle blacklisting of activists by employers;

17) Strengthening collective redundancy rights, lifting the cap on protective awards and the introduction of interim relief to protect workers in this situation, and consultation based on total business redundancies;

18) Increased protection from sexual harassment, introducing gender and menopause action plans and strengthening rights for pregnant workers;

19) Strengthening statutory sick pay;

20) Creating a Single Enforcement Body to ensure employment rights are upheld – a new 'Fair Work Agency'.

While these achievements are significant, Conference acknowledges there is more to be done. The Bill, though transformative, must include stronger mechanisms for enforcing individual rights and enhanced powers for trade unions to address imbalances of power in workplaces effectively.

Conference notes that measures in the Bill from tackling fire and rehire, zero hours contracts and day one rights to claim unfair dismissal have come under heavy fire from the 'right wing', the press and deregulators. Conference asserts that it will seek to protect the Bill from business and Tory attacks whilst trying to improve measures in the Bill in line with UNISON policy and leave no loopholes for avoidance (particularly for employers still willing to attempt to fire and re-hire).

Conference further commits to campaign to bring forward as soon as possible other measures in the New Deal such as insourcing, ethnicity and disability pay gap

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reporting, a right to disconnect, single status of worker and limits on surveillance technology.

Conference notes that even after Royal Assent in 2025 there will be work to be done in some areas in getting effective implementation as soon as possible through statutory instruments.

Conference also notes that pressure is being exerted by business and the Tories to drop the commitment to the repeal of the 2016 Trade Union Act.

Conference is concerned the government may delay the repeal of the requirement for 50 percent turnouts in ballots until after electronic balloting for industrial action has been introduced. Secondary legislation necessary to fully implement the Employment Rights Bill must be prioritised.

Conference also notes that in Northern Ireland, the Executive and Assembly have devolved powers over employment, equality and trade union laws. Conference therefore supports the ongoing campaign by UNISON Northern Ireland, working alongside the ICTU, for comprehensive new Employment Rights legislation to be introduced. Conference therefore calls on the National Executive Council to continue to support these ongoing efforts.

Conference therefore will remain vigilant and calls on the National Executive Council to:

a) Continue lobbying the government to strengthen the Bill in its passage through Parliament, ensuring it delivers on its full potential for workers;

b) Campaign against insecure work and one-sided flexibility and for repeal of the anti-union laws;

c) Track all measures in the New Deal that are not in this initial Bill for implementation through the quickest and easiest means possible;

d) Work with the TUC to improve the Bill and fend off opposition attacks;

e) Work with our self organised groups and Young Members Forum to raise awareness of the new rights and opportunities within the Bill to our members, including how the Bill can positively impact them and their experience within the workplace, with particular attention to addressing the intersectional challenges faced by marginalised groups such as Black and/ or disabled LGBT+ workers.;

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- f) Campaign for the adoption of UNISONs Disability Employment Charter and to close both the disability employment gap and the pay gap;

- g) Plan to expand our membership in schools and social care and work with regions to maximise recruitment and retention opportunities arising from the Bill;

- h) Work with service groups to consider bargaining implications, particularly of measures to prevent the two tier workforce;

- i) Monitor and push for effective implementation at workplace level by employers;

- j) Campaign to ensure that migrant workers can meaningfully access these expanded employment rights;

- k) Continue to be identify and respond to any devolution implications and work with ICTU, STUC and TUC Cymru and our UNISON colleagues in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to ensure care workers and school support staff in those nations are placed at no disadvantage to their counterparts in England by the passage of the Bill and will support UNISON Cymru/Wales in lobbying the UK government and Welsh governments for a Wales-only SSSNB following the overwhelming vote of Cymru/Wales school members in favour of such a body;

- l) And continue to highlight the importance of effective enforcement by the new Fair Work Agency as well as through Tribunals, including the ability of unions to interact with the Agency on members' behalf;

- m) To organise a campaign of lobbying and protests, including work with Labour Link, to ensure repealing of the 2016 Act remains part of the legislation;

- n) Provide training and resources for UNISON activists to maximize the opportunities presented by the Bill in building and strengthening our union;

- o) Promote awareness of the new provisions among members, enabling them to understand and use their rights fully.

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G. Migrant Workers

Carried

Conference, migrant care workers play a crucial role in maintaining the care and wellbeing of individuals, particularly the elderly and those with disabilities, within the UK. Despite their essential contribution to the workforce, some migrant care workers face exploitation. This exploitation is exacerbated by unscrupulous employers who take advantage of their migrant status and the often precarious legal position of these workers under the tight sponsorship requirements that are placed on them.

Conference notes migrant workers on work visas, particularly those on health and social care visas, are essential to maintaining our health and social services. However, current visa rules make their lives incredibly difficult and leave them vulnerable to exploitation

To obtain a visa, a migrant worker must have a job offer from an approved UK employer, known as a sponsor. The worker remains tied to their sponsor for the duration of their visa. This places employers in an incredible position of power, creating a significant power imbalance, allowing employers to withdraw their sponsorship and put migrant workers at risk of being sent home if they cannot find a new sponsor within 60 days. Employers may arbitrarily withdraw sponsorships from migrant workers for raising concerns, whistleblowing, or even complaining about their poor treatment. Migrant workers are constrained to keep quiet and not speak out in the face of discrimination, sexual harassment, and even rape for fear of losing their certificates of sponsorship and being sent back home.

It is, therefore, essential that migrant care workers should be allowed to work under fair and dignified conditions, free from abuse and exploitation. Migrant care workers deserve the same rights and protections as any other worker. It is imperative when they come to work in the UK that they can work safely, with dignity and without fear of exploitation.

Conference recalls the terms of the 2023 motion “Organising to Win” and welcomes the unprecedented gains made to date.

As a result of a regional social care project, Northern region experienced a higher level of engagement from migrant workers in 2024 than previously. This included members attending a regional social care network, some going on to be trained as UNISON workplace stewards, and one becoming a regional representative on the newly formed national social care committee.

Conference therefore commits to focus the power of Organising to Win on the challenge of empowering migrant workers in the campaign for the security, equity and fairness that all public services workers should enjoy, regardless of nationality, race or ethnic origin. UNISON must end the enslavement and exploitation of our migrant worker members through the power of workplace organising.

From this work we have heard testimonies of migrant worker’s experiences. These are wide ranging but at best can be described as exploitation, at worst, modern slavery. This includes employers simply not paying staff for their work for lengthy

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periods of time, after workers have paid significant sums of money to come to the UK for work, and employers threatening to deport employees who escalate the issue. The testimonies include inappropriate accommodation provided employers as part of migrant workers employment arrangement, including shared rooms. When accommodation bills are not paid by the employer, this has resulted in UNISON members being chased for money they do not owe by HMRC and the local authority. This puts migrant workers into increasingly vulnerable positions, often having to rely on local communities and churches for support to live.

When migrant workers lose their jobs, they risk financial hardship, debt, and even the loss of residency rights. This creates immense stress and insecurity not just for the migrant workers but also for their families who depend on their visa status and are consequently affected. These conditions leave them trapped and powerless, unable to challenge unsafe and unfair practices without fear of deportation. Ideally, migrant workers who come to the UK should be seen and treated as serving the country, not individual employers.

To address them, UNISON proposed a Certificate of Common Sponsorship for health and social care workers on visas. The Certificate of Common Sponsorship is a system where multiple organisations and entities in the health and social care sector jointly sponsor migrant workers, breaking the exclusive link between a single employer and a worker's visa status.

The importance of UNISON's new visa campaign for these members cannot be overstated. The current sponsorship system results in migrant workers being afraid to raise concerns regarding their employment, for fear of being deported. Some unscrupulous employers take advantage of this and threaten deportation to silence migrant workers. This very real fear also presents a barrier to migrant workers getting active in UNISON. Increasingly we are supporting migrant workers to secure alternative sponsorship arrangements through new employment before we are able to provide support to challenge the practices of the previous employer. Often by that point it is too late and so bad, sometimes illegal, employment practices go without challenge.

Benefits of this system include:

- 1) Worker empowerment: Migrant workers would have the freedom to change employers within the sector, reducing fear of retaliation;

- 2) Improved working conditions: Employers would need to maintain fair practices to retain staff, fostering safer and more equitable workplaces;

- 3) Sector resilience: Allowing mobility within the health and social care sector could alleviate staffing shortages and improve workforce management.

The implications of this are as follows:

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a) Political: Supporting this reform aligns with the government's commitment to ethical labour practices and workforce resilience, enhancing the UK's reputation as a fair employer;

b) Economic: Better working conditions and improved retention would reduce turnover costs and support a stable and productive workforce in health and care;

c) Social and public health: Health and social care workers who feel secure in their roles are more likely to provide better care, improving outcomes for patients and clients and reducing the risks associated with high turnover.

UNISON South West lobbied Parliament and these issues were shared with MPs present. This has produced a significant result, with an Early Day Motion now tabled in Parliament calling for reform of the current situation. This includes introducing a Certificate of Common Sponsorship, which would allow migrant workers to change employers within the sector without risking their visa status.

Conference, this motion highlights the critical need for improved rights for migrant care workers and calls for concerted action to stop unscrupulous employers from exploiting vulnerable workers in this vital sector.

Conference, therefore, calls on the National Executive Council to:

i) Campaign to promote the value of migrant care workers in the UK;

ii) Campaign for a Certificate of Common Sponsorship to change the sponsorship requirements for migrant care workers and for employers to be removed as the sponsor and to be replaced with a sector wide public sponsor;

iii) Work with Labour Link to apply political pressure to win the visa campaign and to identify and target the specific legislation, policies and employer practices that enslave and exploit UNISON members;

iv) Lobby the government and Members of Parliament to initiate a parliamentary debate on reforms and work towards legislative changes supporting ethical immigration policies for critical sectors like health and social care;

v) Work with service groups, regions, self organised groups, Migrant Workers' Network, Overseas Nursing Network, and other relevant structures of UNISON, as well as other organisations and allies including the TUC, to launch a campaign to

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contact Members of Parliament to publicly endorse UNISON's campaign for visa reform and support the proposal for a Certificate of Common Sponsorship;

vi) Campaign for fair wages and benefits for migrant care workers;

vii) Campaign for safe and respectful working conditions to ensure that the workplace is free from abuse, harassment, or neglect. Migrant care workers must be entitled to clear and fair contracts with transparent terms regarding working hours, tasks, and responsibilities;

viii) Campaign to ensure that migrant care workers can access legal support and safe channels to report abuses without fear of retaliation, deportation, or losing their livelihood;

ix) Campaign for Mobility rights so that workers should not be tied to one employer through exploitative contractual arrangements or sponsorships that limit their ability to change employers when necessary, particularly in cases of abuse or poor working conditions;

x) Work with branches and regions to organise migrant care workers and increase our migrant worker activist base and continue to develop guidance around migrant worker rights and encourage self organised groups, Migrant Workers' Network, regions and branches to continue organising and engaging migrant workers;

xi) Develop and roll out an agreed UNISON migrant workers charter to get employers to sign up to;

xii) To train, mentor and empower members, activists and leaders among our migrant workers and anti-racist allies, and equip them with the organising and campaign methods required to build power and deliver radical change;

xiii) Establish the annual UN international migrant workers day of 18 December as an annual UNISON Day of Action in support of migrant workers delivering UK public services and plan a unionwide mobilisation including a UK parliamentary lobby on 18 December 2025 in support of the UNISON campaign for changes to the social care visa.

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H. Palestine

Carried

Conference deeply regrets the breakdown of the January 2025 ceasefire agreement between the Israeli Government and Hamas. We urge the international community and all parties to the agreement to do all they can to reinstate the ceasefire, ensure humanitarian aid is fully available and all hostages are released.

Conference believes that the resumption of air strikes on Gaza including the bombing of infrastructure such as water and electricity supply, the severe restrictions of humanitarian aid to Gaza, the approval of new settlements in the West Bank and complicity of the Israeli military with settler violence against Palestinian villages in the West Bank indicates the Israeli government is not currently interested in a peace agreement. Conference therefore calls on the National Executive Council to campaign for the UK government to use diplomatic pressure and the withholding of all UK arms exports to Israel to encourage the Israeli Government to engage in meaningful peace negotiations.

Conference is appalled by the killing of 15 health and rescue workers in March 2025 in Gaza, many of whom were working for the Palestinian Red Crescent Society. They were driving clearly marked ambulances, with their lights flashing. Conference notes the attempted cover up of these killings, later contradicted by video footage found on the mobile phone of one of the deceased aid workers.

Conference recognises that the demand for a contiguous, viable Palestinian state alongside a safe and secure state of Israel is central to UNISON's position on Palestine. The demand is fundamental to securing human and workers' rights for the Palestinian people, including the right to decent work and quality public services.

Whilst grounded in international law and successive United Nations (UN) resolutions, international governments and agencies have failed to in their responsibility to support the establishment of a Palestinian state for 58 years.

Conference notes that whilst the 2024 Labour manifesto pledges to recognise "a Palestinian state as a contribution to a renewed peace process," 146 member states of the United Nations have already officially recognised Palestine, leaving the UK in a small minority who have not. Conference calls on the National Executive Council to campaign for the UK government to recognise the State of Palestine immediately and to demand full recognition by the United Nations.

In January 2024 the International Court of Justice delivered the following interim judgement in the South African case against Israel under the Genocide convention—"In the Court's view, the facts and circumstances... are sufficient to conclude that at least some of the rights claimed by South Africa and for which it is seeking protection are plausible".

Conference welcomes and supports the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion of 19 July 2024, on the "Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem".

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The opinion confirms that the State of Israel's continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is unlawful and that the State of Israel is under an obligation to end the 58 year long occupation as rapidly as possible, immediately cease all new settlement activities and evacuate settlers. It confirms that all states and international organisations, such as the United Nations, have a responsibility not to recognise the occupation as legal, and not to render aid or assistance in maintaining it.

The opinion also confirms UNISON's longstanding position that Israel's policies and practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory amount to segregation or apartheid, in violation of article three of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Conference calls on the UK government to fully comply with its obligations arising from the advisory opinion. In addition to officially recognising the State of Palestine, the government should ban trade with the illegal settlements, suspend the UK Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement, until international law is respected, and support measures by the UN Security Council to end the occupation.

Conference believes that the past two years have been harrowing to watch as the atrocities in Gaza unfolded on our screens coupled with horrendous settler violence in the Occupied West Bank.

Conference condemns the Israeli military assault on Gaza. At the end of 2024 the UN reported that over 45,500 Palestinians have been killed and a further 108,000 injured. Approximately 70 percent of structures have been damaged or destroyed, over 90 percent of the population have been displaced, 80 percent of Gaza is under evacuation orders, and 91 percent face high levels of food insecurity, or worse. The rebuilding of Gaza will require a colossal international effort. It must embed the principles of decent work and quality public services and address the needs and hopes of the Palestinian people and their representatives, including trade unions.

Conference reaffirms UNISON's condemnation of the heinous attack by Hamas on 7 October 2023, during which over 1,200 people were killed, 14,970 injured and 252 taken hostage.

Conference welcomes the UK government's decision to suspend approximately 30 arms licences for items used by the Israeli Defence Forces in the conflict in Gaza, due to the risk that they might be used in serious violations of international humanitarian law. We are concerned however that this represents a small proportion of the approximately 350 UK arms licences to Israel and does not include the indirect supply of UK manufactured components for the multi-national F-35 joint strike fighter programme. Conference reiterates its call for the UK Government to fully suspend the arms trade with Israel, excluding the supply of protective equipment used for humanitarian, diplomatic and United Nations purposes.

Gaza's fragile health system remains on the brink of collapse, according to the UN. At the end of 2024, 1,057 health workers had been killed, some have been detained, and just 47 percent of hospitals and 38 percent of primary health facilities were partially functioning due to the relentless bombardment, military raids, major shortages of critical medical supplies and shortage of health workers. Conference urges the UK Government to support action at the UN and in the international courts

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to demand that the Israeli Government adhere to international law. The sick and wounded must be protected and respected and health facilities must never be attacked in any circumstances.

Conference condemns the Israeli Knesset's decision to ban the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) from working in areas under Israeli sovereignty and prohibit Israeli authorities from having any contact with the agency. UNRWA provides a critical lifeline 2.5 million Palestinian refugees in the occupied Palestinian territories, providing essential health, education and social services and the impact of its closure in Gaza has been described by UN and humanitarian agencies as catastrophic. Conference welcomes the UK Government's resumption of funding for UNRWA, following its suspension under the previous Conservative government, but calls for further action to ensure sufficient quantities of aid enter Gaza.

Conference further condemns the continued annexation of the West Bank, including the establishment and expansion of illegal settlements. The situation in the West Bank further deteriorated in 2024, with over 500 Palestinians killed and 3,000 injured. The year also saw the highest levels of settler violence, displaced people and destroyed structures recorded in the West Bank, since the UN began documenting them.

Conference notes existing UNISON policy in support of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement and the excellent work done across UNISON branches and regions. On many occasions we have reaffirmed our commitment to the BDS movement.

Conference agrees that to ensure that we are not funding companies linked to arms manufacture, dual use goods or any companies profiting from illegal occupation, apartheid or genocide, we must strengthen and resource our ethical procurement procedures across the union.

Conference welcomes UNISON's work on divestment and engagement and the withdrawal of the Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill. We support the call for the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) to divest from companies which continue to supply weapons and military technology to the Israeli Government used in violations of international law. We also support the call for funds to begin the process of divestment from companies on the United Nations list of business enterprises involved in or with the illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank and for time limited engagement with companies involved in the occupation, but not on the UN list. The LGPS should be invested in scheme members interests and funds should use their influence to encourage the companies they invest in to protect human and workers' rights, adhere to international law and protect the environment.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to:

- 1) Campaign for the UK government to officially recognise the State of Palestine as a contribution to a two state solution;

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- 2) Continue to call for international governments to support a permanent ceasefire leading to lasting peace in Gaza, and ensure full access to humanitarian assistance, the immediate and safe release of hostages, and the release of Palestinians wrongfully held in Israeli prisons, including under administrative detention;

- 3) Campaign for the principles of decent work and quality public services to be central to international efforts to rebuild Gaza, based on the demands of Palestinian people and their representatives, and for trade unions to play a key role in the process;

- 4) Call on the UK government to fulfil its responsibility not to recognise the occupation as legal, and not to render aid or assistance in maintaining it, including by banning trade with the illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank;

- 5) Call on the UK government to suspend the arms trade with Israel and the UK Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement until international law is respected;

- 6) Call on the UK government to uphold justice and accountability by respecting and implementing the rulings of the international courts;

- 7) Inform UNISON members of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign's 'Don't Buy Apartheid' campaign that calls for the boycott of Israeli produce like avocados, oranges, herbs and dates and the boycott of Coca-Cola and its brands Schweppes, Sprite, Fanta, Innocent, Appletiser, Smart Water and Costa Coffee;

- 8) Disseminate relevant materials and information on Boycott Divestment and Sanctions to all branch officers and everyone involved in procuring UNISON goods and services at central, regional and branch level;

- 9) Provide direct briefings for all involved in paragraph 8 above, on businesses that are complicit in or benefiting from illegal occupation, violations of human or workers' rights or international law, including the crimes of genocide or apartheid to support them in making these ethical procurement decisions;

- 10) In line with current UNISON policy that 'Local Government Pension funds engage with the companies they invest in and to demand they end their involvement

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in the occupied Palestinian territory and in the violation of Palestinian human rights', organise further training for all UNISON nominated pensions officials/trustees or representatives on pensions divestment. Clear guidance should be issued that all such officials/trustees or representatives will seek the exclusion of companies complicit in or benefiting from illegal occupation, violations of human or workers' rights or international law, including the crimes of genocide or apartheid in Palestine. The list of these companies includes all those on the Boycott divestment and Sanctions list, and in detailed reports by the United Nations, and other human rights organisations such as Human Rights Watch, Who Profits and Don't Buy into Occupation';

11) Commit to ensuring that all companies providing UNISON Services to Members are not complicit in or benefiting from illegal occupation, the crimes of genocide or apartheid and violations of human and workers' rights;

12) Continue to lobby for the exclusion of companies complicit in or benefiting from illegal occupation, the crimes of genocide or apartheid and violations of human and workers' rights in all public sector procurement.

I. English Devolution, Democracy and Public Services

Carried

Conference notes that local government in England continues to face unprecedented challenges and changes. UNISON welcomes the government's ambition to bring power closer to communities. We recognise that well-designed devolution can revitalise local economies, enhance service delivery, and empower citizens. While Westminster's devolution agenda promises greater local powers, concerns remain about implementation, funding, and democratic deficit.

The white paper outlines comprehensive changes to mayoral and strategic authority powers across England. The government's stated aim is to achieve "Universal coverage" of Strategic Authorities, led by directly elected mayors wherever possible. Mayors are set to receive significantly expanded powers across multiple areas such as transport, housing, and skills. Public service responsibilities will also grow - in areas where geographies align, mayors will automatically become Police and Crime Commissioners and lead Fire Authorities, while also taking on new roles in health through Integrated Care Partnerships. Local government reorganisation has the potential to impact on the services our members provide and their roles and responsibilities across the whole of the public sector at a local level, as well as the organisation of our members within UNISON's democratic frameworks.

Conference believes that the white paper's proposal to abolish two tier authorities and create unitary councils must not lead to a reduction in both jobs and local services. Conference notes recent proposed devolution deals in East Anglia highlight these concerns, with Suffolk and Norfolk facing major reorganisation despite local opposition and without guarantees about service provision or workforce protection.

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The North East has already undergone substantial restructuring, with no district councils remaining. In addition, all twelve local authority areas are now part of either the North East Combined Authority or the Tees Valley Combined Authority.

Conferences notes that while central government civil service numbers have increased substantially, local government workforce numbers have declined dramatically under successive Conservative governments. The white paper acknowledges significant recruitment and retention problems in local government, and conference notes the proposed creation of a workforce development group.

Conference recognises that the greatest direct impact of the proposals will be on our members in the local government sector. However, regional devolution in England is not “just” a local government issue with existing devolved authorities covering a range of services including police, fire and transport. The proposed abolition of district councils and the rapid creation of large, combined authorities, run by directly elected mayors, is the biggest change in the governance of the English regions in 50 years. Mistakes made now will have a long-lasting legacy for decades to come.

One of the most important changes, as outlined in the White Paper, is the introduction of Integrated Settlements. This will consolidate budgets across key areas such as housing, regeneration, local growth, transport, skills, retrofit, and employment support. The aim is to offer greater flexibility in allocating funding across these policy areas, along with more streamlined reporting on their outcomes.

Conference also notes that recent history has shown how reduced central funding, alongside increasing demand, has pushed many local authorities to the brink of financial collapse. Although the White Paper acknowledges these issues, it must go further in ensuring that councils have the resources to deliver vital public services. UNISON insists that new responsibilities conferred by devolution must be matched with adequate funding, preventing any erosion of service quality or workforce capacity.

Conference reiterates its concerns of the potential of the directly elected mayoral model to concentrate power and influence into the hands of just one person, leading to less accountability and transparency; prioritise the vested interests of the private sector in decision-making; and further remove powers from ordinary councillors, which may do little to promote active engagement in local democratic processes.

Conference, therefore, remains concerned about certain aspects of the White Paper. While it seeks to address the existing patchwork of responsibilities among combined authorities, metro mayors, and local councils, it does not resolve the democratic deficits and funding challenges created by over a decade of austerity. We believe that the success of any devolution settlement hinges on robust financial support for local authorities, as well as clear and consistent frameworks for accountability and service coordination.

Building strong working relationships with Mayors and local authorities is essential to ensure that decision-making reflects community needs. A prime example is the work of the North East Mayor in establishing the North East Child Poverty Reduction Unit and investing in The Crown Works Studios development in Sunderland.

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Conference notes the success of UNISON's bargaining guides and charters and identifies a need to consider similar resources to assist regions and branches in influencing Combined and County Combined Authorities, in line with UNISON's priorities.

Furthermore, Conference recognises the importance of preserving national collective bargaining arrangements. In previous debates on regional devolution, proposals to introduce regional pay threatened to undermine national pay standards and terms and conditions. It is essential that the White Paper clearly rules out any fragmentation of national bargaining, safeguarding staff from a potential "postcode lottery" in wages and employment protections.

Conference supports UNISON's principles for English devolution:

1) Devolution deals must be developed from the bottom up, not through backroom deals in Whitehall; Decision making must take place at the appropriate local or regional level, rather than being retained in or recentralised by Westminster;

2) Full engagement with local people, staff, and their trade unions must precede and shape any new governance structures;

3) Deals should draw powers from the centre, not reduce local community power;

4) No devolution deal should result in job losses, erosion of terms and conditions, outsourcing of services, or reduction in collective bargaining rights;

5) Deals must include predictable, secure, and sufficient funding based on need;

6) Regional and city level devolution should enhance union representation on regional bodies;

7) Local communities must have genuine oversight of decisions, not only through elected mayors or combined authorities but also via transparent consultation and accountability structures;

8) Devolution should demonstrably improve the coordination, quality, and efficiency of services;

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9) Devolution must help drive sustainable local and regional prosperity, delivering benefits to all communities;

10) No region should be financially disadvantaged by devolved arrangements, nor should public service reforms be used to impose cuts;

Conference calls upon the National Executive Council to:

a) Campaign for full funding for devolution, urging the Government to address the £3.4billion funding gap and invest in the future of public services and good jobs; and campaign against any threats to local government jobs, terms and conditions, service delivery;

b) Where devolution deals are in place, support regions to scrutinise proposals and, if necessary, provide alternatives in line with UNISON's bargaining priorities;

c) Where they exist, work with UNISON Combined Authority branches to develop model UNISON charters specifically for Combined and County Combined Authorities to aid bargaining at this level;

d) Collaborate with the TUC and other unions to develop progressive alternative models of local taxation and advocate for greater redistribution based on need;

e) Support branches and regions in England to engage in local discussions on devolution deals and reorganisation proposals, providing resources for local campaigns based on UNISON's principles;

f) Engage with the government to demand trade union representation in devolution planning and workforce development, and to respond to government consultations on English devolution;

g) Continue to make the economic case that public service pay and jobs are key to sustainable regional economic growth;

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h) Offer appropriate support to the Local Government service group, regions and branches fighting any attempt to introduce non-NJC pay and conditions in new local government structures.

By adopting this motion, UNISON reaffirms its commitment to a fair, inclusive, and democratically accountable approach to devolution, one that invests in public services, empowers local government staff, and ensures stronger communities across England.

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Amendment to Rules

1. Rule C Ceasing to be a Member

Lost

2. Rule F Regions

Carried

Rule A.1 Name of the Union

In Rule A 1 delete the second sentence after “the Union”

Rule F 1 List of Regions

In Rule F 1 delete: "Cymru/Wales" and replace with: "Cymru"

Rule Q Definitions

REGIONS delete: "Wales" and replace with: "Cymru"

DEVOLVED ADMINISTRATIONS delete: "the National Assembly for Wales" and replace with: "Senedd Cymru"

3. Rule J The Political Fund

Carried

Where appropriate:

Replace: "Certification Office for Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, Lower Ground Floor, Fleetbank House, 2-6 Salisbury Square, London EC4Y 8JX" with: "8th Floor, Windsor House, 50 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0TL"

Where appropriate:

Replace: “his/her” with “their”

“her/his” with “their”

“she/he has” with “they have”

“she/he is” with “they are”

“she/he shall” with “they shall”

“she/he wishes” with “they wish”

“she/he may” with “they may”

“she/he objects” with “they object”

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“her/his notice” with “their notice”

“her/his willingness” with “their willingness”

“he thinks” with “they think”

“he may” with “they may”

"her/him" with "them"

4. Rule Q Definitions

Lost