

**RECORD OF DECISIONS**

**2014 National Women’s Conference**

**Brighton**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **M1** | **Women Active in Unison** |
| **M2** | **Supporting Education for Women** |
| **M3** | **Young women's role models** |
| **M4** | **ZERO HOURS** |
| **M5** | **Zero hour contracts** |
| **M6** | **Zero hour contracts** |
| **M7** | **Social Work Profession Motion** |
| **M8** | **Home care workers** |
| **M9** | **Child Care** |
| **M010** | **Equality for bisexual women workers** |
| **M011** | **Aspirational women in the workplace - the barriers women still face** |
| **M012** | **EMPOWERING WOMEN IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR** |
| **M013** | **Benefit Cap** |
| **M014** | **WOMEN UNDER ATTACK** |
| **M015** | **The Economy is not working for women** |
| **M016** | **The Disproportionate Impact of Austerity Measures in Relation to Unemployment and Redundancy on Black Women** |
| **M017** | **Women and the Housing Crisis** |
| **M018** | **Local Housing Allowance - Shared Accommodation rate** |
| **M021** | **Save the NHS, save women’s local health services** |
| **M022** | **Maternity and its impact on Women's careers** |
| **M023** | **Group B Streptococcus** |
| **M024** | **No age restrictions for cervical cancer screenings** |
| **M025** | **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN** |
| **M027** | **DOMESTIC ABUSE: SUPPORT FOR WOMEN IN EMPLOYMENT** |
| **M028** | **Support for those suffering Domestic Violence** |
| **M029** | **Domestic Abuse** |
| **M032** | **UNISON policy on violence against women** |
| **M033** | **End violence against Black women** |
| **M034** | **Product Regulation** |
| **M035** | **Pay Day Loans** |
| **M036** | **Food Banks** |
| **M037** | **FREE SANITARY PRODUCTS FOR ALL WOMEN** |
| **M038** | **HEALTH AND SAFETY MOTION** |
| **M039** | **Supporting the women victims of stalking** |
| **M040** | **Traditional values v women’s rights** |
| **M041** | **DEFENDING THE WOMEN OF COLOMBIA IN THEIR PEACE PROCESS** |
| **M042** | **Sexualisation of women in the media** |
| **M043** | **‘Lose the Lads Mags’ Campaign** |
| **CB** | **CEDAW** |
| **CC** | **MALE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN** |

**Motions**

**1. Women Active in Unison**

**Carried as amended by amendment 1.1**

As the trade union with the highest density of women members it is disturbing that so few women are active in their branches or across the union at regional and national level.

It is of particular concern that the number of low paid women members who are active in UNISON is declining.

Self organization should be at the heart of our union and we must ensure that women have the opportunity to be involved from local groups up to national committee level

At Branch level we still have gatekeepers who prevent potential women activists from coming forwards to be involved in their union and their branch.

Statistics show that the high level branch positions are still in the majority held by men.

It is now time to look at where we are and take stock of what roles women play in Unison. We must highlight the benefits of being involved and how women’s voices can be heard loud and clear.

Now is the time to look at how we recruit stewards that truly reflect the make up of our membership.

As a union we must ensure that women are at the forefront of what we do, how we recruit and how we campaign.

National Women’s Conference asks that the National Women’s Committee produces material to promote what the benefits of being a Female Unison activist brings.

To carry out research on the levels of female activism across the regions and report back to National Women’s Conference 2015.

To highlight the importance of having active, low paid women members at a local, regional and national level.

To be prepared to mount a robust campaign at NDC 2014 if there are any proposed rule changes seeking to remove the low paid women's seats or to redefine them to allow men to stand.

**2. Supporting Education for Women**

**Carried**

Conference is proud of Unison's commitment to lifelong learning and education for all. It is particularly proud of the selection of Unison course which provides women with an opportunity to learn in a safe and supportive environment; allowing women to return to the classroom where this opportunity may not otherwise have been afforded and increasing women's confidence and self-esteem which can lead to further learning and assist with career progression.

For women who continue with further education, Conference welcomes the bursaries Unison has available to study full-time residential courses in Women's Studies, Trade Union or Labour Studies at Ruskin or Northern College but for women wishing to gain certificates or diploma's to increase their understanding or for those wishing to study for a Batchelor's or Master's degree, Women's Studies have been omitted from the bursaries currently available which only apply to learning in the Trade Union or Labour movement.

With more than two thirds of Unison members being women and with women more likely to be low paid and/or part-time workers, in addition to being more disproportionately affected by the austerity cuts, the omission of Women's Studies from some of the bursaries may provide yet another barrier to the challenges already facing women who may wish to pursue that level of learning; it also indicates less value is seen in relation to Women's Studies when compared to the Labour movement or Trade Union yet women have played such an important role in both.

Whilst Conference acknowledges Unison's commitment to women members and education, particularly the education and training targeted specifically at women. Conference would welcome Women's Studies being aligned with Trade Union and Labour Studies in terms of eligibility for bursaries at all levels, thus demonstrating the recognition that Women's Studies and the role of women deserves.

Conference calls upon the National Women's Committee to:

1. Work with the National Executive Committee to review and amend the current policy regarding all bursaries, to include Women's Studies where bursaries are currently available for Trade Union and Labour Studies
2. Publicise the bursaries to women members to support the existing measures for lifelong learning

**3. Young women's role models**

**Carried**

Conference believes that, despite the continued existence of discrimination against women and the barriers to women’s participation at all levels of society, women are continuing to make progress in taking up leadership roles.

Conference further believes this is important in not only challenging the predominance of male power in our society, but also in providing positive role models for young women.

Conference also believes that such role models may be individuals, or may be groups of young women who have worked together to achieve positive change.

Conference calls on the National Women’s Committee to seek to promote positive role models to young women, especially those who contribute to delivery of public services and who contribute to political life.

Conference also calls on the National Women’s Committee to:

(i) call for examples from regional women’s groups of young women who have made a positive difference in their workplaces, the union, and/or community, and seek to work with UNISON’s Communications Department to help publicise their work through UNISON communication channels;

(ii) consider inviting a young woman to address next year’s conference on the importance of young women’s participation in the union and/or public life.

**4. ZERO HOURS**

**Carried**

Conference deeply concerned at the improper use of Zero Hours contracts throughout the employment sectors. Employers are targeting workers via health and social care settings, education, hotel services and many more work areas, to use these contracts as a means of reducing costs and maximising profits.

However, they are disproportionately affecting women workers and their families and communities, inevitably increases demands on social, health and housing services, food banks and CABs.

Some evidence clearly suggests that employers are using these contracts unlawfully and discriminatingly, as an easy means of removing employees with health and disability issues from the workplace. Zero hours contracts are being imposed on such individuals (as an alternative to redundancy), but the employee is subsequently never contacted for work.

Such tactics do not benefit either the employer, who loses any respect and confidence and commitment within the workforce, and those employees are left in an insecure state of perpetual limbo, constantly waiting on the next phone call, unable to make any family or financial commitments, other than the very short term.

Conference condemns the use of zero hours contracts in all sectors of employment and calls on the National Women’s Committee to recommend to UK and Scottish Government that legislation be introduced to set low limits in the use of zero hours contracts within workplaces.

**5. Zero hour contracts**

**Withdrawn**

**6. Zero hour contracts**

**Carried**

This Conference is concerned at the growing number of zero hour contracts that are being forced onto a desperate workforce. Conference believes that a disproportionate number of women in public services are increasingly being subjected to these types of contracts.

The Coalition Government and private sector claim that zero hour contracts offer both the employer and employee ‘flexibility’, and that they might suit those who want ‘occasional earnings’. It is hard to imagine that in the midst of the Coalition Government ‘austerity’ measures of pay freezes, cuts to funding, rising cost of living that many people want ‘occasional earnings’ What zero hour contracts in truth offer workers is insecure low paid employment.

Traditionally, these types of contracts were used in agriculture, retail and hospitality, bars and restaurants for seasonal, casual labour. Zero hour contracts are however, being increasingly used by contractors providing outsourced services for public bodies. A Government survey of businesses published in January 2013, found the second highest proportion of workers on zero hour contracts work in the health sector and the third highest was education (The 2011 Workplace Relations Employment Study, Jan 2013). A recent Commons Library report (14th October 2013) suggests that other sources indicate the number of workers on zero hour contracts is much higher than government figures suggest. The Financial Times in April 2013 reported that there are almost 100,000 zero hour contracts in use across NHS hospitals, whilst the Guardian on 8th September suggested that as many as 5.5 million workers could be employed on zero hour contracts. Skills for Care estimate that 307,000 adult social workers in England were employed on zero hour contracts in May 2013. Zero hour contracts were found to be significantly more common for domiciliary/homecare workers with 61% of workers on zero hour contracts in September 2011.

The evidence suggests that more women than men are employed on these types of contracts. Conference welcomes the UNISON ‘branch guide on equalities in procurement’ and asks the National Women’s Committee to work with the relevant committee’s and groups to,

1. raise awareness of the increasingly disproportionate number of women on zero hour contracts amongst branches and,
2. Conduct appropriate research on the impact on women of these type of contracts
3. To use the findings of any research to campaign against any adverse impact on women which may ultimately include an overhaul of the legislation

**7. Social Work Profession Motion**

**Carried**

Conference notes that social work is a profession dominated by women. Social work is a gendered activity, in terms of both its workforce and client group and it is well documented that more women than men enter this area of work (‘Gender at Work: Characteristics of ‘Failing’ Social Work Students’. Sheila Furness. Division of Social Work and Social Care, University of Bradford). It was a career with a defined career path, where newly qualified social workers could expect support and training as they developed their skills in the real world. However, in recent years, this approach has deteriorated with budget cuts, greater client expectations, scapegoating by the press; increasing workloads, pay failing to keep up with inflation, high staff turnover and a reduction in support and training programmes for newly qualified staff.

For too long now, newly qualified staff are often greeted with high case loads and complex cases. The competition for qualified social workers often results in staff undertaking a period of work experience with one employer and then moving to another authority that can offer a lighter caseload and higher pay. It is no surprise that social workers are one of the most highly unionised groups working within the public sector. A UNISON press release on 15th October highlighted that a recent joint survey of social workers by UNISON, employers and other organisations found that many social workers reported widespread use of agency workers as a result of recruitment freezes, informal arrangements to help each other out, stacking of cases and employers using bullying tactics to pressurise social workers to accept additional workloads.

Anecdotal evidence also suggests that the culmination of this is an increase in the level of sickness absence, refusing flexible working requests and aggressive use of formal capability procedures. Therefore, Conference asks that the National Women’s Committee to work with appropriate national and regional committee’s to :

1. Investigate the adverse impact on women of with a view to,
2. Using the findings to raise awareness of the issues and the particular impact on women
3. issues guidance to branches and women members, outlining the steps that women can take to protect their health and their professional careers.

**8. Home care workers**

**Carried as amended by amendment 8.1**

Conference congratulates the local government service group on the work they are doing to improve working conditions for home care workers, and the production of the Ethical Care Charter.

The issues facing these workers are well recognised – low pay, unpaid hours, unpaid travel time, unpaid sickness absence, unrealistic mileage rates, short client visits etc. The ethical care charter seeks to address these on behalf of care workers, the vast majority of whom are women.

Conference welcomes the Ethical Care Campaign, which links decent wages and conditions for workers with quality of service for users, and urges local authorities to sign up to the Charter. This includes commitments to stop commissioning services on the basis of 15 minute packages of care or at prices which are bound to lead to a poor quality of care and/or low wages. It has already contributed significantly to a far higher political and media profile for the effects on service users of these commissioning practices, and the fact that between 150 - 200,000 home care workers are paid less than the national minimum wage because they are not paid for the time they spend travelling between the homes of the people they care for.

Conference therefore further welcomes UNISON’s ‘Pay Up for Travel Time’ campaign launched in September 2013. Branches have been provided with information on every homecare provider their council commissions, and asked to use this to undertake recruitment and organising work around this issue.

The charter also seeks to address the issue of the use of zero hours contracts, which are increasingly being used in the public sector and in home care in particular. The use of such contracts hides the true women’s unemployment figure in the UK, which is currently at a 25 year high.

The impact on women’s incomes is stark – zero hours contracts provide no guaranteed income, making household budgeting – primarily carried out by women – impossible to manage; benefit entitlements may be confused; and employers abuse such contracts to impose poorer working conditions for staff who are afraid to complain for fear of losing hours.

Additionally women with childcare or other dependant commitments struggle to manage that care, and family life is disrupted.

Conference calls upon the national women’s committee to work with the local government service group to promote the Ethical Care Charter, and to work with all appropriate departments and partner organisations to raise awareness of the damaging impact of both poor conditions for home care workers and zero hours contracts.

Conference further calls on the National Women’s Committee to encourage branch and regional women’s groups to give support to the Ethical Care Campaign, and to get involved in branch and regional work around the Pay Up for Travel Time campaign.

**9. Child Care**

**Carried as amended by amendment 9.1**

Conference notes that affordable child care was one of the main issues raised by the young women members’ caucus at national young members weekend 2013.

Conference believes that affordable child care is essential if parents and those with parenting responsibilities, and in particular women, are to be effectively enabled to have access to full working lives.

Conference notes that UNISON is working with Gingerbread, the charity for single parent families, to call on the government to extend childcare support so that all parents on universal credit will have 85% of their childcare costs paid for, once the new welfare system is introduced. This call forms part of Gingerbread’s wider campaign, Make it Work which is aiming to ensure that single parents across Britain have access to decent jobs that allow them to balance their childcare responsibilities and provide for their families.

In addition to the need for increased government support for working parents, conference believes that the current provision and practices vary widely between employers.

Conference calls on the National Women’s Committee to seek to work with the Bargaining Support Unit to survey branches on child care provision in order to:

(i) ensure an up-to-date picture of current agreements on child care provision is available;

(ii) develop a model bargaining claim for promoting to service groups.

Conference further calls upon the national women’s committee to work with Labour Link, the NEC, regions and branches to promote and support the Gingerbread Make it Work campaign, and other appropriate initiatives which seek to improve childcare provision and lower the costs of childcare, whilst protecting the terms and conditions of staff working in the childcare sector.

**010. Equality for bisexual women workers**

**Carried**

Conference notes that Bisexual Visibility Day has been marked on the 23rd September since 1999. Bisexual Visibility Day is a day in which the bisexual community, their friends and supporters recognise and celebrate bisexuality, but the day is not acknowledged by many.

Quite often bisexual women face biphobia not only from heterosexuals, but from the LGBT community as well. They face allegations of sitting on the fence and of not making their minds up. Bisexual women are particularly likely to be accused of being greedy or promiscuous.

Research supported by UNISON has shown that bisexual women are far less likely to be out at work. The UK results for the Europe-wide LGBT 2012/2013 discrimination survey showed that 31% lesbians and 53% bisexual women always or often hid or disguised their sexual orientation at work during the last five years

Bisexuality is often paid no more than lip-service in equality action plans and omitted from equality and diversity training. It is no surprise that bisexual women are afraid to disclose their sexual orientation due to a fear of prejudice and discrimination.

Conference notes the 2012 Open University Bisexuality Report which found:

1. Bisexual people’s experiences differ in important ways from those of heterosexual people, and from those of lesbian and gay people.
2. Biphobia is distinct from homophobia.
3. Bisexual populations have significantly higher levels of distress and mental health difficulties than equivalent heterosexual or lesbian/gay populations.

The report also suggests that bisexuality is considerably more common amongst women than men.

Conference welcomes the following recommendations of the report:

1. Inform yourself about bisexuality and avoid stereotypes about bisexual people.
2. Include bisexuality within all policy and explicitly within the diversity implications section of every document and policy.
3. Don’t assume one unified bisexual experience. The experiences and needs of bisexual people are also affected by their race, culture, gender, relationship status, age, disability, religion, social class, geographical location, etc.
4. Separate biphobia out from homophobia, recognising that there are specific issues facing bisexual people such as lack of acknowledgement of their existence, stereotypes of greediness or promiscuity, and pressure to be either gay or straight.
5. Recognise the role that biphobia and bisexual invisibility play in creating negative outcomes for bisexual people.

Conference calls on the National Women’s Committee, in liaison with the National LGBT Committee, to work with branch and regional women’s groups to address equality for bisexual women members including:

1. Publicising the findings and recommendations of the 2012 Bisexuality Report via regional and branch women’s groups and the women’s self-organised group webpages;
2. Promoting UNISON’s factsheets on Bisexuality: a trade union issue and on Lesbian, gay and bisexual workers rights;
3. Publicising and promoting the annual UNISON network meeting for bisexual members, held each July, and Bisexual Visibility Day held each September, throughout the women’s self-organised group, including via social media; and
4. Addressing bisexual equality in regional women’s equalities training and events.

**011. Aspirational women in the workplace - the barriers women still face**

**Carried as amended by amendment 11.1**

Conference notes that women make up 51% of the population and are a major contributor to shaping and enriching our communities. The current Coalition Government cuts have had a huge impact on the public sector, where the majority of the workforce are women. As a result women members have been disproportionally hit on a number of fronts.

Women remain under-represented in senior positions, even in professions where there are predominately female workforces. This is bad for society as the views of women are often excluded from the decision making processes.

For our future women leaders there are too few women to inspire them, and evidence shows that there is a lack of access to training, mentoring and support for women to take on more senior roles in workplaces. The greater the cuts to public services the more severe the effect upon women’s ability to develop and progress in their workplaces.

For many women, one of the major issues is career drop-out before they reach more senior levels often due to childcare or caring responsibilities. Sometimes there is barrier to women progressing professionally after becoming parents, and women are often given lesser roles following parenthood, being seen as choosing parenthood over a career. Additionally there is a lack of any real support to encourage women to progress outside of traditional roles, the term ‘breaking the glass ceiling’ is a very real issue for many of our women members.

Nevertheless conference does note that there are inspiring women, particularly in our Union structures, who do hold senior roles; and UNISON should celebrate and promote this achievement.

In the Northern Region women play a pivotal role in providing leadership, and we promote women to aspire and take on leadership roles. Women activists are offered mentoring and are encouraged to take part in positions throughout the union. Through the Northern Public Services Alliance support is offered to local campaigners, encouraging them to take part in activity and women have been at the forefront of this, often taking the lead in fronting campaigns.

Conference agrees it is imperative that women are at the forefront of the promotion of inspirational women in the workplace.

This conference asks the National Women Committee to:

1. To promote the publication and use of Equality Impact Assessments to ensure women are not disproportionally affected by cuts;
2. Work with branches and regions to encourage activists to promote policies within the workplace and to support progression and devolvement of women members;
3. Work with Regions to develop mentoring schemes for women activists; and
4. Work with our representatives on the TUC Women's Group and STUC Women's Committee to work with the other trade unions to highlight the impact a lack of visibility of women in senior positions.

**012. EMPOWERING WOMEN IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR**

**Carried**

Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Women’s group welcomes UNISON’s Guide to Influencing the NHS (Stronger Together – A UNISON Guide to influencing the NHS)

As women trade unionists, we are used to being involved in workplace negotiations and have an honourable tradition of arguing our case. Getting involved in public sector bodies – for example the new NHS does not compromise our trade union principles, but allows us to support and promote our union values.

As women we can join many groups that are being set up to represent our communities, schools and health bodies, for example in the new NHS there are far more decision making bodies now than in the old NHS. Women can get involved in these decision making bodies and influence how they will use their yet to be determined powers and influence going forward.

Conference calls upon the National Women’s Committee to work with UNISON structures and relevant bodies, including Labour Link and Learning and Organising to educate, mentor and support women to achieve their full potential by doing so to empower them to exert and influence the future direction of our public services and bodies.

**013. Benefit Cap**

**Carried**

This conference believes that the Government’s austerity measures are purely an attack on the working class and that women are more likely to be feeling the detrimental impact of any Welfare Reform. Women rely more on tax credit and benefits than men, in particular due to their caring responsibilities, relative economic inequalities and poverty. According to the Fawcett Society, “66% of the savings from the Benefit Cap will come from women”.

Universal Credit has to some degree dominated the headlines and shifted the focus away from the incoming benefit cap which is targeted at out-of-work-families. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) estimates that about 67,000 households will be affected by the measure in 2013/14 rising to 75,000 in 2014/15. This means that in 2013/14 - 80,000 adults and 190,000 children will be affected.

The amount of benefit payable to single people will be limited to £350 per week and to couples (with or without children) and lone parents it will be limited to £500 per week. This includes payment of housing costs. In real terms this means a loss of income and in fact the DWP estimates that affected households will lose an average of £93 a week (mean) or £63 a week (median). 20% of those affected are expected to lose more than £150 a week.

If, as a single person or family you are getting more than the benefit cap, your Housing Benefit is reduced to make sure that the total amount of your benefit is not more than the cap. This means you will have to use money from your other benefits to pay towards the rent for your home. Inevitably this will lead to a social cleansing of the areas where housing is the most expensive but in the interim, families will either go without the basics in order to pay their rent or they will fall into rent arrears and ultimately be evicted. Given that single women, many of whom are single parents make up 50% of recipients of housing benefit (with couples making up 20% and single men making up 20%) the cap on benefits will hit women harder.

In addition, and because the emphasis is on getting people back into work, it will also force many women into work in order to claim Working Tax Credits and be exempt from the cap. Yet to be eligible for Working Tax Credits you have to be on a low income and be working over a conditional amount of hours. This will place a heavy burden on single parent families the majority of whom are women, who will be most likely to be taking on the worst jobs, zero hour contacts, low salary, poor terms and conditions. As a consequence of the coalition government reducing the amount of childcare costs the state will cover for low income families, finding affordable childcare is an additional concern.

We therefore ask the National Women’s Committee to;

1. Raise the profile specifically on the Benefit Cap, its workings and its likely impact. This may include a fact sheet for members as well as signposting to UNISON Services such as ‘There for You’
2. Conduct appropriate research on its impact.
3. To use the findings of any research to campaign against any adverse impact on women which may ultimately include an overhaul of the legislation.

**014. WOMEN UNDER ATTACK**

**Carried as amended by amendment 14.1**

Women are bearing the brunt of cuts from both the UK Government and our locally elected devolved institutions. In Northern Ireland alone, changes in welfare benefits may result in the loss of £500 million from our budget over the next four years.

It is clear that women will again suffer disproportionally from these changes. Women play a vital role in our economy as both workers and consumers. Decisions on the economy, in particular on health, and cuts to public services, have a major impact on women's incomes and wider lives and will have a profound impact on increasing health inequalities.

Conference notes that Black women are more likely to work in the public sector as it has historically been the equality employer of choice and therefore are affected more by job cuts and attacks on terms and conditions in this sector. Black women are more likely to be on lower incomes and therefore more reliant both on public services and on benefits, both of which are under attack from this government.

Disabled women are under attack at work including through the squeeze on access to work budgets and the imposition of increasingly draconian sick leave policies which ignore disabled people’s right to disability leave. The bedroom tax and the imposition of Universal Credit have a negative impact on large numbers of disabled people.

Conference further notes that in December 2013, UNISON published the findings of ground breaking research it had commissioned from NatCen Social Research on the impact of austerity on LGBT people. LGBT women are experiencing a reduction in specialised services which meet their needs as a result of cuts in both the voluntary and public sectors. Progress in challenging LGBT discrimination is being reversed and homophobia, biphobia and transphobia are on the rise again. LGBT equality is treated as an optional extra to be dropped when times get tough – at the same time as scapegoating, bullying and hate crime are on the rise.

Many of the lessons drawn out by that research report also reflect the experiences of disabled women, Black women and women in general under the assault of austerity.

The Government and the devolved institutions need to recognise that gender is the most significant factor interacting with economic status to compound health inequalities. Women and girls have greater health and social care needs than men across their lives and face significant barriers to both good mental and physical health. Women and girls' lives are shaped by physiological factors and social experiences that negatively impact on their physical and mental health, including poverty and economic disadvantage, women's reproductive and caring roles, experiencing violence and abuse and age. Whilst women live longer than men, they spend more years in poor health and with a disability. This has a detrimental impact on them as individuals but women's position in society as main care givers means their poor health will also have a detrimental impact on the lives of their families and their ability to function in wider society, in their community and in the labour force. Cuts to frontline public services will exacerbate this situation and increase health inequalities for women across our society.

Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to work with Regional Women's Committees and other UNISON structures in a renewed campaign to highlight the impact of cuts on women and to highlight that greater public investment must be directed towards prevention in order to tackle the root issues that impact on women across their lives, including poverty, sexual violence, abuse, reproduction and age.

**015. The Economy is not working for women**

**Carried**

This conference notes

The cuts across the public services are having a detrimental effect on women lives and the lives of their families. The UK is the sixth richest economy in the world and yet more than one in five people live below the poverty line.

Women whether single or in relationships are more likely to live in low income households with single parents and older women more likely to be living in poverty.

As a result of this many of our women members are relying on food banks and experiencing fuel poverty.

Recent research carried out by Oxfam shows that of the 8.1 billion in net personal tax increases and benefit cuts pushed through as part of the austerity measures 5.8 billion (72%) will impact on women.

Furthermore, it shows that since the cuts in public services female unemployment has risen to 1.08 million a level last seen in 1988 and this is expected to rise to 1.5 million by 2015.

This conference welcomes the decision of the Labour Party to abolish the bedroom tax and freeze energy prices when they come to power. We applaud those local authorities who are setting up their own energy schemes to ensure residents can access energy at a lower price. These measures will directly benefit women.

Therefore National Women’s Conference asks the National Women’s committee to

1. Report back to the National Women’s Conference 2015 on the amount of women members who have been made redundant due to cuts in the public sector.
2. Work with Labour Link to ensure the impact of the Con-Dems policies on women are a priority for the Labour Party’s policies in campaigning for the 2015 general election.
3. Promote There for You, to encourage women who need to access the services which UNISON offer including the credit union.

**016. The Disproportionate Impact of Austerity Measures in Relation to Unemployment and Redundancy on Black Women**

**Carried as amended by amendment 16.1**

Conference notes that Black women are disproportionately bearing the brunt of this government’s austerity measures. More Black women are being condemned to living in poverty in the midst of these cuts and to a higher rate of unemployment than white women. According to the latest Labour Force Survey statistics, the employment rate of Black women is 52 per cent compared with 72 per cent for the working population as a whole. The Black women’s economic unemployment rate is particularly high, at 39.2 per cent. Being Black and female is detrimental to employment prospects, career progression and job security.

Conference notes that as discontent at austerity and falling living standards grows we are witnessing concerted attempts by politicians to create divisions among us for example by scapegoating migrant workers and Muslims.

Women are particularly affected by proposals in the new Immigration Bill which reduce rights of appeal against deportation and require GPs and landlords to check their patients/tenants immigration status and limit access to healthcare for workers on visas.

Attacking the right to family life will have a devastating impact on women trying to preserve families in often desperate circumstances.

Migrant women workers have played a major role in building and maintaining public services in general and the health service in particular – yet they could face restrictions on receiving treatment within the NHS where they work.

Conference, Black women are twice as likely to be unemployed than white women - and are reporting having to 'Westernise' their names or removing hijabs (headscarf) to improve their chances of getting a job.

This is according to the Runnymede Trust report for the All Party Parliamentary Group on Race and Community, which finds that 25% of the unemployment rate for Black and Asian men and women is because of "prejudice.” For example, the unemployment rate for Black women in 2011 was 14.3% and 6.8% for white women. The report found Black women face discrimination at "every stage" of the recruitment process.

The report also found discrimination based on religious dress, especially towards women who wear the hijab. It was found that those who removed their hijab for interviews were more successful than similarly qualified women who did not, and some women interviewed reported removing their headscarf in order to find work.

Conference notes that, since this report, the stoking of Islamophobia following the killing of Lee Rigby saw Muslim women wearing a hijab or niqab (headscarf or veil) being verbally abused and even having them ripped off. Spurious arguments about security and women’s liberation have been used divisively by politicians, the media and far right groups such as the EDL who declare it should be illegal for Muslim women to cover their faces. Tory MP Philip Hollobone put forward a private members bill to ban face coverings. Tory health secretary Jeremy Hunt announced a review of NHS uniforms to ban the niqab. Women in some workplaces and colleges have been told by their employers they can no longer wear the niqab, including in a number of NHS hospitals. Where there have been campaigns against bans, individual Muslim women have gained confidence to resist and have identified different reasons why they actively choose to wear the niqab.

The report found the situation had not improved since the 1980s for Black women and was worsening for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women. "With 17.7% of Black women and 20.5% of Bangladeshi and Pakistani women looking for work being unemployed compared to only 6.8% of white women,” the inquiry found that “this gap has remained constant for Black women since the 1980s, and has actually worsened for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women since 2004".

Unemployment among women is set to rise to 1.5 million by 2018, according to a report by the Fawcett Society that says 400,000 women in the UK can expect to lose their jobs over the next five years. It says Government moves to increase employment opportunity in the UK are "leaving out women" as six out of 10 "new" jobs are going to men.

The report blames a variety of factors, including cuts to public sector jobs. It has found that a third of women in the UK are employed in the public sector, making up 65% of the workforce, so women are likely to make up the majority of those who lose their jobs. Almost half of Black Caribbean women work in the public sector before the public sector job cuts hit. Over the past 12 months, there has been a 5.3 per cent decline in the amount of public sector jobs, which has a disproportionate effect on Black staff. In Lambeth, South London, it was reported that 73 per cent of Black staff were at risk of redundancy compared to 45 per cent of white staff.

The Fawcett Society report concludes that the Government should implement a ‘Women's Employment Strategy’ to improve levels of low pay and ensure greater access to the jobs market for women.

Many Black women are losing their jobs in the public sector, as they work on the frontline, particularly in the NHS and local government, where jobs are going first and fast. This cannot be allowed to continue so that the already unacceptable levels of unemployment amongst Black women can get even worse. Ministers must take urgent action on the recommendations of this report, particularly the monitoring of redundancies by gender and ethnicity combined, and do more to tackle the labour market barriers faced by Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, including racism.

The demise of the public sector has exposed the weakness of the private sector in recruiting Black employees. The private sector remains less transparent and accountable in how it recruits. Accusations of racism and nepotism, or the ‘who you know’ syndrome, have often been leveled.

In the UK, largely because of the racism in the employment practices in the private sector, Black women are more likely to work in the public sector. They are largely located in the lower and junior administrative roles and it’s these post that have been disproportionately affected by job cuts and pay freezes.

Black communities are among some of the hardest hit by the Government’s programme of spending cuts according to a ground-breaking new report published in October 2013 by the Centre for Human Rights in Practice at the University of Warwick, Coventry Women’s Voices, Coventry Ethnic Minority Action Partnership and Foleshill Women’s Training

The ground breaking report entitled, Layers of inequality: a human rights and equality impact assessment of the cuts on BAME women in Coventry examine the impact of cuts BAME in a range of areas including employment, housing, welfare benefits, health, social care, education, legal aid, violence against women and voluntary organisations.

This local study has found that unemployment among BAME women in Coventry increased by 74.4% between 2009 and 2013. Unemployment among white British women increased by 30.5% during the same period.

We can therefore expect that around twice as many women than men will lose their jobs in the public sector, with around half a million women in total facing redundancy. Jobs that will be lost include local government workers, nurses, teachers, council workers, school meal assistants, Sure Start workers, domestic violence support workers and care workers, amongst many others.

Women in certain regions will be hit particularly hard; for example, 46% of working women in the North East of England work in public sector occupations - one of the highest percentages in any region of the UK.

Women in certain parts of the public sector are especially vulnerable as they make up an even greater majority of the workforce. For example:

• 75% of local government workers are women

• 77% of NHS workers are women

• 80% of adult social care workers are women

• 82% of education workers are women

Black women may be affected severely by job cuts. In February 2012, UNISON surveyed 17 out of 27 local authorities in London and found that Black women are being disproportionately hit in 12 London councils: for example, in one council Black women constituted 5% of the workforce but 23% of redundancies.

Conference believes that the austerity measures are unfair and their disproportionate impact on Black women cannot continue unchallenged.

Conference believes that the Immigration Bill will have a detrimental effect on migrant women workers in public services and the right to a family life.

Conference believes all women have the right to choose how they live and what they wear. The small minority of Muslim women who wear the niqab are being targeted as part of wider attempt to stoke racism in an era of war, austerity and discontent.

Conference therefore calls on the National Women’s Committee to work with the NEC and other appropriate bodies, together with:

1. The TUC and Fawcett Society to determine strategies to counteract the discriminatory impact of the austerity measures.
2. Labour Link to campaign vigorously to promote full employment of Black women
3. The National Black Members Committee to develop information on challenging unfair redundancies.

d) Campaign against the detrimental effect of the new Immigration Bill on women.

e) Campaign against any ban on women’s right to choose whether or not they wear the niqab.

**017. Women and the Housing Crisis**

**Carried**

Conference notes that the UK is suffering from an acute housing crisis, with rents soaring and house building grinding to a halt as a direct result of the recession, whilst the number of new households is increasing faster than the number of new builds.

Against a background of mounting debt across the country, huge numbers of homeowners are having their homes repossessed. This is particularly the case for women with children whose relationships have ended and who are unable to keep up with their mortgage repayments on a reduced income, or those who have become unemployed due to public sector job cuts.

In the rental sector :

• Over 2 million households in the UK are currently waiting for social housing;

• Some homeless women - many with dependent children - wait for years in temporary accommodation – often these women will be escaping abusive relationships;

• Women renting privately on low incomes have to put up with poor living conditions and little security;

• Lone women are not prioritised for social housing;

• Above inflation rate increases in private rentals are not matched by housing support.

And at the sharpest end, many hundreds of women sleep rough on the streets every night, cold and fearing for their safety.

In rural areas and the devolved nations, lower wages and high rental and living costs exacerbate the problem, with many women being unable to remain in the areas where they have the support of family and long term friends.

Conference calls upon the national women’s committee to work with the NEC, Labour Link appropriate partner organisations and community organisations to lobby the UK government, and future government, to :

• provide secure, affordable, decent housing for all, by investing in affordable homes to boost the economy and to help solve the housing crisis;

• Increase regulation, including rent capping, in the private sector, and increase the maximum penalties for rogue landlords;

• Ensure that the housing needs of women are taken into account in housing policy.

**018. Local Housing Allowance - Shared Accommodation rate**

**Carried**

This conference believes that the Government’s decision to raise the Local Housing Allowance shared accommodation rate to 35 year olds was not subject to equality impact testing.

It is well documented that women earn less than men and therefore find it harder to afford private sector rents. With the changes to eligibility for the 1 bedroom rate higher numbers of single women are being forced into shared accommodation yet they have no control over whom else is in the house with them. For women who have experienced physical and sexual abuse feeling unsafe in their home environment is traumatic yet this Government has in effect put more women at further risk not only to their physical self but to their mental well being. Conversely one of the few exemptions to the LHA change is prisoners; which means that a perpetrator of serious physical and /or sexual abuse aged under the age of 35 years can on release claim Local Housing Allowance for a 1 bedroom home. This is totally unacceptable and sending out the wrong signal to victims.

Conference instructs the National Women’s Committee to,

1. Raise the profile specifically on ‘Shared Accommodation Rate’, its workings and its likely impact on women. This may include a fact sheet for members.
2. Conduct appropriate research on the impact on women and,
3. use the findings of any research to campaign against any adverse impact on women which may ultimately include campaigning for an overhaul of the legislation.

**021. Save the NHS, save women’s local health services**

**Carried**

This conference notes that despite the Health Service apparently being outside the cuts there have been many reductions in hospital services across the country and often these are those that provide specialist services to women. 11 hospitals have already lost maternity services since 2010.

The closure of local maternity units will force women to travel miles to another hospital. In the West Midlands the regrettable events and subsequent investigation at Mid Staffordshire Hospital are being used as grounds for the possible closure of the consultant led maternity unit.

If the closure goes ahead women will have to travel approximately 20 miles to the nearest maternity unit. Staffordshire is a large rural county and women may face journey times of up to one hour and expensive taxi journeys if they don’t have access to cars.

This Conference calls upon the National Women’s Committee to work with the National Executive Council and the Valuing Maternity Campaign to continue to campaign for properly funded and resourced maternity services.

Furthermore this conference calls upon the National Women’s Committee to work with the National Labour Link committee to campaign for proper maternity services as part of the 2015 general election campaign.

**022. Maternity and its impact on Women's careers**

**Carried as amended by amendment 22.1**

Conference notes that for many women, returning from maternity leave can attribute to future stressful periods in their working life. It’s not just the thought of leaving baby behind, but the thought of what lies ahead in regard to their future working life and opportunities within the workplace.

In Local Government, reorganisation seems to have become a yearly occurrence yet it is often the women who bear the brunt of efficiencies savings particularly those pending maternity leave or those who are actually on their leave. Most women that work in Public Services feel isolated and unsupported and many fall victim of incorrect HR advice in regard to their rights within the workplace when pregnant and on their return.

This can often result in women being unable to compete with colleagues when restructures occur when they are absent. Recent reports from organisations looking at the effects of maternity and future opportunities within the workplace show us that 37 % of professional women drop out of their careers at some point, mostly this refers to maternity. About three quarters of these women are side-lined for much of their lives as they cannot compete with the ‘male competitive model’ who have an unblemished record and so they simply leave their job due to pressure within the workplace.

However, this is not the only barrier women face on their return to the workforce.

Many women take part- time positions when they return from maternity leave, this is not always because they would like to spend more time with their children, but often it is due to the financial burden of costly childcare and the inflexible approach of many employers.

Since the Coalition Government took office we seem to have talked endlessly about women being disproportionately affected by the austerity measures yet we must do more.

Conference welcomes the announcement that the Equality and Human Rights Commission is to carry out a survey on pregnancy discrimination, the first since 2005. The project will investigate employers’ practices towards employees who are pregnant or on maternity leave, and these employee's experiences in the workplace to provide evidence on the extent, causes and effects of pregnancy and maternity discrimination. This survey has been brought about in no small part because of pressure from trade unions and our partner organisations, including Maternity Action and Working Families.

Conference further notes that the UNISON pregnancy – your rights at work guidance has been updated, along with UNISON guidance on bargaining for maternity rights.

Conference recognises that for us to achieve the ability for all women to be active, equal members of the workforce then there has to be a massive change in attitude by the employer with UNISON raising the profile of maternity issues in both the workplace and the media.

Therefore this conference calls upon the National Women’s Committee to:

1. Provide effective campaign material for branches to launch a ‘maternity and your rights’ campaign at both local and national level.
2. Work with UNISON nationally to include ‘maternity awareness’ in all foundation training for new workplace representatives and further training for the Women’s Officers within each of the branches.
3. Create and re-fresh material so that branches can promote maternity rights in easy to understand material.
4. Produce template policies which branches can promote with their employer which are family friendly with a duty of care.
5. To lobby MP's for universal, affordable Childcare.
6. Work with all UNISON structures to raise awareness of and encourage members to respond to the EHRC survey on pregnancy discrimination.

**023. Group B Streptococcus**

**Carried as amended by amendment 23.1**

I would like this conference to tell the government that every woman should be routinely given accurate information about group B Streptococcus (group B Strep or GBS) during her antenatal care

And then be offered a sensitive test for GBS, ideally at 35-37 weeks of pregnancy

Group B streptococcus (GBS), also known as group B strep, is one of many different bacteria which live inside your body. About a third of us have GBS in our gut without even knowing it.

About a quarter of women also have GBS in their vagina. If you do, you won't know it's there, as GBS doesn't have any obvious symptoms.

GBS bacteria can be passed from you to your baby during labour. But this doesn't usually cause problems, and most women who carry GBS bacteria have healthy babies. It is thankfully only in rare cases that GBS can cause serious illness and, even more rarely. But even 1 baby is too high a risk

One simple test will eradicate this and no new born baby will ever have to die because of it.

Countries which have done this have seen their incidence fall by 71-86%

We call upon the National Women’s committee to:

1. Campaign to have this test available to all women.
2. Highlight the importance of Group Strep B screening
3. Provide guidance on the symptoms and effects of Group Strep B.
4. Include information in the women’s campaigning guide – Women in UNISON - active, campaigning, leading, and in the women’s health guide – Taking Care, Keeping Informed

**024. No age restrictions for cervical cancer screenings**

**Carried**

10 years ago the age for Cervical Cancer screening rose from 20 to 25 in England followed by Northern Ireland in 2011, Wales in 2013 and Scotland due to rise in 2014.

Cervical Cancer screening is available for all women aged between 25 & 65. Government guidelines state there is no benefit to offer it to younger girls as greater abnormalities are common in those under 25, leading to unnecessary treatment, which in turn could lead to giving birth pre-term.

Unfortunately Cervical Cancer can happen to a woman at any age after becoming sexually active. Women are becoming sexually active at a much younger age, so screening should start within 2 years of becoming active.

Screening stops at 65 as it is by this age that it is believed that most women in a relationship have settled with one long term partner. Statistics show that more women than ever before are getting divorced in their 60’s and are enjoying renewed sexual activity thus requiring them to continue having access to Cervical Screening.

We call upon the National Women’s committee to:

• Campaign to have the age restrictions lifted on cervical screening and to make screening available to all women.

• Continue to highlight the importance of cervical screening.

• Provide guidance on the symptoms and effects of Cervical Cancer.

• Liaise with relevant organisations and work together to campaign for better screening for all women.

**025. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

**Carried**

In light of the recent United Nations evidence on the growing prevalence and impact of violence against women here and throughout the world, Council expresses extreme regret that UNISON NDC Conference 2013 defeated an amendment calling for women to be assumed to be telling the truth when they report abuse.

Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to work with all relevant UNISON structures in a campaign against violence against women in campaigns designed:

\* to confront and challenge violence against women throughout society including within our movement;

\* to extend screening for domestic violence to all forms of violence against women and in all areas of health care;

\* to ensure that any policies and strategies that are developed are sensitive to the particular needs and circumstances of women – particularly on issues such as mental health, self-harm and suicide which are often related to violence and sexual abuse; and

\* to champion the work of community and voluntary organisations dealing with this issue.

Conference also calls for the National Womens Committee to work with all relevant structures to work for the full implementation of the recent recommendations on violence against women contained within the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the seventh periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

**027. DOMESTIC ABUSE: SUPPORT FOR WOMEN IN EMPLOYMENT**

**Carried as amended by amendment 27.1**

For women in an abusive relationship, the work place is an important protective factor; it offers time away from the abuser; space for women to be themselves and valued for their skills and abilities; a source of income that provides some autonomy and independence; and communication with work colleagues that reduces isolation. The general perception is that employed women may need support from their employer or Trade Union to make a disclosure and seek help, but that they have enough resources to remove themselves from violent relationships. The reality for many women in part time and/or low paid work is very different.

The Northern Region Women’s Network has worked closely with My Sisters Place, in Middlesbrough, an independent specialist ‘One Stop Shop’ for women aged 16 or over who have experienced or are experiencing domestic abuse. The organization has 3 core values:

1. Safety
2. Social Justice
3. Health and Well-being

In March 2013 My Sister’s Place statistics showed that almost 50% of the women they were supporting were employed. Investigation of these cases showed a catalogue of barriers and difficulties in accessing the services they needed, in particular, safe temporary accommodation and Legal Aid to secure their property rights and the safety of children. Three key issues were highlighted:

1. The right to safety and justice
2. Access to Legal Aid
3. Access to safe temporary accommodation

Every woman should have the right to safety and justice. Employed women do not have those rights due to the restrictions on access to Legal Aid, the discriminatory practice in the application of housing benefit, and restrictions on access to Refuge accommodation applied primarily by Housing Associations, but embedded in the competitive tendering of Refuge contracts set by Local Authorities.

Voluntary and statutory funds are targeted to support the ‘most disadvantaged’ in society based on a range of measures that tend to exclude women in employment. If access to safety and justice were the measure of disadvantage, employed women would be at the top of the list alongside women with no recourse to public funds. However, women earning above minimum wage that find themselves, through no fault of their own, having to leave the family home, have limited or no recourse to public funding despite being taxpayers.

The restrictions that have been made to the Legal Aid Scheme have had a negative impact on women trying to leave abusive relationships. The lack of funding has the potential to put children at risk of harm, and deter women from leaving as her income and assets are assessed (even though she may not have access to those assets and her income may not be sufficient to support her and her children through the leaving process).

All the research agrees that the point of leaving a violent relationship is a dangerous time. This is supported by homicide reviews and is a primary risk factor in any domestic abuse case. It is recognized that safe temporary accommodation is vital for women that have made the decision to leave; hence, every local authority has a duty to provide Refuge accommodation for women fleeing abuse and these cases are given priority by homeless departments. Women on benefits receive full housing benefit and can make a ‘double claim’ on their own property for the period they are in a refuge. Housing Benefit is guaranteed and covers the full cost of rent and support with a small ‘service charge’ on top set by the Refuge provider, ranging from £12 - £24 a week.

Women, who work, face a number of barriers, with many Refuges refusing to accept working women at the point of access. The reason being that the process for submitting a Housing Benefit claim requires a level of documentation often not available to a woman in crisis, takes time to process, cannot be backdated more than a week, and the likelihood is that she will not qualify anyway. From the Refuge’s perspective, they may be accepting a non-paying resident and are therefore at best cautious, but generally refuse unless the woman agrees to pay the rent herself.

The average cost of Refuge accommodation is around £200 per week with a range of £160 - £350 a week.

Research undertaken by My Sister’s Place on access to Refuges by working women, including provision provided by Housing Associations, across the country highlighted the following responses:

1. None of the Refuges had a policy for accepting working women
2. Access refused if she had a mortgage on a property
3. She had to evidence that the Police had been called to prove her claim
4. One Refuge had never had a working woman
5. Women were encouraged to give up their job
6. Where the referral was accepted the woman had to pay full rent weekly plus charges (£250)

UNISON is committed to campaigning for social justice for all. A woman’s decision to leave an abusive relationship and her home takes huge courage. Evidence shows that she does not do this until she feels that there is no alternative.

Conference welcomes the Department of Health (DoH) Responsibility Deal pledge for organisations wishing to support employees experiencing domestic violence, and the guidance associated with the pledge. However, conference recognises signing up to such a pledge is only a first step and that employers need to put in place effective mechanisms to support women experiencing domestic violence.

Conference further recognises the opportunity provided by initiatives such as that in the Belfast Area Domestic Violence Partnership to work with local organisations to provide the best possible service for women, whilst raising the profile of UNISON in the local community.

Conference recognizes the work that UNISON has done to highlight domestic abuse as a key campaign within the union, and calls on the National Women’s Committee to:

A1) Highlight the barriers for working women accessing support to assist them to leave abusive relationships, including denying women access to safe accommodation which puts their lives at risk, and to campaign within UNISON and other relevant organizations to which we affiliate, for all women fleeing domestic abuse to have an automatic qualification for Housing Benefit to cover emergency accommodation;

A2) To campaign to highlight the impact of ‘means tested’ benefits including Legal Aid provision, for working woman fleeing domestic abuse, that does not recognize that she may not have “access” to these assets and income, and may have other financial responsibilities including childcare costs which should be taken into account.

A3) Work within UNISON structures to encourage employers to sign up to the DoH pledge; to share best practice on workplace domestic abuse policies and to signpost the assistance offered via UNISON There For You to members experiencing and/or fleeing domestic abuse.

**028. Support for those suffering domestic violence**

**Carried**

Conference notes the rise in domestic violence; a staggering 1 million females were victims of domestic violence last year accounting for 1 in 5 of all assaults.

It has long been understood that domestic violence tends to increase during difficult periods for society, such as recession, and in these austere times with cuts to police and the criminal justice system; cuts to charities working on domestic violence that are funded by local government; and wider cuts to services that provide structural support, we have seen vital support mechanisms either diminish or disappear at a time they are most needed.

Conference welcomes that policies on domestic violence have been developed within the public sector to give support to many women who are at an extremely vulnerable time in their lives. These policies are particularly relevant to women in the workplace as they give support to them when they can feel they have few places to turn.

Individuals who do suffer domestic violence often express anger and concern about the lack of understanding from their employer, either because they feel unable to tell them what is happening, or that when they do there is little understanding of what help these individuals need. The ability for women to remain in employment whilst experiencing domestic violence relies on employers having robust domestic violence policies, which managers are aware of and remain vigilant in implementing.

It is imperative that the UNISON women are at the forefront of the defence and promotion of women’s rights. This conference asks the National Women’s Committee to:

1. Encourage branches to challenge proposals regarding cuts to services that may have a detrimental effect on services that individuals experiencing domestic violence may access.

2. Fight to protect the right of women members and promote the development of policies within the workplace by working with branches and regions to ensure that employers are adopting Domestic Violence polices in their workplace.

3. Encourage branches and regions to offer training for activists to make them aware of domestic violence policies in their work places, and how these can be used to support members.

4. Work with our representatives on the TUC Women's Group alongside sister trade unions to highlight the impact and extent of domestic violence.

5. Campaign with our representatives on the TUC Women's Group to highlight the need for affordable refuge for women experiencing domestic violence regardless of their socio-economic background.

**029. Domestic Abuse**

**Carried**

The Cymru/Wales Regional Women’s Committee recognises the ever present need of support, advice and guidance required for those experiencing domestic abuse. Despite the rise in demand for domestic abuse support, austerity measures have slashed charity funding leaving sufferers vulnerable and isolated.

Employers have a duty of care to their employees. For those experiencing domestic abuse, knowing their employer has a domestic abuse policy, taking into account absence relating to domestic abuse, is of great comfort.

Strong local relationships with domestic abuse organisations and promoting the use of resources available would not only benefit members but also employers as it would ensure that employees maximise their attendance at work and maintain a productive workload.

This is particularly relevant at present, during a period of austerity, where statistics have evidenced a rise in incidents of domestic violence.

Conference calls on the National Women’s Committee to:

1. Work with Regional Women’s Committees to seek to ensure all employers have a robust Domestic Abuse policy, which all staff are aware of, and are able to access.

2. Promote the use of resources such as UNISON’s ‘There For You’ (UNISON Welfare), financial and debt advice/support, reference guides such as ‘The Cookbook’ etc, to both UNISON members and Management.

3. Develop relationships with external domestic abuse organisations in order to provide information (where necessary) to members, but also to promote UNISON’s assistance to its members.

4. Actively encourage all employers to hold details of women’s organisations, local charities, informal social groups, religious groups and inter-governmental organisations in order to sign post those affected by domestic abuse.

**032. UNISON policy on violence against women**

**Carried**

Conference notes that at national delegate conference 2013, an amendment to the national women’s committee motion on UNISON women, active, campaigning, leading, was debated and lost.

That amendment stated:

“We believe that our trade union has the potential to transform society for the better. Therefore we have a particular responsibility to confront and challenge male violence against women within our movement. Male violence against women is not acceptable in any case. It must not be tolerated from those who hold office or power in our movement.

We recognise the enormous challenges faced by women victims of male violence, and the pressures which women face, including from abusive men, not to complain about violence and abuse. We therefore believe that, when women complain of male violence within our movement, our trade union should start from a position of believing women. We believe that all women who complain of male violence have the right to be listened to and supported.”

It called on the NEC to review existing practice and subsequently issue guidance to all UNISON bodies about how to respond to male violence against women in our movement.

However, conference further notes that the debate which ensued became focused on the issue of men also experiencing domestic abuse – an issue which is recognised in our guidance and model workplace policy. As a result, the amendment was narrowly defeated.

Conference notes that policy established at national delegate conference (NDC) and national women’s conference absolutely recognises that domestic abuse is a gendered issue. Motions carried in the last 6 years at NDC referred specifically to the gendered nature of domestic abuse, and called on the National Executive Council to work with the women's self organised group in developing and negotiating workplace policies on domestic abuse. Guidance developed in response to the conference motions also states that domestic abuse is a gendered issue and adopts a victim centred approach.

UNISON has also supported calls for and consistently lobbied for the UK to enact the UN statutory definition of violence against women, and has policy on rape, cultural violence and prostitution, and is committed to ending violence against women in all forms.

Conference re-affirms this policy (of domestic abuse as a gendered issue) and calls upon the national women’s committee to:

• work with the NEC to ensure that UNISON policy is clearly understood;

• issue a strategy document encompassing all aspects of violence against women.

**033. End violence against Black women**

**Carried**

Conference notes that domestic violence and abuse does not discriminate. It happens among heterosexual couples and in same-sex partnerships. It occurs within all age ranges, ethnic backgrounds, and economic levels. And while women are more commonly victimised, men are also abused. The bottom line is that abusive behaviour is never acceptable.

According to Women’s Aid:

• 1 in 4 women will be a victim of domestic violence in their lifetime – many of these on a number of occasions.

• One incident of domestic violence is reported to the police every minute.

• On average, 2 women a week are killed by a current or former male partner.

Furthermore, Women are much more likely than men to be the victim of multiple incidents of abuse, of different types of domestic abuse (partner abuse, family abuse, sexual assault and stalking) and in particular of sexual violence (Walby and Allen, 2004.)

According to Government figures, domestic violence accounts for 15% of all recorded violent crime. Women are the victims and men are the perpetrators in 4 out of 5 domestic homicides.

Domestic violence harms women and has a devastating impact on children in the family. At least 47,000 women report rape every year in the UK. Many rapes still go unreported and less than 6% of reported rapes result in a conviction, one of the lowest rates in Europe.

• 3 million women face violence every year

• The suicide rates of Asian women are up to 3 times the national average

Domestic violence affects women from all ethnic groups, however, the form the abuse takes may vary. In some communities, for example, domestic violence may be perpetrated by extended family members, or it may include forced marriage, or female genital mutilation. Women from Black communities may also be more isolated, or may have to overcome religious and cultural pressures, and they may be afraid of bringing shame onto their 'family honour'.

Black girls and women have been subjected to female genital mutilation (FGM) and it has devastating physical and psychological consequences. The World Health Organization describes it as: "procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons" (WHO, 2013).

FGM is practiced in up to 42 African countries, and also in parts of the Middle East and Asia (House of Commons International Development Committee, 2013). In the UK, FGM tends to occur in areas with large populations of FGM practicing communities. These areas include London, Cardiff, Manchester, Sheffield, Northampton, Birmingham and Oxford. However, FGM can happen anywhere in the UK (NHS Choices, 2013).

66,000 women in England and Wales live with female genital mutilation. The Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Act was introduced in 2003 and came into effect in March 2004. The act:

• makes it illegal to practice FGM in the UK

• makes it illegal to take girls who are British nationals or permanent residents of the UK abroad for FGM whether or not it is lawful in that country

• makes it illegal to aid, abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad

• has a penalty of up to 14 years in prison

The government has declared its intention “to end violence against women and girls (VAWG)” – an ambition that the TUC shares. But the harsh reality of government cuts means that many refuges and charities, which provide a lifeline for women suffering abuse, face closure.

Conference notes that if you are a Black woman trying to escape from domestic violence, your experiences may be compounded by racism, which is pervasive in the UK. You may be unwilling to seek help from statutory agencies (such as the police, social services, or housing authorities) because you are afraid of a racist response.

Imkaan, an organisation which provides services for Black women, say that they have been forced to close two of their six specialist refuges and local authority funding for two more has also been cut. And False Economy FOI requests exposed that eight domestic violence and sexual abuse organisations took a 100% cut in local authority funding in 2011/12.

Ashiana provides temporary safe, supportive housing for South Asian, Turkish & Iranian women between the ages of 16-30 who are experiencing domestic violence. It can be difficult to seek appropriate support, especially if women do not speak English. Ashiana is working closely with partners in the voluntary and statutory sector in progressing the strategies on violence against women, honour based violence and forced marriage.

Southall Black Sisters provide general and specialist advice on gender-related issues such as domestic violence, sexual violence, forced marriage, honour killings and their intersection with the criminal justice, immigration and asylum systems, health, welfare rights, homelessness and poverty. Every year, hundreds of Black and migrant women face domestic violence from their husbands and families in the UK. For many, their insecure immigration status renders them extremely vulnerable to abusive partners who exploit their position by subjecting them to often-extreme forms of violence, imprisonment and domestic servitude, usually with impunity.

Southall Black Sisters campaign highlights the devastating impact of 'no recourse to public funds' on the lives of minority women without secure immigration status and who are subject to domestic violence in the context of the marriage, employment and trafficking.

As a consequence of pressure groups and government policy the CPS now flag and monitor all cases of trafficking. In addition, policy and legal guidance on exploitation of prostitution was published in June2011.

At work, unions have a big role to play. A TUC surveys suggest that too often women suffer in silence – too afraid, or perhaps too ashamed, to tell their employer. But women are more likely to turn to a trusted union rep. And with 46% of women we surveyed saying violence at home was impacting on their job performance, it’s important that they have a union on their side.

Conference believes that forced marriage should be dealt with as part of the national strategy on domestic violence and to ensure that it is perceived as a gender-related violence issue rather than as a ‘cultural practice’. Without a national strategy and funding to match, women and children will remain at risk of violence and death.

Many women have nowhere to go and no one to turn to. Yet every woman and child has the right to live in safety and access help – whether that means a bed for a night, legal assistance, counselling or support. Do we really want our children to grow up in a world where they witness their mothers being beaten and brutalised?

Conference therefore believes that, when Black women complain of male violence, our trade union should start from a position of believing them. Furthermore, we believe UNISON ought to campaign for recognition in acknowledging the relevance of the evidence provided by women to the police.

Conference therefore calls on the National Women Committee to:

• Work with the NEC and Public Services International to develop a resource pack for global trade unions to use

• Work with Ashiana, Southall Black Sisters and other community based organisations to raise awareness of domestic violence.

• Work with the NBMC to develop a web-based resource pack on specialist help and support services aimed specifically at Black female victims of violence.

• Develop a campaign pack that could be used by members in partnership with local services to fight the cuts.

• Review existing practices and guidance on how UNISON supports Black women who have been victims of male violence and where appropriate issue updated guidance.

**034. Product Regulation**

**Carried**

Lulled by the soft sell and the hidden persuader, the average woman is seldom aware of the deadly materials with which she is surrounding herself, indeed she may not realise she is using them at all. This is a quote by Rachel Carson in 1962 and this still applies today, some 50 years later.

Women are often told to protect their skin by not exposing themselves to harmful rays from the sun but where are the warnings about the harmful chemicals/ingredients included in some of the very products we are advised to use for our protection?

We are encouraged to use anti-bacterial products to ensure the highest level of hygiene and cleanliness yet they encourage the growth and development of superbugs such as MRSA which has been evidenced to have devastating effects, such as contributing to a rise in the death rate.

Just 10% of the 10,000 chemical substances used on the European market have been tested for health effects? Some of the ingredients used in perfumes, cosmetics and personal care products include cow’s brains, placenta, spleens and spinal cords? In addition to this, some also contain anti-freeze and a toxic cocktail of chemicals, such as parabens. Parabens mimic oestrogen and during testing on fish, changed the gender of male fish to female following exposure. This is increasingly worrying for women when you consider a heightened risk of breast cancer has been linked to lifetime increased exposure to oestrogen.

Conference recognises that research was undertaken regarding this issue by the 'Women’s Environmental Network' and other agencies and groups over a decade ago and that the WECF (Women in Europe for a Common Future) have been relentlessly advocating for non-chemical alternatives worldwide, yet still there is much work to be done.

Conference applauds the previous motions put forward regarding this subject and the work that’s been undertaken as a result of them. This motion is now asking for these existing foundations to be built upon.

Conference calls upon the National Women’s Committee to:

1. Work with the National Executive Committee, MP’s, MEP’s, other women’s groups and Unison branches to raise awareness and campaign vigorously to back proposals for improved regulation, testing and labelling of perfumes, cosmetics and personal care products and everyday domestic cleaning products

b) Investigate the possibility of working with a environmentally sound and safe providers for discounts for Unison members in a similar fashion to those provided for car insurance, discount cards and holidays.

c) To encourage affiliation to local Women’s Environmental Network via regional women’s committee’s to support their continuing good work.

**035. Pay Day Loans**

**Carried**

Conference notes with concern the growing existence of pay day loan companies, particularly targeting the low paid who are struggling financially.

Research by the insurance company Aviva found that where a woman is the main breadwinner, families were more than twice as likely to have taken out a payday loan in the last year. Further, the number of women being declared bankrupt had risen from 30% to almost 50% since 2000 – attributed by financial experts to the ease of access to and high cost of payday loans.

Households reliant on a woman’s salary typically receive nearly a third less income and have significantly more debt and smaller savings than when a man is the main source of earnings, leaving women vulnerable to seeking crisis loans, encouraged by companies targeting women and using female celebrities to front their advertisements campaigns.

Pay day loan companies charge exorbitant interest rates – with the lowest quoting an Annual Percentage Rate (APR) in excess of 1360% - rising to almost three times that amount.

Where borrowers are unable to make the scheduled repayment, roll over charges quickly mount up, creating massive debts which the borrower has no realistic chance of repaying.

Conference is deeply concerned at the impact on women and their families, including the impact on women’s mental health as the stress of trying to meet impossible repayments increases .

Conference calls upon the national women’s committee to work with the NEC and appropriate UNISON departments to and campaign to:

• Lobby the government for tougher regulation of payday loan companies, including capped interest rates and;

• Raise awareness of the assistance available to members in financial crisis through There For You, debt advice services and credit unions;

• Seek to ensure that UNISON does not invest in unscrupulous companies involved in pay day loan activities.

**036. Food Banks**

**Carried as amended by amendment 36.1**

Conference notes that in 2012, the national women’s committee brought a motion to conference highlighting the resurgence of food banks across the UK. At that time, it was reported that in September 2011, 130 food banks were feeding up to 100,000 people.

It is shocking to note that the Trussell Trust now has 400 food banks operating, feeding around 350,000 people in the past year, 125,000 of those being children.

It is well known that the cuts in public services are having a disproportionate impact on women, as the services they rely on and the services they provide are being targeted for cuts, forcing them into low paid, part time work or unemployment. Women escaping domestic violence or family breakdown have no alternative other than to seek help from the food banks as benefits are delayed and crisis loans refused.

UNISON members, particularly low paid women members and lone parents (90% of whom are women), are being forced to seek help in this way, as rising food and energy prices, wage freezes and redundancy impact on their ability to support themselves and their families. Their reliance on food banks puts further pressure on families who are already struggling, and many feel a sense of shame which is in no way deserved.

The growth of food banks is yet another example of this government’s callous disregard for the most vulnerable in society; its development of policy which damages women and children’s lives and protects the wealthy at the cost of ordinary people.

Conference recognises that in many areas there are community food co-ops where people can access fresh fruit and vegetables at a reduced cost. Conferences believes that these should not operate in isolation from food banks and both should be encouraged to work together.

Conference therefore calls upon the national women’s committee to :

1. Encourage branch and regional women’s groups to liaise with local community organisations and public sector alliances to support those most in need, and to campaign jointly to raise public awareness of the impact that this government’s policies are having on the most vulnerable in our society, particularly highlighting the return to food banks;
2. Work with UNISON Welfare “There for You” to ensure that members are aware of the assistance available to members in crisis;
3. Encourage members who can afford to do so to support food banks with donations of less popular items – particularly sanitary protection, toiletries, baby products, which are often overlooked by donors. This could be used as an organising campaign for branches;
4. Encourage branch and regional women's groups to link with local food co-ops;
5. Work with the NEC in continuing to oppose and challenge poor government policy which impacts on our members lives.

**037. FREE SANITARY PRODUCTS FOR ALL WOMEN**

**Carried as Amended: 37.1**

In these austere times women often bear the brunt of stretching finances in the home. It is well known that when it comes to prioritising essential things such as food and bills against personal items, food, bills, kids and home always come first, and women’s dignity and health issues go out of the window.

One of the most expensive personal items a women has to buy is sanitary products. The cost of sanitary pads in a home with a woman with teenage daughters is and can be phenomenal. Therefore, conference believes that as an absolute minimum, free sanitary products should be available to all menstruating girls of school age. Also, VAT is currently charged at the reduced rate of 5%, but conference believes that again, as a minimum, sanitary products should be VAT free. Isn’t it time such an essential product is available to women free of charge. What a boost to women’s equality this would be.

Conference calls upon the National Women’s Committee to work with all relevant bodies including the Fawcett Society to campaign for free sanitary products for all women.

**038. HEALTH AND SAFETY MOTION**

**Carried as amended by amendment 38.1**

Conference remains alarmed at the continuing attacks by the Coalition Government on Health and Safety legislation by claiming that the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (The Act) and Statutory Instruments made under it amount to a burden on business without any credible evidence base.

The 33% budget cut to the Health and Safety executive (HSE), and additional cuts to local authorities pose serious risk to enforcement bodies to deliver on the three key areas – enforcement, inspection and advice – and will result in increased workplace incidents, injuries and fatalities.

The Government’s decision to amend the Act, which removes civil liability will deny our members – and others – access to justice for workplace injury claims and is a shocking attempt to take workplace safety back to the dark ages. The Government also intends to replace the Approved Code of Practice of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 replacing with guidance a lower compliance threshold.

A substantial number of our women members work in jobs which contain all the factors of hazardous working, including risks from chemicals, manual handling, fatigue, infection risks, violence and stress. Men and women are strongly segregated into different work sectors, and hold different positions in the hierarchy of jobs. Men tend to predominate in the construction sector, whereas women tend to predominate in the health care sector. Women are more likely than men to be in low paid jobs and less likely to hold supervisory or managerial positions. In addition, women still carry a greater proportion of unpaid work in the home, and if paid and unpaid work are added together, women are seen to work longer hours than men. As a result women are more likely to suffer work related stress, musculo-skeletal disorders – other than back injury – and health problems such as dermatitis.

Changes to legislation will mean:

employers would no longer have a strict liability for the health and safety of their workers, for the first time since 1898;

workers could not rely on an employer's breach of health and safety law to win a personal injury claim, they would have to provide proof of negligence;

enforcement of health and safety law would be increasingly left up to a significantly weakened and less effective HSE and Local Authority Officers;

employers could increasingly hide behind the defence that complying to health and safety regulations was not "reasonably practicable”; and,

risk assessment duties will be weakened and where risk assessments are carried out they will be less likely to address gender impacts.

This is part of a wider ideological move by the government in the interests of employers, to the detriment of workers. As a result of the Government’s amendments to the health and safety legislation, UNISON members will be at greater risk of injury from now on.

Conference, therefore, calls on the National Women’s Committee to work with the NEC to:-

1. Campaign for the reinstatement of Section 47 of the HSAW Act;
2. To ensure that gender factoring is taken into account in all future workplace risk assessments.
3. Work within our Labour Link structures to encourage opposition to the Government’s actions by the Labour Party and put pressure on the Party to reverse the damage done, rescind the attacks and strengthen health and safety protections in the workplace.

Conference further calls on the National Women’s Committee to raise the profile of the relevance to women of Health and Safety legislation.

**039. Supporting the women victims of stalking**

**Carried as amended by amendment 39.1**

According to the British Crime Survey there are approximately 120,000 predominantly vulnerable female victims of stalking each year; however less than half of these cases are recorded as crimes.

Research in 2011 found that stalking is not fully recognised by criminal justice professionals and too often stalking goes unreported. When it is reported there is a lack of understanding and low priority is given to cases by the criminal justice system. In many cases the pattern of stalking is missed and effective risk assessment, management and a coordinated response is lacking, putting women’s lives at risk. Even where perpetrators were convicted, sentences were often short and few received any treatment to reduce the risk of re-offending. In addition breaches of restraining orders were not treated seriously.

Latest figures show that more than 80% of the victims of stalking are women, and over 70% of the perpetrators are men, most of them known to their victims either as previous partners or acquaintances, including those targeted because their stalker wrongly believes that a professional relationship is personal. Whatever the origin, stalking is without doubt a gendered crime.

Now, as a result of the stalking law reform campaign two new offences of stalking have been enacted, but women are still not being adequately supported, nor are cases being taken seriously, despite high profile media cases of women who have been stalked and murdered, and failures being identified in the way their cases were handled.

Conference calls upon the national women’s committee to work with the NEC, UNISON health and safety and There for You to:

1. Explore ways of working with Paladin, the National Stalking Advocacy Service and the Protection Against Stalking Organisation to ensure that UNISON members experiencing or at risk of stalking are supported;
2. Promote the UNISON health and safety guidance on violence at work “It’s not part of the job”.
3. Continue to actively promote UNISON’s model domestic violence and abuse policy as stalking is an inherent part of domestic violence and abuse.

**040. Traditional values v women’s rights**

**Carried**

Conference recalls the 2012 Women’s conference resolution “Our tradition is equality and human rights”, which expressed concern that the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council had adopted a Russian resolution linking human rights to ‘traditional values’. It recognised that Russia was attempting to block progress on women’s rights and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) equality in the UN, as part of a political agenda using a conservative view of ‘tradition’ to try to restrict human rights.

Conference notes that recent comments made by Russian president Vladimir Putin have made this more explicit. Putin said Russia should avoid the example of European countries that were ‘going away from their roots’, by legalising same sex marriage and excessive ‘political correctness’. He called on Russians to strengthen a new national identity based on ‘conservative and traditional values’ such as those of the Orthodox Church. There has been a growth in similar rhetoric targeting women and LGBT people in some other countries including the Ukraine and Georgia.

Conference further notes that Putin’s government has unleashed a crackdown on civil society. A series of discriminatory laws significantly restrict civil society organisations and threatens their existence, such as the treason, foreign agents, Dima Yakovlev, and anti-propaganda laws.

The foreign agents law requires organizations whose activities are deemed ‘political’ who receive any funding from foreign sources to register as ‘foreign agents’. In just 4 months over 1,000 organisations were subjected to ‘inspections’, 56 identified as ‘agents’, including a women’s studies centre, and proceedings instituted against 22.

The anti-propaganda law bans propaganda of ‘non traditional sexual relations towards minors’, but is so widely drawn that any statements and actions that support lesbian or bisexual women’s equality, or displays of affection between women, can be grounds for arrest. Other legislative initiatives include banning adoption of children from Russia by foreign same-sex couples, and a proposal to take children adopted in Russia away from their parents if they are in a same-sex relationship.

Xenophobia and discrimination are encouraged by the authorities, with women’s rights and human rights defenders portrayed as enemies of Russia and its traditional values. One example, is the treatment of the women of the punk band Pussy Riot, currently serving two-year sentences for ‘hooliganism on grounds of religious hatred’ for performing a protest song in Moscow’s main Orthodox cathedral, highlighted by Amnesty International.

While ethnic, racial and religious minorities have long been targets of neo-Nazi and ultra nationalist groups, the new laws and accompanying public rhetoric has led to a dramatic spiral of violence and discrimination against minority groups. LGBT people are increasingly targeted and conference welcomes the ILGA-Europe’s informative campaign, led by Russian LGBT groups, to highlight developments.

Conference calls on the National Women’s Committee, working with the National Executive Council and other bodies as appropriate, to:

1. Raise the deteriorating human rights situation, systematic violence targeting women and minorities and clampdown on civil society in Russia in all appropriate forums;
2. Raise awareness of the attempts to promote the ‘traditional values’ agenda in the UN and the need to support the universality of human rights with women’s organisations and women’s structures within trade union bodies;
3. Encourage branch and regional women’s groups to mark international women’s day by supporting Amnesty International and ILGA-Europe campaigns to promote women’s rights and human rights against ‘traditional values’ propaganda.

**041. DEFENDING THE WOMEN OF COLOMBIA IN THEIR PEACE PROCESS**

**Remitted**

**042. Sexualisation of women in the media**

**Carried**

Conference condemns the continual sexualisation of women in the media and finds it unacceptable the way in which women are presented to the public often posing partially clothed in a sexual or passive way. The presence of these imagines on the covers of magazines and newspapers can encourage and reinforce outdated stereotypical views of women.

Many forms of media are presented as family friendly, yet contain unacceptable portrayals and images of women. This can bring sexism into the family domain, with a danger of normalising pornographic images. This practice can influence the young and damage the image of women in society. This is demeaning, discriminatory and should not be tolerated, and this can affect women in both their home and work life.

Whilst there are anti-discrimination policies and procedures within the workplace, it is sometimes difficult to see how these can be implemented effectively when women are being so publicly dehumanised and treated as a tradable commodity by the media. It is also worrying that such publications are available and accessible in our libraries, hospitals and other public buildings.

Conference notes with concern that the current government trivialise this issue and argue we should simply turn the page if we don’t like it. There needs to be strong challenge to this culture if we are going to reverse this continuing trend.

Conference welcomes the initiative by the Co-operative chain that insisted certain publications place their magazines in ‘modesty bags’, which means that images that are aimed at the over 18s are not seen by the general public, and acknowledges this is a step in the right direction. Nevertheless, it does not address the central issue which is the overtly sexual way women are portrayed in our media.

It is imperative that women in UNISON are at the forefront of the defence and promotion of women’s rights. This conference asks the National Women’s Committee to:

1. Continue to promote UNISON’s support of the ‘No more page 3’ campaign;
2. Work with sister trade unions to highlight the impact and extent of the sexualisation of women in the media, and promote material for activist to use about the impact these images have; and
3. Encourage branches to lobby employers to ensure that publications available within public buildings, such as Libraries and Hospitals do not include material portraying a sexualised depiction of women.

**043. ‘Lose the Lads Mags’ Campaign**

**Carried**

It is long established that the overwhelming portrayal of women as sex objects in society plays a role in maintaining inequality between women and men. This has been recognised at the international level by the United Nations Convention to Eliminate all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), an internationally, legally binding document ratified by the UK Government in 1986 which calls on States to take decisive action to tackle objectification. CEDAW has since repeatedly identified the links between the portrayal of women as sex objects by the media with attitudes that underpin violence and discrimination against women.

Our culture is saturated with pornography; in music videos, on the internet, on advertising billboards and in our supermarkets. With increasingly available access to the internet, the average age of first exposure to online hardcore pornography, much of which is violent and degrading, is only 11 years old. With no statutory sex education around the harms of pornography, and the normalisation of this type of material in society, children and teenagers are getting most of their sex education from porn. It is no surprise, therefore, that sexual bullying in schools is on the increase, and young girls feel more and more under pressure to perform sex acts and behave like porn stars and glamour models. At the same time, young boys are taught that women want violent, degrading acts done to them and that girls should look the way porn stars do. Meanwhile, ‘lads mags’ and music videos have moved soft porn into the mainstream, normalising and marketing themselves as 'lifestyle'. They are available without restrictions, contain degrading imagery and sexist/misogynistic content, and feed into a culture where violence against women and girls is still prevalent. In order to tackle this growing issue, we must first address the accessibility of mainstream material.

Conference congratulates the national women’s committee in gaining official UNISON support for the ‘No More Page 3’ campaign. Recently, UK Feminista and Object have obtained brand new legal advice showing that displaying and selling ‘lads mags’ and papers with Page 3-style front cover images can constitute sexual harassment or sex discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. Employees could take legal action against shops on this basis. Where the magazine is visibly on display, customers could also have a claim. The writing’s on the wall for retailers: by selling ‘lads mags’ they are open to legal action. The CoOp have already taken steps and discontinued the sale of ‘lads mags’ that are not supplied in 'modesty covers'. In 2014, women's bodies should not be sold alongside groceries, without restrictions. It is time to ask high street retailers to lose the ‘lads mags’

Conference instructs the National Women's Committee to;

• Ensure that UNISON officially supports the 'Lose the Lads Mags’ campaign

• Encourage branches and regional committees to make financial donations and affiliate to the campaign

• Circulate campaign materials and information to branches and SOG and Young Members networks

• Encourage members to write to MPs and retailers expressing their concern about the continued sale of ‘lads mags’

**Composites**

**B. CEDAW**

**Carried**

CEDAW (19 19.1,20)

In July 2013 the UK Government was called to give evidence to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This requirement to give evidence happens every three years. Women’s organisations came together to produce a shadow report – that was given in evidence to CEDAW. The Shadow Report brings together issues impacting on the realisation of women’s rights under CEDAW in the UK in order to support the Government to make positive change in the future. The report highlights the key areas where Women’s rights in the UK have come to a standstill and in fact some are being reversed. Conference applauds the work of the 42 women’s organisations that worked together to gather evidence and present it so effectively to the CEDAW panel.

On 26 July 2013 CEDAW published its “Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland”. The report highlights a number of key areas of concern:

1. Austerity and women

2. Legal Aid and Employment Tribunal Fees

3. Abolition of the National Women’s Commission

4. The UK national strategy for implementation of the Convention

5. Women only shortlists

6. Violence against women

7. Female Genital Mutilation

8. Human Trafficking

9. Women into public life

10. Employment and economic empowerment

11. Health care

12. Women in Prisons

13. Disadvantaged groups of women

14. Welfare reform

The report also makes a number of specific recommendations. All of the recommendations made, support our UNISON campaigning and bargaining agenda. For example it made recommendations or urges that our government should:

a) Take advantage of the review of the PSED to ensure that the gender equality component of the duty is properly prescribed for public authorities, including the application of the principle of substantive equality.

b) Mitigate the impact of austerity measures on women and services provided to women, particularly women with disabilities and older women. It should also ensure that Spending Reviews continuously focus on measuring and balancing the impact of austerity measures on women’s rights. It should further review the policy of commissioning services wherever this may undermine the provision of specialised women’s services.

c) Ensure that the Government Equalities Office has a dedicated section for the coordination of gender equality in all parts of the State party.

d) Continue to engage with the media to eliminate stereotypical imaging of women and their objectification in the media, particularly in advertising.

e) Increase its efforts in the protection of women, including black and minority women, against all forms of violence, including domestic violence, and the so- called honour killings; and Continue public awareness-raising campaigns on all forms of violence against women, including black and ethnic minority women.

f) Intensify its efforts to promote the use of flexible working arrangements and introduce shared parental leave to encourage men to participate equally in child care responsibilities;

g) Create more opportunities for women with disabilities to access employment;

h) Ensure women’s access to justice in employment cases, including in cases related to discrimination on grounds of pregnancy and motherhood.

i) Urges the State party to provide affordable childcare and to mitigate the impact of the proposed reforms of the welfare system on the costs of childcare for low income families and the increased burden for care on women.

Conference notes that the UK Independence Party (UKIP) and its supporters have policies which would adversely impact on many of the recommendations in the report, including their policies on workers’ rights and public sector spending, should they come into power at local, regional or national level.

Conference further notes that UNISON and the TUC participated in the process of submitting a “shadow report”, along with partner NGOs and co-ordinated by the Women’s Resource Centre, to which UNISON is affiliated. This shadow report drew attention to the government’s failings as identified in points 1-14, and work now continues to put pressure on the government to take the necessary action to meet the recommendations.

Many of these issues have been the subject of debate in National Women’s Conference, but as the CEDAW report reveals there is still a long way to go before discrimination against women is eliminated in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Conference calls on the National Women’s Committee to work with the relevant structures of UNISON and the TUC to campaign for the implementation of the observations by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women within Great Britain and Northern Ireland and asks that the National Women’s committee resolves to monitor all relevant UK government activities and to highlight the CEDAW recommendations at every opportunity, raising awareness of the government’s failings on women’s issues and campaigning for real and substantive equality for women.

Conference further calls on the national women’s committee to work with the NEC, Labour Link and all other appropriate structures to encourage women to use their vote in the next elections, and raise awareness of the implications of voting for UKIP.

**C. MALE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

**Carried**

Male Violence against Women (26 26.1, 30, 31)

Conference welcomes the decision by UNISON National Delegate Conference 2013, in passing Motion 8, to encourage women’s activism in our trade union. We recognise that this particular effort is necessary because, in a sexist society, women face particular obstacles to participation in all areas of life, including trade unionism.

Conference recognises that one such obstacle is created by male violence against women. Violence affects the lives of millions of women worldwide, in all socio-economic and educational classes. It cuts across cultural and religious barriers, impeding the right of women to participate fully in society.

The fear of stigma and the fear of not being believed prevents many women from reporting violence – however research has shown that 35% of all women world wide will experience either intimate partner or non-partner violence, with violence from an intimate partner the most common type of violence against women, affecting 30% of women worldwide.

In June 2013 the first global systematic estimate of violence was published and this showed that three in ten women have been punched, shoved, dragged, threatened with weapons, raped or subject to other violence from a current or former partner, with one in ten women being sexually assaulted by someone other than a partner. Of women that are murdered more than one in 3 were killed by an intimate partner and currently in the UK 2 women a week are killed by their partners.

Conference recognises that although men and boys are also the targets of violence, in certain forms of aggression – such as intimate partner violence and sexual violence – the majority of victims (and fatalities) are female, while the vast majority of perpetrators are male.

Conference affirms our opposition to all violence, whatever the gender or age of the perpetrator or victim but also recognises that, in a sexist society, male violence against women plays a particular role in limiting the participation of women in all areas of social life, including trade union activity. Therefore, as UNISON is committed to equality, we must address the particular problem of male violence against women.

Conference further recognises that, as a self-organised group for women, we have an obligation to speak up for women’s rights and to defend women’s interests. We believe that male violence against women is not acceptable in any case. It must not be tolerated from those who hold office or power in our movement, our movement must be a safe space for women.

We believe that our trade union has the potential to transform society for the better. Therefore we have a particular responsibility to confront and challenge male violence against women within our movement. Conference recognises the enormous challenges faced by women victims of male violence, and the pressures which women face, including from abusive men, not to complain about violence and abuse.

Conference believes that all women who complain of male violence have the right to be listened to and supported. Conference therefore believes that, when women complain of male violence within our movement, our trade union should start from a position of believing women. This must of course be without prejudice to a fair and impartial investigation which protects the rights of all parties.

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

1. Organise a Fringe meeting at NDC 2014 to highlight the particular importance of violence against women;
2. Campaign to develop UNISON policy in line with this motion;
3. Develop a resource pack that could be used by branches to raise awareness of the true impact of VAW. This could also be used by activists to raise the issue in workplaces and within their branch.
4. Develop a campaign pack that could be used by members in partnership with local services to fight the cuts to specialist VAW services.
5. Work with the NEC to issue guidance to branches on raising the issue of violence against women;
6. Circulate UNISON’s policy on Domestic Violence to all branches.