

GMB

CONGRESS 2022

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**BARBARA PLANT
(President)
(In the Chair)**

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Held in:

**Harrogate Convention Centre,
King's Road, Harrogate HG1 5LA**

on:

**Sunday, 12th June 2022
Monday, 13th June 2022
Tuesday, 14th June 2022
Wednesday, 15th June 2022
and
Thursday, 16th June 2022**

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**PROCEEDINGS
DAY ONE
(Sunday, 12th June 2022)**

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**(Transcript prepared by:
Marten Walsh Cherer Limited,
2nd Floor, Quality House,
6-9 Quality Court, Chancery Lane,
London WC2A 1HP.
Telephone: 020 7067 2900.
email: info@martenwalshcherer.com)**

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FIRST DAY'S PROCEEDINGS
SUNDAY, 12TH JUNE 2022
MORNING SESSION
(Congress assembled at 9.30 a.m.)

CALL TO ORDER

THE PRESIDENT: Delegates, could I, please, ask you to take your seats. Thank you. Could I call Congress to Order. Welcome all to Harrogate, and welcome back to the first in-person Congress since 2019. *(Applause and cheers)* I know that we are all so very glad to be back together again.

Congress, this week I will be joined once again by our Vice President, Malcolm Sage. He will be assisting with chairing Congress throughout the week, ensure we have a smooth running of the agenda.

BANNER CEREMONY

THE PRESIDENT: We will now move on to the traditional opening of Congress, which is the banner ceremony. This year Southern Region will be forming the Banner Party.

I call Congress to order for the opening ceremony. Congress, please stand to greet the National banner. *(National Banner starts the procession followed by Regional banners to the accompaniment of Jerusalem)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you to all those people who are carrying the banners. They are not easy. It is always such an emotional start to Congress. We will wait for the banners to be displayed and then we will carry on.

OBITUARIES

THE PRESIDENT: I now call on Congress to stand this time in silence as a mark of respect for departed GMB colleagues. Names will be shown on the screen and a copy of the Obituary list is on page 6 of the Congress Guide. In addition to published names, we have been since notified of the passings of Tony Herbert of London Region; Joe Warburton of North West & Irish Region, and William Foster of Southern Region. Thank you. *(Congress stood in silent tribute)* We remember them all with respect and pride.

SAFETY PROCEDURES

THE PRESIDENT: I have a lot of information to tell you. First of all, details of the fire and evacuation procedures are in the Final Agenda and Congress Guide document. It is not compulsory but if you wish to wear a face mask you are more than welcome to do so.

There is a prayer room located in the Star Dressing Rooms off level 5, which is the area above the information desk. The wi-fi is *venuewifi* and there is no need for a password.

WELCOME TO DELEGATES AND VISITORS

THE PRESIDENT: I would now like to introduce the members of the platform party: Malcolm Sage: Vice Chair. Gary Smith, General Secretary and Treasurer. Throughout the week we will be joined by members of the Research & Policy team who will be assisting with the agenda, as well as other members of GMB staff assisting with Congress.

Could I also, please, welcome the following guests and visitors: We have three General Member Auditors who will be supervising the counting of votes: Charmaine Hyman (Southern Region), Dave Kempson (Birmingham Region) and Paul Gregson (Midland Region)

And of course our Verbatim Shorthand Writers: Phyllis Hilder and Michael Thear.

This year we are also joined by sign language interpreters from Interpreting Matters. Please welcome Karen Green, Helen Foulkes and Russ Andrews. I would also like to welcome and thank the live subtitle writers from Interpreting Matters who will be providing this service remotely.

Other suppliers I'd like to thank are Exhibit World, U2 events, Full Spectrum Printers, and of course Pellacraft. Without these organisations we wouldn't have Congress running quite as smoothly.

And, of course, a big thanks to Gary Maziere and T5 Event Media who provide all our staging and PA equipment in the main hall and fringes to make sure Congress really looks and feels like it always does.

Most importantly I would like to extend a warm welcome to all our first-time delegates and welcome back to all our delegates who we haven't seen at an in-person Congress for the last three years.

As you know, a motion was unanimously passed at our Congress in 2017 in support of the *Total Eclipse Of The S*n Campaign* on banning The S*n newspaper from all GMB buildings, GMB conferences and all GMB meetings.

As this is our first in-person Congress since the pandemic, we wanted to remind you all of GMB policy, that this rag (*Applause*) is still banned and should not be brought into the centre. The S*n caused a lot of pain and suffering with its lies and misreporting and we've not forgotten it.

Could I also remind delegates that all Congress sessions are transmitted live on the GMB website and later uploaded to YouTube. This means that your speech will be shown live over the internet through the GMB National website, so please don't use any inappropriate language.

Please also refrain from making person attacks on staff or any other individuals while you make your speeches.

Make sure you remember to say your name and region clearly for the verbatim record, and so we all get to know each other.

Please also mention if you are a first-time speaker because you will get a very warm welcome.

Could I also ask delegates to take a moment to check that you have these important documents with you: Firstly the one page Delegate Outline Programme and Order of Business. This gives you an overview of the order of business for the week, though changes may be necessary from time to time as Congress business progresses. Where changes are expected, I will try to give delegates advance warning.

Next we have the Income & Expenditure Report. These are the Annual Accounts.

Lastly, we have the Final Agenda, and Congress Guide. These documents give you information on Congress motions, CEC Rule Amendments, SOC guidelines for Congress business, including time limits for speakers, Standing Orders Committee Report No. 1, Representation Statements for Congress, Composite motions, Fringe meetings, Exhibitions and Seating Plans.

ROLL CALL

THE PRESIDENT: Would all Regional Secretaries please notify the Congress Office of any changes to your delegation. Please use the email address for the Congress Office as the first port of call for any issues.

TELLERS AND SOC

THE PRESIDENT: The names of all Regional Tellers are in the Congress Guide. All Tellers must remain in the Hall whilst Congress is in session and delegates must be in their allotted seats when a vote is taken.

To see if you are eligible to vote, please look down at your Congress credential. If it says the word "Delegate" then you can vote. All others in the Hall are not eligible to vote.

Could I congratulate Helen Johnson on her election as Chair of the Standing Orders Committee for the fourteenth year. It might be the fifteenth, but she will correct me. Names of members of the Standing Orders Committee is on page 24 of your Final Agenda.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 1

THE PRESIDENT: I will now call Helen Johnson, Chair of the SOC to move Standing Orders Committee Report No. 1, which is on page 20 of your Final Agenda.

GMB CONGRESS 2022

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE REPORT NO 1

The business of Congress will be conducted in accordance with the Agenda, the Programme and the Guidelines for Congress Business, subject to changes at the President's discretion.

Times for Congress

The Standing Orders Committee wishes to draw the attention of Delegates to the starting times of the morning and afternoon sessions set out in the Congress programme as follows:

Sunday 12 June – Wednesday 15 June
9.30 am – 12.30 pm, 2.00 pm – 5.30 pm

Thursday 16 June
9.30 am – Lunchtime

The Standing Orders Committee recommends that the President be authorised to close each session when appropriate, without further reference to the Standing Orders Committee or to Congress.

Times for Speakers

The Standing Orders Committee recommends the following Time Limits for Speakers.

General Motions and Rule Amendments:

Movers up to	4 Minutes
Seconders up to	2 Minutes
Other Speakers up to	2 Minutes

Officers' Reports:

General Secretary up to	10 Minutes
Movers of Section Reports up to	5 Minutes
Questions up to	1 Minute

Officers' and Section Reports, and questions to them, should relate only to matters of general policy, and not to details of negotiations.

Special Reports and CEC Statements:

Mover up to	6 Minutes
Secunder up to	3 Minutes
Other Speakers up to	3 Minutes

It would help the business of Congress enormously if, wherever possible, motions could be formally seconded, and if replies to questions and debates were kept to a minimum.

The Standing Orders Committee draws Delegates' attention to the rostrum and asks speakers to be ready by the rostrum when it is their turn to speak. Chairs will be provided at the front of the hall for speakers awaiting their turn.

Questions on Balance Sheet and Auditors' Report

Questions on the Balance Sheet and Auditors' Report must be submitted in writing to the Congress platform no later than 5.30 pm on Monday 13 June.

Motions Out of Order

The Standing Orders Committee has ruled that the following Motions are Out of Order for the reasons specified:

Motion 48 A Fairer More Inclusive Scale for Membership Fees

This Motion calls for a sliding scale of membership fee dependant on the number of hours worked to be adopted. This would require a Rule Amendment.

Motion 50 Reduced Rates of Membership Fee for Members Earning Less Than Wage Advocated by GMB as National Living Wage

This Motion calls for a set of bands of reduced membership fee to be set for members earning less than the wage GMB advocates as National Living Wage and for the reduction rate to match the extent to which the National Living Wage is below the wage that GMB advocates as National Living Wage. This would require a Rule Amendment.

Motion 70 National Equalities Forum Constitution

This Motion is not appropriate for Congress to debate as it relates to the constitution of the National Equalities Forum. This is a matter which ought to be dealt with by a more appropriate body, that is the National Equality Conference and the CEC.

Motion 124 ASDA

This Motion calls for a campaign on inequity within the company on pay. This Motion ought to be dealt with by a more appropriate body that is the relevant GMB Committees and membership in ASDA.

Motion 149 NJC Red Book

This Motion calls for parity of esteem to be reaffirmed in terms of the NJC for Local Government Craft Workers in terms of the NJC Red Book, and that members working within that NJC are supported in protecting and enhancing their terms and conditions within the Red Book. This Motion ought to be dealt with by a more appropriate body, that is the relevant JIC or Local Government National Committee.

Motion 153 NHS Travel and Subsistence Allowances

This Motion calls for NHS travel and subsistence allowances to be updated. This Motion ought to be dealt with a more appropriate body, that is the relevant JIC or NHS Staff Council.

Motion 154 Overtime Rate for Part Time Workers in the NHS

This Motion calls for part-time NHS staff to get the same rate of overtime pay compared to full-time colleagues at time and a half. This Motion ought to be dealt with by a more appropriate body, that is the relevant JIC or NHS Staff Council.

Motion 156 NJC for NHS Terms and Conditions

This Motion calls for a separate National Joint Council to deal with all matters relating to NHS pay and conditions. This Motion ought to be dealt with by a more appropriate body, that is the relevant GMB National Committees and NHS membership.

Motion 291 The Value of Equalities in GMB Structures

This Motion is not appropriate for Congress to debate as it involves matters relating to GMB staff terms and conditions and is contrary to the Special Motion adopted at Congress 1985 (reproduced in the Guidelines for Congress Business) which reserves such matters to the CEC.

Motions in line with Existing Policy

In accordance with recommendation 14 of the “Framework for the Future of GMB: Moving Forward” CEC Special Report endorsed by Congress 2007, the CEC has advised the Standing Orders Committee about those Motions which are in line with existing GMB policy. The CEC Report on “Existing Policy Motions” printed in the Final Agenda explains when and how existing policy was established in each case. The Standing Orders Committee has accepted the advice and is therefore recommending to Congress that the following Motions be put to Congress for endorsement without the need for debate:

Motion Number - Title

Motion 18 - Welfare Rights Representation

Motion 52 - Membership Contributions

Motion 76 - Equal Minimum Wage Irrespective For Age

Motion 81 – Domestic Abuse Charter

Motion 87 – HSE Funding And Inspector Levels

Motion 98 – Fire And Rehire – Zero Hours

Motion 101 – 4 Day Working Week

Motion 102 – Protect Home Workers

Motion 103 – Share Equality in Parental Leave

Motion 112 – Stop The Misuse of Non-Disclosure Agreements Also Known As Confidentiality Clauses

Motion 116 – Motion Calling Upon the GMB To Campaign And Get The Imposed Restrictions Around Trade Unions Right To Take Industrial Action

Motion 120 – Support The High Street With A “Level Playing Field” So Physical Shops Can Flourish

Motion 121 – Protect High Street Shops And Jobs

Motion 130 – Get Rid of Privatisation In Security Sector

Motion 139 – Manufacturing In Energy

Motion 142 – UK Shipbuilding

Motion 143 – Protection of Public Services

Motion 173 – Green Levies To Be Moved To General Taxation

Motion 174 – Remove Value Added Tax From Domestic Fuel Bills

Motion 212 – Asylum Seekers Should Be Allowed to Work

Motion 232 – Privatisation Of the NHS

Motion 253 – Nationalise The Gas & Electricity Industries In The UK

Motion 256 – Supporting Clean Energy And Union Jobs In Britain’s Nuclear Industry

Motion 259 – Campaigning And Parliamentary Lobby On Energy Crisis

Motion 260 – Energy Bills For Older People

Motion 261 – Centrica And Energy Price Rises

Motion 263 – Energy Crisis

Motion 264 – New Nuclear

Motion 265 – Price Capping And Removal of VAT On Domestic Fuel
Motion 280 – Bus Safety Campaign For London Buses Requires External Independent Investigation
Motion 282 – PIP And Public Sector Contracts

Composite Motions

Agreement has been reached on the 17 Composite Motions printed in the Final Agenda.

Congress 2018 carried Motion 8 Speakers On Motions:

“This Conference urges that, in the interests of the smooth running of Congress, and to maximise the time allocated for open and meaningful debate, any motion that remains unopposed should have its speakers limited to the mover and the seconder”

This will apply to Stand Alone motions and Composite Motions where up to two Regions are involved. There is one agreed Composite Motion where there are more than two Regions involved. The Composite is Composite 14 Cammel Laird 1984 involving North West & Irish, GMB Scotland, and Southern.

The SOC recognises that in agreeing Composites Regions will have given up the ability to move and second their motion as a Stand-Alone motion. In the past the Regions involved in the Composites which are not moving or seconding the Composite would have still had the ability to speak to the Composite and been allocated “Priority in debate”. In the interests of fairness and having regard to Motion 8 carried at Congress 2018, the SOC recommends that each of the Regions involved in this agreed Composite as above should still have the opportunity to speak to the Composite motion if they so wish. This is even if there is no opposition to the moving and seconding speeches.

Mobile Phones

If mobile phones are brought into the Congress Hall, they must be switched off at all times when Congress is in session.

Film Cameras

The Standing Orders Committee has given permission for film cameras to be used in the Conference Hall. The Committee has been assured that filming will be carried out with no interference to Delegates.

DVDs, Videos etc

Requests to play DVDs, videos, etc should be submitted to the Standing Orders Committee for approval prior to being shown at Congress.

Bucket Collections

Requests for permission to hold Bucket Collections should be submitted in writing to the Committee by 11 am on the first morning session of Congress. (It is a term of Exhibitors' agreements with GMB that they will not request permission to hold a collection.) Requests must be submitted in writing by the Regional Secretary, and must have the support of the Regional Delegation. Priority will be given to requests for bucket collections which concern trade union or related issues. Where permission is granted, those requesting the collection must organise, count and bank the collection, if necessary liaising with the Congress office for support from Congress Stewards. They must then notify the Congress office of the amount collected, so that the President can inform Congress.

In the normal course of events the total number of bucket collections to be authorised by the SOC will be limited to a maximum of 3, except in exceptional and unforeseen circumstances at the discretion of the President. The SOC will limit consideration of requests for bucket collections to a maximum of 1 per Region, except in exceptional and unforeseen circumstances.

By agreement reached at Congress 96, Regional Committees will each contribute a further sum to the national Congress gift. So permission will not be granted for a collection to augment the Congress gift

HELEN JOHNSON (Chair, Standing Orders Committee): President and Congress, I formally move SOC Report No. 1. Before I move the report, and with your permission, President, I would like to mention the passing away of three previous SOC member since the last time we actually met in person in 2019. They are Joe Isaacs and Jim Richmond had both been members from London Region and Liz Blackman from Midland & East Coast Region had been a CEC observer. All are very sadly missed by us and we offer our sympathies to their families, friends and colleague trade unionists.

President and Congress, I will now move on to the Report. You will find a copy of this report in your Final Agenda starting on page 20. I formally move adoption of that report and, in doing so, would colleagues please note the long-standing guidelines for Congress Business, which are on page 14 of the Final Agenda. This should help all of you, especially new delegates, in understanding the procedures and guidelines that both the President and the SOC work to. A copy of the SOC Report on behalf of the Committee will be issued to delegates later today and any further SOC reports delivered from this podium will be issued to delegates during the course of the week. I hope this will assist everyone in being able to keep track of the decisions that we make during the week, including information on withdrawn motions as we move through the programme.

On the subject of withdrawn motions, the SOC has been informed that a number have been withdrawn since the printing of the Final Agenda that you have in front of you. We will report on these in full later today but for now could you, please, just note that Composite 3: Rule Amendments Rule 5 & 6, standing in the name of Birmingham & West Midlands Region, has been withdrawn. I am just letting you know this now because it was due to be heard this morning.

Would Congress delegates please note that if any further motions are to be withdrawn during the week, then please advise the regional secretary who will then, in turn, inform the SOC. Thank you.

So on the subject of agreed composite motions, we would like to thank the delegates and their regional secretaries for agreeing the 17 composite motions that appear in your Final Agenda, starting on page 165. There is one agreed composite motion where more than two regions are involved, which is Composite 14: Cammell Laird 1984, which involves North West & Irish Region, GMB Scotland and Southern Region. The SOC is, therefore, recommending that each of these regions should still have the opportunity to speak on this composite motion if they so wish. This is by way of an exception to Motion 8: Speakers on Motions, carried at Congress 2018,

which limits the speakers normally to a mover and a seconder where the motion is unopposed.

Just to note that GMB Scotland will be moving Composite 14.

Existing policy motions. Congress, in accordance with the decision adopted since 2008, the SOC is recommending that motions which are existing policy are endorsed by Congress without the need for debate, following advice from the CEC, on the particular motions in question. The existing policy motions are listed in SOC Report No. 1 at page 22 of your Final Agenda. You may also find it helpful to refer to the detailed report from the CEC on page 187 of the Final Agenda, which gives much more information on why these are not being actually moved, seconded and voted on today.

The letters “EP” appear in the Agenda beside these motions in the correct order.

Motion and Rule Amendments out of order: The SOC has ruled that there are nine motions out of order for debate. Firstly, there are two motions out of order since they require a rule amendment and Congress 2022 is not a rule amendment year. Secondly, there are a further five motions which are about industrial strategy and are matters for GMB members in those areas and the relevant GMB committees, and are not policy matters for Congress. Thirdly, there are two motions which are appropriate to be dealt with elsewhere and are not matters for Congress. The details of the out-of-order motions are contained in your Final Agenda at pages 20 and 21.

President and Congress, I formally move adoption of SOC Report No. 1.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Helen. Does any delegate wish to speak on any of the SOC’s recommendations? *(No response)* In that case, I will put the vote on SOC Report No. 1. All those delegates in favour? Any against? Thank you, Congress. These are the rules you have adopted for the conduct of Congress for the coming week.

*SOC Report No. 1 was **ADOPTED**.*

PRESIDENT’S ADDRESS

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It gives me great pleasure to call on our President to address Congress.

THE PRESIDENT (Barbara Plant): Vice President and Congress, it is with huge pleasure and pride – if I cry, these are tears of joy, nothing else – that I stand before you today as your GMB National President. As we gather here in Harrogate after one of the most challenging periods any of us can remember, I am delighted to be able to say “Congress, welcome back!” *(Applause)*

It has been three long years since we came together in Brighton for our last in-person Congress and doesn’t it feel great to be back together again! *(Applause)* It does. Looking out across the hall I see so many familiar faces, so many friends and

comrades. I also see many new delegates joining us for the very first time. Let's give them a huge welcome to our GMB Congress family. *(Applause)*

It is also Gary's first in-person Congress as GMB General Secretary. I am incredibly excited to be working with him. Gary, we are different people with very different personalities, but I feel that you, Malcolm and I make a great team and have a shared vision for the future.

This week is a time for work, for serious discussion and debate to form policy and shape the future of our great Union. It is also a time for friendship, a time to be among people who share common bonds of solidarity. It is a special time, a time we treasure. It is a chance to reflect on events that have tested us in so many different ways: the Covid-19 pandemic, a war in Europe and the cost-of-living crisis. Alongside tales of despair and tragedy, we have witnessed incredible heroism and commitment, with GMB members so often on the frontline leading the way. In the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges, GMB people have kept responding again and again. We have cared for the old, the sick and the vulnerable. We've stacked the shelves, transported the goods, made the food, generated the power and kept the lights on. In our hour of need, GMB members heard the call. They truly kept our country going. Let's show our appreciation for all they have done and continue to do. Please join me in a round of applause for our incredible GMB heroes. *(Applause)*

It is also right that we recognise the incredible work done over the last couple of years by GMB reps in keeping our union going. So many people have gone the extra mile to ensure we have kept representing our members and fighting their corner in the toughest of circumstances, and so much of this is down to our reps. To recognise their efforts, we have produced a special one-off commemorative GMB badge for all delegates that says our thank you to these incredible people. They are amazing and we thank them from the bottom of our hearts.

But as members know only too well, claps don't pay the bills. It has been and remains such a tough time for so many. The Tory Government have done their utmost to make it even worse with years of failed austerity, pay freezes, food prices up, fuel bills up, petrol costs up and National Insurance up. If there is a problem, you can bet your last pound that the Tories will make it even worse.

Let's not forget the disgrace – the absolute disgrace – that is Boris Johnson. *(Applause)* As our members were working and some losing their lives as they cared for others, he and his cronies were boozing it up, partying the night away. Now we know that at the same time insulting the caterers, the cleaners and the security staff, those people who look after the place he calls home. Doesn't that tell you everything you need to know about him?

Our members, many working super-long shifts to cover for sick colleagues, were not allowed to have a so-called "post-work gathering". They were not allowed to have birthday cakes and sing songs. Let's not forget the thousands who could not even say goodbye to their loved ones. If our members broke the law, they would be sacked, but amazingly Boris gets to keep his job, although with 148 of his own MPs saying he is not up to it, the clock is clearly ticking. As always, it's one rule for the Tories and

another for the rest of us. We are better than this. As they spoke of division and seek out the culture wars, we stand for collectivism, solidarity, equality and decency. And when we do stand together and when we act together, we move mountains.

(Applause)

Just look at some of what GMB members and their campaigns are achieving: proper pay increases for refuse workers, with victories from the south coast to all points across the country; equal pay successes, with the women of Glasgow once again setting the pace and Birmingham on the way soon; big uplifts in money for low-paid Asda staff, particularly those working in stores who stuck with the Union for so long, and landmark collective agreements in the rapidly expanding gig economy, as we represent members in Uber, Evri and now Deliveroo. We are on the march again.

(Applause)

But we must also be honest and talk about our recent past. The last couple of years have also been very difficult internally for our Union. Some of the practices, behaviours and cultures that previously existed hurt many who care so passionately about the GMB. We experienced some dark moments and remain on a journey that may not always be easy. Thankfully, we are moving on and have already done so much to make our Union a better place. A bit part of this positive change has been the role played by the Central Executive Council. I want to say a personal thank you to all CEC members, lay members like yourselves, elected at the end of 2018. We met twice in person before Covid hit and everything went on line. There was not a chance to get to know one another, to come together and share experiences, to learn from one another what was expected of a CEC member. Yet even in the face of such challenging circumstances, people stepped up and showed real leadership, never more so when our previous General Secretary left so quickly.

The CEC is the bedrock of our Union, and a wonderful expression of our member-led democracy. It is heartening to see that our Union is returning to a place where the members come first, where it listens to the campaigns we want, our priorities and the issues that matter to us. It is also exciting that senior levels of the Union are changing, too, with new people in key positions. Welcome to the new Regional Secretaries that have been appointed in the last three years. I hope, Congress, you will indulge me for a second as I say special congratulations to our three new women Regional Secretaries, the first in our 133 years. *(Applause and cheers)* It is a sign of the changes we are making that more than 40% of GMB Regional Secretaries are women. Also our ground-breaking Women's Campaign Unit shows the direction of travel we are taking and the commitment we have to tackling the inequalities that women still face in the 21st century. This is great progress but there is so much more to do if we want to secure the future of our Union. Doing this requires leadership, and that is everyone's responsibility. There is a phrase called "The Leadership Shadow". It is what is cast by each of us through what we say, how we act and what we do. In our changed GMB we should all be looking to cast a powerful, positive leadership shadow. We should all be looking to be judged on our words, our actions and our deeds. That is a vision of a better GMB that Gary and I both want for our Union, a Union that campaigns, enthuses, organises and wins, where we express our collectivism and solidarity in all that we do, where the members come first and where we make work better. *(Applause)*

Achieving this demands change. It demands ambition and commitment. We take inspiration from the best of those who have gone before us, those like Will Thorne and Elena Marx, who wanted GMB to be a fighting union, who left it in good shape for those who came after. That is our responsibility. It starts with us. We are the leaders who will make it happen.

So enjoy the next five days and your chance to build a Union that is here for the next 133 years but, please, be respectful and keep to time in our speeches. That is all I ask. Congress, it's been a long three years. Welcome back. *(A standing ovation)* Thank you.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE PRESIDENT: That is the nervous bit over. Congress, before we begin our first debate, I would like to explain a few points of procedure. Please listen carefully. To save time I will take motions in groups. Your session programme will show the groupings. If you are speaking on any of these motions, you must register the number on your delegation pass at the desk in front before going to the chairs in front of the rostrum ready to speak. Please make sure you do this every time you speak, and we will have a change over of staff at that desk.

I will call movers and any seconders. In line with Motion 8 carried at Congress 2018, I will not be calling for additional supporting speakers on motions, unless a delegate is speaking in opposition. I will call the CEC speaker to reply at the end of the group, rather than deal with each motion individually. Where the CEC is supporting a motion, I will advise Congress. Where the CEC has any other position, the CEC speaker will give the reasons for their decision. We will then move to a vote of all the motions in that group. If there is any reason not to take those motions as a group, I will notify Congress.

I know this is quite long but as the week progresses it all becomes clear, believe me.

On Special Reports and Statements, the CEC will have moving and seconding speakers. I will then invite one delegate from each region to speak on the report or statement at that time.

When it comes to moving and seconding your motions, delegates will see a light on their right-hand side when they speak on the rostrum. When the light turns yellow, this means that delegates have 30 seconds left to finish their speech. After those 30 seconds the light will turn red. We always have to be tight on time, so if you are still speaking when the light turns red, you may be cut off. Most importantly, keep to time, practice your speeches and have fun!

Finally, could I remind Congress that as you have voted in SOC Report No. 1 all existing policy motions will now not be debated, nor will those motions that are out of order.

UNION ORGANISATION: CONGRESS

THE PRESIDENT: On to our first item of business: Motions relating to Congress.

Can I ask that the movers and seconders of Motions 1, 2 and 3 come to the front of the hall, and also that movers and seconders of the next item of business please make themselves ready as well as CEC members. Can I have the mover for Motion 1, please.

CONGRESS REFORMS

MOTION 1

1. CONGRESS REFORMS

This Congress calls on the General Secretary and CEC to look at ways of reforming Congress – reduce the number of motions, many of the 300+ which disappear on a computer file never to see the light of day and increase the amount of debate and learning that takes place.

AVON & WESSEX BRANCH A55

Wales & South West Region

(Fell)

THE PRESIDENT: Can I just check that Motion 1 is to be moved by Wales & South West Region? Is there a delegate speaking on that motion? If not, that motion will fall. *(No response)* Okay. So Motion 1 falls.

Motion 1 FELL

THE PRESIDENT: So we are on to Motion 2. Thank you.

USE OF VOTING TECHNOLOGY AT CONGRESS

MOTION 2

2. USE OF VOTING TECHNOLOGY AT CONGRESS

This Congress notes the successful use of voting technology at Congress 2021. The on-screen voting statistics were reassuring for both those taking part, and for those watching online, and ensured that numbers were immediately available.

Acknowledging that not all delegates are familiar with the use of such systems, Regions would need to support delegates to ensure they have the skills and equipment to vote, the introduction of such technology at an 'in person' Congress would reduce the need for appeals and card votes.

Therefore, this Congress tasks the CEC with introducing such technology in time for Congress 2023 and establish this as the norm for voting procedures moving forward.

EUROTEC BRANCH

Midland & East Coast Region

(Referred)

TONI YEL (Midland & East Coast): President and Congress, I move Motion 2: The Use of Voting Technology at Congress. Whilst Congress 2021 was not the usual in-person coming together, the Union adapted and adjusted to the new environment and led a successful online event. We embraced the technology available to us and

showed that on-screen voting statistics could be visible immediately after all delegates registered their vote. This approach was developed for this specific need due to the Covid measures being in place, but the positive outcomes of how this worked for delegates and, presumably, the running of Congress, certainly should be taken forward in future Congresses. I hope that our President and colleagues at the top table would also see the advantages when seeing a sea of hands when we have a split or unclear decision in the room. This would mean that card votes and appeals would not take up the additional time at Congress and we could have immediate accuracy that the technology provides.

I know that the CEC would like to refer this motion to the Congress Working Party with the possibility of introducing it at Congress 2023. If the CEC would like to refer back to the written motion and note the last line, it actually reads: “Congress tasks the CEC to introduce such technology in time for Congress 2023”. So it would seem, my CEC colleagues, that we are actually supporting the same principle. We understand the need to ensure that we have the kit, and this is something that can be established, certainly within a year. The CEC Statements says that the working party will see “if” this is possible, but we know it is possible because otherwise we would not have a successful Congress 2021 – we know it was a success – even though it was not the Congress we wanted. Also the fact that people will all be in a room together means that there will be less technological issues than having people sat in different areas of the UK, like 2021.

Also we don’t have to rely on people having their own smart phones or the GMB purchasing iPads. There is additional technology out *there* that can be sourced by working with the necessary companies to bring in bespoke voting electronic systems. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. A seconder for that motion, please.

COLIN CRISP (Midland & East Coast): Congress, I am seconding the use of technology at Congress. I am a first-time speaker. (*Applause*) I will start by reiterating two of the main points put forward by the motion mover. The GMB very successfully, as has been pointed out, used the technology in 2021. It makes sense to continue to do so and develop it. The time taken for card votes and appeals will be drastically cut, reducing the pressure put on the Congress timetable, making the available time to be reallocated. The use of voting technology will also help spike the interest of young people when seen on the internet. They need to see how the GMB is moving forward with the times. We all know how key to the future of the Union young people are. We need to do everything possible to bring more into the GMB.

This is also about each delegate being able to express their views on any issue and removing any anxieties or inhibitions to ensure that this is the case. We know this can be done. It’s been on the *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire* programme for years. So do not refer. Let’s make the decision to move forward now. Let’s make a clear-cut unanimous decision so we don’t waste any time with a count. Leave the fumbling and the bumbling to Boris Johnson and his Tories. I second the motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Colin, a first-time speaker. Can we have the mover of Motion 3.

BROKEN PROMISES

MOTION 3

3. BROKEN PROMISES

This Congress notes that the GMB has sponsored charities from all regions, and money has been collected from all regions for all charities including Dogs for the Blind and the donations have been appreciated.

Can we say all regions? as that does not always happen at every Congress.

The GMB has sponsored 4 dogs Billy, Turner, Finn and Ella, but we could have had so many more dogs sponsored but for the broken promises from the regions that said they would donate, but did not.

When we are at Congress we watch, listen and vote on the motions, when a motion is passed, we are making a commitment to carry that motion forward.

During the course of Congress each Region can make a request for a bucket collection to the Standing Orders Committee, the amount that is collected is announced at Congress, and from there the President of GMB will then ask if any other Region would like to donate, this happens at every Congress, but what is happening is that that not all Regions honour their pledge.

We therefore call on Congress:

To continue to have the bucket collections for charities.

Continue to have Regions donate, and to ask that this be considered a request that all Regions honour their pledge.

GLASGOW NE & SW HEALTH SERVICE BRANCH

GMB Scotland

(Carried)

MARGARET BOYD (GMB Scotland): Good morning. This Congress notes that the GMB has sponsored charities from all regions, and money has been collected from all regions for all charities including Dogs for the Blind and the donations have been so much appreciated.

Can we say “all regions” as that does not happen at every Congress? The GMB has sponsored four dogs – Billy, Turner, Finn and Ella – but could have had so many dogs sponsored because what happened at previous Congresses was that not all regions honoured their pledge to donate and that was a broken promise from the GMB regions.

A great big thank you to all the regions that did donate. Because of the money you donated, we have the four guide dogs. When we are at Congress we watch, listen and vote on the motions. When a motion is passed, those regions have made a commitment to carry that motion forward. When there is a bucket collection, the

amount that is collected is announced at Congress and from there the President of the GMB will ask if any other region would like to donate. This happens at every Congress. The goal was to sponsor a dog for every region. As we know the GMB is down to seven regions so there are just three dogs to sponsor.

Since 2017 we have raised more than £14,500 from Congress, omitting the last two years, of course. We have seen amazing generosity from our delegates and regions. So may it continue until we have the magic number of seven, so that a blind or partially blind person receives their dog so much sooner than they would have.

At the moment we have just over £2,500 in the bank, an account that is only for the GMB Guide Dogs' Puppy Appeal. This is going towards the next puppy. So in total, as a Union, we have raised just over £17,000 for the Guide Dog Association. *(Applause)* Thank you. They are also very grateful for what has been raised so far.

We appreciate that the delegates have played a big part to help raise the money and hope they continue. We hope the regions do continue to make contributions, although these are hard times for all of the country. Anything is appreciated. Our goal for the Dogs for the Blind is a dog for every region. Mary, being Mary, is like a dog with a bone. We appreciate the help and support of GMB Scotland and all of the regions.

For the past two years the pandemic has created wage losses and tight budgets for everyone nationwide. Charities, too, suffered. Now we have a cost-of-living crisis and crippling prices in everything we normally shop for, but we are still complimented on being a generous nation. So all we ask is whatever you can donate and honour it.

We, therefore, call on Congress to continue to have the bucket collections for charities, to continue to have regions donate and to ask that this be a considered motion that all regions honour. Thank you so much, Congress. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Margaret. Secunder?

LINDA WALKER (GMB Scotland): President, I am seconding Motion 3: Broken Promises. Congress, I want to take you back to a summer's day in Brighton not that long ago. It was the day following a great night out celebrating Congress. In the midst of everything was a man with his dog holding a big orange bucket. They were collecting donations and thanking folk as they gave. The following day the bucket collection announcement was made and people at Congress had so kindly supported the man and his dog. Then, amazingly, the regional heads again pledged more money. The hall was ecstatic for such kind generosity for the man, his dog and the orange bucket that would get help for another guide dog puppy. A year prior to this story the man and his dog with the orange bucket had been at Congress and had a bucket collection along with similar pledges collected from the heads of regions, which helped get a puppy named William Thorne. But that was too long a name for a wee puppy and so it was shortened to Billy. Everyone was delighted he was named after the founder of our GMB and helping another person.

Going back to the beginning of this story, to that hot day in Brighton, following the announcement of the bucket collection and the amazing pledges made, sadly, it does not have a happy ending. The man with the dog had a lady helping him to collect the

money and liaising with the Guide Dogs, but this time while they waited the pledged money did not come in. Post Congress fund raising continued and another secured – Eleanor Marx, Ella, for short. Fund raising continued and two more puppies were secured – Turner and Finn. Despite challenges, the man, his dog and the lady who helped him did not give up in their pursuit for puppies. Sadly, had all those pledges made at Congress been met, this goal would have been close to being achieved. This story, with the help of you all and Gary Smith, can have a happy ending if we can see through the midst and gather in the money that was pledged to the man with the dog and the orange bucket. The beginning of the end of a happy story is in your hands. Please support this motion. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Linda.

Let me make this announcement. If anyone has found a mobile phone, could you let Birmingham Region know as a delegate has mislaid theirs.

Are there any delegates wishing to speak in opposition to any of these motions? *(No response)* No. Then I ask June Minnery from the CEC to speak, please.

JUNE MINNERY (CEC): Good morning, colleagues. I am speaking on behalf of the CEC on Motions 2 and 3.

President and Congress, on Motion 2 – Use of Voting Technology at Congress – the CEC is asking for this motion to be referred. The CEC wishes to refer this motion to the Congress Working Party, which is exploring options for electronic voting at an in-person Congress. As the motion suggests, some systems rely on all delegates having access to suitable equipment, such as smart phones or iPads. It is requested that this motion is referred so that the Congress Working Party can continue to explore options with the intention, if possible, of introducing electronic voting at Congress 2023.

Finally, the CEC is asking that Motion 3 – Broken Promises – be supported with a qualification. The qualification is that any supplementary donations to bucket collections and the amount donated should be at the discretion of each regional committee.

To sum-up, the CEC is asking for Motion 2 to be referred back, and for Motion 3 to be supported with the qualification as outlined. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, June. Does Midland & East Coast accept the reference back on Motion 2? *(Agreed)* Thank you. For new delegates, that means there is no vote taken when they accept the reference back.

Does GMB Scotland accept the qualification on Motion 3? *(Agreed)* Thank you. I can now call for a vote on Motion 3. All those in favour, please show? All those against? That is carried.

*Motion 2 was **REFERRED***

*Motion 3 was **CARRIED**.*

UNION ORGANISATION – GENERAL

THE PRESIDENT: We are on to Union Organisation – General. I will start with the mover of Motion 5. Can I also ask that movers and seconders of the next items of business please make themselves ready, as well as CEC members.

LONG SERVICE AWARD SYSTEM

MOTION 5

5. LONG SERVICE AWARD SYSTEM

This Congress notes that a Congress 2011 motion from our branch calling for an automatic award system to recognise members with Long Service to GMB was referred. As a result, the 2012 General Secretary's Report informed us that a pro-active central system had been set up by GMB National Administration Department such that once 25 years of unbroken GMB membership has been reached by an individual member then the Region can prepare a long service certificate and badge which is sent to the Branch for presentation. Years later we were pleased to see that there is also a similar Merit certificate which can be awarded to any member by the Region for excellence.

However, we call on GMB to look into the operation of the long service system reporting as in our Region we are not centrally notified of qualifying members, instead branches have to nominate members for this award and as such some members are missing out. We ask that a report be centrally processed and sent to Regions on a regular basis so that all who qualify can be properly recognised.

EAST DEREHAM BRANCH

London Region

(Referred)

JAN SMITH (London): President and General Secretary, I move Motion 5 on the Long Service Award System. As the Secretary of the GMB Retired Members Association I know first hand how dedicated our members are and how many have been a member of the Union since leaving school and starting work. We need to make sure that all of our members are recognised for the years, and many years, of service that they have given to the GMB.

We put this motion in as the current system is not working. In 2011 our branch in East Dereham, back in Norfolk, asked for an automated process to be run from the National Office to let all regions know which of our members had completed 25 years of unbroken service. That motion was referred and we were told that a central system would be set up. That has not happened. Ten years on we are still waiting for this process to be run on a regular basis. Currently, the only way we hear about these members is if the branch let us know that a member has long service, and not all branch secretaries check their members' start date records. So, colleagues, many members miss out.

At our last Regional Council Meeting, Warren Kenny, our Regional Secretary, thanked a long list of resigning branch secretaries, and most of them had more than 25 years' service. I can tell you, Congress, that one of our branch secretaries, who is 96 years old and still a branch secretary, has been a member for 60 years plus. We have

now made presentations to these branches but, colleagues, we should not have to wait until a member resigns or retires before recognising their good work. Also we should not just be awarding post-holders.

Colleagues, all members – I repeat, all members – of the GMB deserve recognition as we know how hard it is for people to retain their membership, especially in today’s economic climate.

I know other organisations reward loyalty, so we the GMB should do the same. We know that this motion is being referred, and I sincerely hope it does not take another 10 years for it to be sorted out. I would like to ask the National Office to work with all regions and make this happen. Maybe a report could be produced every quarter so branches can make presentations at their branch meetings or at a regional council meeting, and if needs be a special meeting. Yes, we know that our membership records may need updating but we have a regional programme which should be able to address this. Let’s make sure that all our members are given certificates but, most of all, medals and make a fuss of them for all the hard work and dedication that they have given to this Union. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jan. Is there a seconder?

HARRY CLARKE (London): President and Congress, I am a first-time delegate and first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Thank you.

Congress, I am very pleased to follow the mover of this motion, who happens to be my fantastic branch secretary. I am a relatively new member of the GMB and I, probably, only have another 15 years or so to go before I get to my 25 years’ membership, but I can’t beat the record of the 96-year-old. I think that this motion is a no brainer. It is not that we don’t recognise long service but it is partly about the actual system. We all welcome, whether we are first-time delegates or others, our gifts of a thermos flask and a rucksack etc, which are all very useful additions, but I think what has been proposed by the mover is very sensible, clear and does retain a member’s loyalty and their recognition. It does go a long way to having that amount of goodwill. I will not take up any more of your time. I hope you support the motion. I do understand the referring back but I hope this matter can be sorted out, and that I don’t have to come back in 10 years’ time. Thank you, Congress. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Harry. Can we have the mover of Motion 6.

GMB SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

MOTION 6

6. GMB SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

This Congress recognises the rise in use of all forms of social media for both communications and organising.

During the 2021 General Secretary election, the Union was subjected to many negative and deliberately designed posts, attempting to attack the candidates in the election, other staff and lay members, our CEC and the Union as a whole.

Where such unwelcome and unreasonable interventions are made by any staff, retired staff, members or postholders, the Union must take all reasonable steps to address this in the most appropriate way.

Congress agrees to review current social media policies for staff and members to be undertaken as soon as possible and all Branches should be provided with policies and training agreed by our CEC.

BARKING BRANCH **London Region**

(Referred)

STEVE DAVIES (London): President and Congress, I move Motion 6 on the GMB Social Media Policy.

Congress, I am sure you will agree that the use of social media has changed the way we communicate in recent years. The use of online platforms became particularly necessary during Covid lockdown with many members and colleagues embracing this technology to communicate when face-to-face contact was restricted while working from home. It changed the way how we run disputes and organised campaigns. It has also changed how we communicate with our reps and mobilise our members.

The GMB is also utilising this media to reach out to groups which were hard to reach and recruit, especially those in non-unionised workplaces, which as you know is essential to growing the membership of the GMB. Unfortunately, an adverse effect to the increased use of social media is that it has blurred boundaries between work and home life and has provided some users with a façade that they are able to say things that they normally would not say in person. Some of these comments are re-posted or end up going viral.

Comments made on digital platforms can rapidly end up being used for a dismissal or disciplinary action. Our motion is to ensure that our staff, activists and members have clear information and guidelines to using social media, highlighting the responsibility, power and pitfalls to the use of these platforms. Please vote to support our motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Steve. Secunder?

TONY CHOLERTON (London): Conference, I am seconding Motion 6. As the mover has said, digital media is now a fixture in people's lives with billions of people using different social media platforms. Used well and responsibly, this is a great way to reach out to our members and to promote our policies and campaigns. However, with power comes responsibility. With increased use of social media comes online trolling, abuse and harassment, which all have effects on people's mental health.

Our motion mentions how careless use of social media risks damaging the Union's reputation, work and interests. During the General Secretary election, whilst there were bylaws we saw some negative posts which were difficult to police.

During its General Secretary election, another union sent members specific guidelines on the use of social media and what was acceptable. Our members need similar specific guidance to avoid the pitfalls as they represent the Union and are bound by the policies and rule book of the Union. We are pleased that this motion will be referred to the Election Review Working Party, but we are asking for specific policies that cover staff and members to be used at any time and not just during elections. Any training should also include video guides on the safe use of apps, like Whatsapp, Facebook and Zoom, and the use of images, videos and language which may get misunderstood in different cultural environments. Congress, I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tony. Can I have the mover of Motion 7?

ACCESSIBLE AND CLEAR GMB DOCUMENTS AND REPORTS MOTION 7

7. ACCESSIBLE AND CLEAR GMB DOCUMENTS AND REPORTS

This Congress notes that GMB is a General Union, proudly open to all who wish to join, and so documents at all levels of the Union including Congress and all National Conferences should be in a format accessible to all members.

Unfortunately, in recent years an increasing number of documents provided to Congress and National Conferences have included complex language. This makes it harder for members at all levels of the union to have a chance to fully understand them.

GMB has previously stated that as an organisation it is committed to Plain English publications, but there is often little evidence of this in these reports.

This Congress instructs the CEC to:

1. Make sure all future reports to Congress and all National Conferences are written in clear and accessible language to ensure they are as widely understood as possible;
2. Make sure all future reports to Congress and National Conferences contain a short, clear summary;
3. Include a summary of abbreviations in all GMB reports;
4. Commit to using Plain English in GMB documents.

HOLBORN BRANCH London Region

(Carried)

SUSAN KELLY (London): President and Conference, I move Motion 7 on accessible and clear GMB documents and reports. Congress, this motion is quite self-explanatory so you will all be glad to hear that this speech will be short.

We are and always have been a very proud general union and we are open to everyone, regardless of what their trade is or their level of education. Imagine, then, being a member who does not have a good standard of English or English might be

your third or fourth language and you are presented with Congress documents that are not easy to read, that are very technical, do not have a summary or a glossary and they are full of acronyms. That is what we have previously been presented with. These are not examples out of my own head but these are examples we had last year from members who attended the digital Congress.

We understand that the reports we get given have to go to a really wide audience. We also understand that there are long-standing deadlines that have to be met on the production of reports. Believe it or not, we understand that you can't please everyone all the time. No one is asking for that. All this motion is really asking for is some small changes to the way we do things to make life a bit easier. Really, some of those changes have already been made in this year's reports to Congress. I applaud the fact that when I opened this year's reports and the language is a lot easier to read as well as many of them having a summary. It did not take me six times to read through some of them. In fact, it did not take me six times to read through any of them, as last year's did, and I read legal papers for a living. So it should not be a real effort to say "Yes" to this motion, and I ask you, please, to support it. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Susan. Secunder?

STEPHEN JONES (London): Conference, I second this motion. There is not a lot that I can actually add to the previous speaker, but I would like to comment on one or two little points. The GMB has committed itself to using clear language in documents years ago. Complex English has its own difficulties for nearly everybody. For instance, references to various sections of, say, the Equality Act 2010 means sometimes for those who know about the Act it is not a problem, but for many people they would not understand what you are talking about if you refer to section 26 of the Equality Act, for example. Every document should use terms that mean something to people. I have an example here because I have actually fallen foul of this myself with my own branch in Redbridge, where I refer to, say, the RTUC, which is short for Redbridge Trades Council. I have been reminded that I should not be using such analogies and should make it a lot clear. What I always do in documents or if I am speaking in meetings is to say that I am TUC but I also say Redbridge Trades Council, for example. Using abbreviations won't do, but these are useful for keeping documents short, but it should come with a glossary. I second this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Steven. Can I have the mover of Motion 8, please?

BRANCH WORKING PARTY

MOTION 8

8. BRANCH WORKING PARTY

This Congress notes that a motion from Congress 2021 agreed to reinstate the Election Review Working Party and the Branch Working Party to look at GMB democracy and member engagement but we note that the Branch Working Party has not yet met. Our branches need updated guidance and training in order to help meet the challenges faced by their members.

We call for the Branch Working Party to be reformed to look at shaping a branch strategy around "Making Work Better" and updating the Branch Secretary's Handbook to include data protection and templates and guidance for Branches.

ISLINGTON 1 & HARINGEY BRANCH
London Region

(Referred)

TONY CHOLERTON (London): Conference, I move Motion 8: Branch Working Party. Congress calls on the GMB to reinstate the Branch Working Party to help branches to be more democratic and engage with members in a way that is more appealing to the change in demographics within the Union.

In my branch there has been a massive turnover of staff and a big shift in the age range of potential members. In the past we represented people from all age ranges but now there has been a shift to much younger people. Traditional ways of recruiting do not work as well so we need to adapt so that we are much more appealing to a younger generation.

Due to Covid 19 we have learnt new ways to communicate with members, but we need to develop branch strategies that can work for all our members and help us to recruit the next generation of both members and activists. I know from experience that branch meetings are often poorly attended, but when I called meetings on Teams there were considerably more members attending.

During this year's pay negotiations we held a traditional postal ballot that got a very poor response when we were asking members to reject a pay offer put to us. This makes it harder for us to negotiate with managers who think our members are not passionate about the cost-of-living crisis. So for the first time my branch used Microsoft Forms to hold an electronic ballot following a greatly improved pay offer. This resulted in a much better response both for the numbers taking part but also resulted in positive feedback from our members.

By reinvigorating the Branch Working Party we can work together to swap ideas and find new ways to recruit and grow. Branch secretary training can be modernised and the Branch Secretary Handbook can be updated to help with the changes which have accelerated because of Covid-19. The more tools that branch activists have at their disposal, the greater the effort to recruit and invigorate will be.

This motion calls on GMB to reform the Branch Working Party so that all branches can be given greater guidance and activist training. The sooner the Working Party gets together, the sooner we can adapt to a changing world and make work better. Congress, please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tony. Secunder?

TARANJIT CHANA (London): President and Congress, I second Motion 8. Our Union is a strong and independent union, built on the dedication of us, the lay members, who organise around workplaces and through branch activity. Branches play a crucial role in terms of our internal democracy where activists like us thrive.

The report of the Branch Working Party highlights that branch activity and involvement was and is inconsistent across regions and nations. So to enable us as branch activists to continue our dedicated branch activities, we need updated and consistent tools for our trade. The General Secretary in his report highlights the work of various branches organising in workplaces. It is important that the Branch Working Party reconvenes to continue and complete the work on shaping a branch strategy around making work better. So we, as lay members, should have updated guidance and training to help us meet the challenges faced by our members. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Taranjit. Are there any delegates wishing to speak in opposition to any of these motions? (*No response*) No. In that case, I will ask Penny Robinson to respond on behalf of the CEC.

PENNY ROBINSON (CEC): I am speaking on behalf of the CEC on Motions 5, 6, 7 and 8.

On Motion 5, the Long Service Award system, the CEC is asking for the motion to be referred. The CEC asks for this motion to be referred so our National Admin Unit can look into ways of ensuring that this information can be made available to regions as the membership system does not automatically make these reports.

Turning to Motion 6 – GMB Social Media Policy – the CEC is asking for this motion to be referred. The CEC wishes to refer this motion to the Election Review Working Party, which are reviewing the bylaws, including canvassing bylaws and the use of social media for future elections. A best practice guide on the use of social media is also being developed for staff and activists which will form part of the campaign training being rolled out.

On Motion 7 – Accessible and Clear GMB Documents and Reports – the CEC is supporting this motion but with some qualifications. The CEC goes to great lengths to ensure that documents presented at Congress are written in a language that is relevant to our members and reflect our values, whilst setting out clear policy that our members feel they can endorse. However, we know we can always do better.

Our reports are written for GMB members. We have a very diverse membership and a writing style or length that is preferred by some delegates and members may not be so by others. Reports are written and proof read by GMB staff, including by staff who are neurodivergent, with guidance and input from the CEC and GMB members. While reports may tackle difficult subjects, they are not written in academic language. Our reports also contain our outward-facing policy, which will be read by political parties, governments, other unions, the TUC, the media and other policy-forming organisations. A certain level of detail can be really important to avoid losing the meaning.

Without a doubt, the CEC supports points 2 and 3 listed in this motion, which will help maintain a house style for our reports. Whilst the CEC is generally supportive of the motion, there are some qualifications that we are asking to be accepted. The first qualification is on point 4 of the motion. In correspondence with the branch, it was suggested that we use the service of the Plain English Campaign, which is a for-profit

private company. We have used this company in the past to change the rule book and found that the changes had to be reversed. We note that the communications of other organisations, who also use the services of the Plain English Campaign, have been found to be unclear by the Advertising Standards Authority. The CEC does not believe that we should be engaging with this company.

The second qualification is that it is not accurate to state that reports have been delivered late, with the exception of the special case of the 2021 report on the Work of the Taskforce for Positive Change. All deadlines have been met in recent years.

We would, however, be willing to look at whether those long-established deadlines could be set differently.

Finally, the CEC is asking that Motion 8 be referred so that the Branch Working Party can consider it when it reconvenes.

To sum up, the CEC is asking for Motions 5, 6 and 8 to be referred back and for Motion 7 to be supported with the qualification as outlined. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Penny. Does London Region accept reference back on Motion 5? *(Agreed)* Thank you. And do you accept the reference back on Motion 6? *(Agreed)* Thank you. Do you accept the qualification on Motion 7? *(Agreed)* Thank you. Do you also accept the reference back on Motion 8? *(Agreed)* Thank you. Again, reference back means that they do not get put to the vote. So I now call for your vote on Motion 7. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against? That is carried.

Motion 5 was REFERRED.

Motion 6 was REFERRED.

Motion 7 was CARRIED.

Motion 8 was REFERRED.

UNION ORGANISATION: RECRUITMENT & ORGANISATION GMB'S STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE, RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION COMPOSITE 1

C1. GMB's Strategy for the Future, Recruitment and Retention

Covering Motions:

10. GMB's STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE - LONDON REGION

13. RECRUITMENT – RETENTION - MIDLAND & EAST COAST REGION

This Congress fully supports the General Secretary's announcement to focus recruitment at all levels of the organisation.

This Congress agrees, our Union must commence consultations and discussions with all stakeholders on what our members need and require from our Union, in the ever changing, fast moving, world of work.

We need a fresh Framework for the Future Strategy which will make our Union relevant to changes in economic and employment trends and practices.

In 2021, we secured the first ever world recognised collective agreement with UBER which was successfully negotiated over many months following several victories in the courts. Our

priorities must be to organise in the workplace, the building block of the Union, in the first instance.

Our economy, post pandemic, has changed rapidly. Many jobs are being created in the gig or platform economy, transport, logistics and supportive supply chains. We must examine how our Union is adapting to the new world of work and adapt with it.

Congress therefore agrees to organise strategic discussions with all stakeholders aimed at supporting GMB@Work and “Make Work Better” existing GMB policies, but to also reach further and agree how our Union will more consistently and collectively organise in these new emerging economy and workforces.

Congress also agrees that resources must, at the same time, be made available to service membership, thus enabling recruitment successes to be sustainable.

Moving Region: LONDON

Seconding Region: MIDLAND & E COAST

(Carried)

THE PRESIDENT: Can we start with the mover of Composite 1. Can I also ask that the movers and seconders of Composite 2 and Motion 12 please make themselves ready, as well as CEC members.

STEVE DAVIS (London): Conference, I move Composite 1 – GMB Strategy for the Future. Congress, after several difficult years for the GMB, we need to take an honest look at ourselves so that we can move forward from this Congress with integrity, pride and, importantly, ambition.

The GMB has had its problems, but with the publication of the Monaghan Report and the actions taken on this, along with the earlier Henry Report, we can now demonstrate that we have turned the corner and, thus, refocus our attention to the needs of our members. From our earliest foundations, the GMB’s greatest strength has always been based on recruiting and organising workers to defend and improve their conditions. However, the workplace is changing, and the challenges we have faced through the Covid pandemic has merely accelerated those changes. The security of a job for life disappeared decades ago, but new work insecurities have emerged. The casualisation of work and what has been called the ‘gig’ economy, characterised by zero-hours contracts, bogus self-employment, in-work poverty, remote and hybrid working and workers having to multiple part-time jobs to keep a roof over their heads or to feed their children. There has always been a hidden ‘gig’ economy but the difference now is that this is becoming the norm, and not just a few casual hours for a student working in a bar.

Whether we like it or not or whether our members want these changes, they are being forced upon them, so we, the GMB Union, need to be fit for purpose to represent them. The GMB can be proud of how we fought companies like Uber, both industrially and legally, to a victory establishing workplace rights for their drivers. We can be proud of agreements drawn up with other companies, such as Deliveroo and Evri. We can be proud of our members in these companies for standing firm, and we can be proud of our officers and reps who stood by them every step of the way. But we need to go further. We need a fresh framework for the future strategy that firmly embeds our work in the ever-changing world of work. The GMB is at its best on the front foot, prioritising and concentrating on the members we represent and

those new members we seek to recruit. We are at our best when we face and take on these challenges head on.

Congress, the future is bright only if we return to our core mission, which is to recruit, organise and represent our members. Let's leave Harrogate with a vision of the future and the ambition to improve the world of work for our members. Thank you.

(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Steve. It is Midland to second.

JASON EVANS (Midland & East Coast): President, I second Composite 1. During these ever-changing and challenging times in the world of work, we doubtless need to be nimble to organise, recruit and respond. We also must provide adequate resources and coverage to service those members who we do recruit. Supporting and demonstrating our strengths to existing members has always been one of the best recruitment tools. I have seen this work in practice for many years in the water sector, in which I work, and as a result our sector has grown to more than 7,000 members and the GMB as a result is the union for water workers. Whilst we moved away from a service model many years ago, this Congress supports a balanced approach to recruitment and retention. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jason. I call the mover of Composite 2, London.

GMB ORGANISING STRATEGY FOR SCHOOLS & ACADEMIES: RE-EVALUATION OF JOB DESCRIPTIONS IN SCHOOLS COMPOSITE 2

C2. GMB Organising Strategy for Schools & Academies; Re-evaluation of Job Descriptions in Schools

Covering Motions:

11. GMB ORGANISING STRATEGY FOR SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIES - LONDON REGION

145. RE-EVALUATION OF JOB DESCRIPTIONS IN SCHOOLS - SOUTHERN REGION

This Congress agrees our Union should revitalise and relaunch our strategy for organising in Schools and Academies across the UK. As a Union, we built significant membership in this sector many years ago and we would argue, we were the dominant trade union for School based staff.

Congress therefore agrees to examine our history of organising in Schools, how we may strengthen our support for our members in this environment, particularly given many members are now under significant pressures with more and more work being pushed onto them by cuts in Education budgets from this callous Government.

We need to campaign for equality, fairness and to secure professional standards for our members in Schools and Academies now!

This Congress believes that job descriptions in schools and multi academy trusts should be re-evaluated to ensure that they are at the correct level. A call for action to campaign for the right pay for the right job nationally with the education institutions where GMB have support staff members.

Let's not forget, we once called them Education's Hidden Professionals! They deserve so much more than they receive and they're such a vital part of the educational setting for children. It is about time we put a decent claim on the table for them, launch cross regional strategies, and fight for the long overdue recognition our members so desperately need.

Moving Region: LONDON

Seconding Region: SOUTHERN

(Carried)

TRUDI TEW (London): Conference and President, I move Composite 2.

Never in all the years of inadequate pay rises and professional plights have school support staff deserved our help and focus more. During Covid they kept schools and academies open, going into school whilst most teachers taught online, safe at home. Now the cost-of-living crisis hits them, too. No longer are school support jobs pin-money jobs for bored mums reading to children, helping at playtime or in the office answering the door and the phone. Most now have relevant qualifications, not funded by schools. Teachers admit that academic results suffer if they don't have their support staff. They should not be paid less than unskilled outside education or for less weeks of the year.

Support staff contribute to the education of your children, your grandchildren, your god children: in fact, any children you know, and to the education of the UK's future adults who may be making policies about your old age. We must organise for these people as they are leaving educational jobs disillusioned. Support roles are the first ones to have hours cut when budgets are tight.

Years ago the Support Staff Negotiating Body did sterling work but was abolished by the Tories. Boo! Hiss! We should campaign to reinstate this body to fight for 52-week pay and pay rises not governed by what's left in the pot once teachers have been paid and a new minibus has been bought. Why should they have lower percentage cost-of-living rises than teachers. No more should they be told "You're great. You do so much more than your job description, but we have no money for you", or "Oh, well, we could re-evaluate your job and give you a rise but your friends will lose hours or their jobs. Do you want me to?" This was said at my school, to my friend. They don't say this to teachers. School support staff work to the same rules, policies and safeguarding regulations as teachers. Their jobs are at risk if they fail in this through disciplinarys. Chocolates from parents at the end of the term is not enough recognition.

According to the 2021 Workforce Census, there are 276,000 teaching assistants in schools. They don't even measure a lot of the other roles. However, 50% of school staff are non-teachers. In a recent London Region member survey one-third of support staff said that they had used or expected to use a food bank to feed their children. Professionals such as these should not be in this position. It is shameful. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: A seconder from Southern Region, please.

KEITH JOHNSON (Southern): Good morning, Congress. GMB Southern Region has tens of thousands of school support staff members and my branch in Lambeth has thousands of members working as teaching assistants and admin staff, cleaners, catering, and more. These workers were on the front line throughout Covid-19. They deserve our union fighting for better pay and conditions. We need a strategy for this to be delivered for these often lower paid workers, over-working members. I support the motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Keith. A mover for Motion 12, please.

SERVICING UNSPECIFIED MEMBERS

MOTION 12

12. SERVICING UNSPECIFIED MEMBERS

This Congress calls on the GMB to do a review of how unspecified members are serviced and organised in the GMB and to review how the membership database is used and its functionality. Currently Unspecified members will be allocated to a branch and the Branch Secretary may have limited information on the member until they contact them. This work can take a lot of time up for the Branch Secretary outside of allocated facility time.

We call upon the CEC to set up a Task Force to look at how we can better service these members and to look at how we can collect data from these members to map their workplace and how we can organise and create structure and get recognition in the workplace. We would also like this taskforce to look at the membership database and make improvements in the search engine functions and how we can get more details.

ISLINGTON APEX BRANCH

London Region

(Carried)

MARIE McCORMACK (London): Good morning, President, Congress, as a time-pressed Branch Secretary based in a local authority I am very familiar with our Islington Council members and those in our schools. We deal with the policies day in, day out. I have a chance to suggest new policies and sometimes that is taken on board, and I am asked to contribute in the review of existing policies. We know where we stand so there are generally no surprises and this is vital when we are supporting our members. It is also infinitely easier to get messages out to those council-based members and the school-based members, and basically to encourage participation and attendance at meetings. It is all pretty cohesive and we do not really have any issues there. We have plenty of issues but not issues in terms of knowing who our members are. We also, though, have 500 unspecified members in our branch, and possibly even more, they are individuals often like one individual in a private company and they also need to be serviced. They are entitled to the same degree of service as the others. Those private companies will have their own policies and the first time we hear of those policies is when the member comes to us for help so we have to get to grips with the policies; sometimes they are not even a policy, it is something scribbled on the back of a piece of paper. It is often very disappointing but we still have to go with it and help the member.

What this motion is about is getting a taskforce put together to conduct a mapping exercise to identify those members in those individual companies, the companies they work for, the policies and issues, and to see what the numbers are out there and possibly with a view to getting recognition agreements and we need to establish ways that these members can be better served. They have the same demands and concerns as all the others but this has to be carried out beyond the council facility time. They have phone calls to make, emails to write, meetings to be had, and it is just pretty impossible; we cope but we do not want to be just coping. Essentially, the private

companies have different ways of selecting for redundancy, for example. The first time that happened that was a surprise but we got round it and we learned the rules.

We are flipping from local authority policy to private company policy but often we are not getting the private company policy until the problem arises. We need to pre-empt these differences by having information in advance where possible so we get a feel for what is out there. For example, I recently attended a notice of concern appeal meeting and in the room the Chair said, “I won’t be making a decision today,” and I am thinking, “Well, if you’re not going to be doing it who is going to be making it?” It was an ACAS breach that we had to call out but if we had these policies in advance we could be pointing out, “Actually, your policy is not in accordance with ACAS guidelines,” and actually help them to write something that is. It would be good if we could share out the work and perhaps have a team dedicated to unspecified members that can be a central point of contact so that GMB HQ is aware of the actual extent of the resources and time needed to help these members. I just do not think they are aware.

All branch members are equal and we think we need to look at a solution to this. There are not enough hours in the day and we need more resources. We could be teaming up those unspecifieds who work in particular companies, i.e. there could be companies in different boroughs but they are all separated. Essentially, we could group them by type of work as well, i.e. care homes or media companies. In regards to the members’ database we just needed to be updated so that at a press of the button we can get all this information or as best as we can. The membership team are always very helpful when I contact them, and thank you for that, but it would be great to have that info myself. I know I am running out of time.

THE PRESIDENT: You have run out of time.

MARIE McCORMACK (London): I move this motion.

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. (*Applause*) Thank you, Marie. Secunder?

CHRISTINE HUSTON (London): Morning, Congress. First-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Thank you. The Islington Apex Branch has around 500 unspecified members and these members help with the finance of our branch. The branch usually has little or no details of the workplace, location, or job title. This keeps our Branch Secretary and stewards very busy. I call upon the CEC to set up a taskforce to see how we can better service our members and to look at doing a data collection exercise that includes mapping out and organising the workplace to build the GMB membership in our workplaces. Congress, I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Christine. Are there any delegates wishing to speak in opposition to any of these composites or motions? No? There is no CEC speaker because the CEC is supporting all of these motions so I will put them all to a vote. All those in favour of Composite 1, Composite 2, and Motion 12, please show. Thank you. Anyone against? They are carried. Thank you.

Composite 1 was CARRIED

Composite 2 was CARRIED

Motion 12 was CARRIED.

UNION ORGANISATION: REPRESENTATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

THE PRESIDENT: We go on to Union Organisation Representation and Accountability. Can I start with the mover of Motion 14 and can I also ask that the movers and seconders of the next items of business please make themselves ready, as well as CEC members. The mover of Motion 14.

WALES & SOUTH WEST REGION

MOTION 14

14. WALES & SOUTH WEST REGION

Congress notes that the South West of England has a proud history of trade unionism going back to the Tolpuddle Martyrs.

Congress notes that from the Isles of Scilly and Land's End to the border with the West Midlands in Gloucestershire, England's South West is an incredibly diverse Region and has a tradition of public services, manufacturing, agriculture, mining and shipbuilding to name but a few.

Congress notes that both the nation of Wales and the region of South West England are integral parts of GMB Wales and South West Region.

Congress agrees the principle of appropriate representation for both Wales as a nation and the English South West Region at all levels within our union.

Congress agrees to commission officers, to be determined by the CEC, to produce a report into the potential options for future representation of both Wales and South West England on the CEC, Regional Committee and Regional Council for the next Congress to vote on. This may include reserved seats for the South West of England, and may be similar to arrangements for Northern Ireland in the GMB North West and Irish Region.

DEVONPORT DOCKYARD BRANCH D19

Wales & South West Region

(Referred)

IAN DAVIS (Wales & South West): Second-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Congress notes that the South West of England has a proud history of trade unionism going back to the Tolpuddle Martyrs. Congress notes that from the Isles of Scilly and Land's End to the Border with the West Midlands in Gloucestershire, England's South West is an incredibly diverse region and has a tradition of public services, manufacturing, agriculture, mining, and shipbuilding, to name but a few.

Congress notes that both the nation of Wales and the region of South West England are integral parts of GMB Wales and South West Region. Congress agrees the principle of appropriate representation for both Wales as a nation and the English South West Region at all levels within our union. Congress agrees for commission officers to be determined by the CEC to produce a report into potential options for

future representation of both Wales and South West England on the CEC Regional Committee and Regional Council for the next Congress to vote on. This may include reserved seats for the South West of England, and may be similar to arrangements for Northern Ireland, and the GMB North West and Irish Region. Congress, I move.
(Applause)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Secunder for 14? Formally. Thank you. Can I have the mover of Motion 17?

ESTABLISH A “WELLBEING SUPPORT OFFICER” AT A REGIONAL LEVEL

MOTION 17

17. ESTABLISH A ‘WELLBEING SUPPORT OFFICER’ AT A REGIONAL LEVEL

This Congress requests that a ‘Regional Wellbeing Support Officer’ be established upon each Region to enable a greater level of support for members who have mental health issues, and give a ‘signposting’ service towards extra help, where needed.

GMB LEICESTERSHIRE BRANCH Midland & East Coast Region

(Lost)

STEPHEN ALEXANDER (Midland & East Coast): Morning, Vice President, Colleagues, this Congress requests that a regional wellbeing support officer be established in each Region to enable a better level of support to be given to members and GMB colleagues who are struggling with mental health issues, and give a “signposting” service towards help that is available. Colleagues, we are facing a mental health crisis the like of which has never been seen before. According to research carried out by MIND in February this year one in four adults have experienced the worsening of their mental state in the last two years, adults suffering from some form of mental health issue has risen to over double compared to pre-pandemic levels, and over one million people who have experienced problems with their mental health for the first time during the pandemic have not spoken to anyone about it.

NHS research reveals that mental ill health is the second most common cause of years lived with a disability. In a disturbingly ever larger number of representations that I attend an issue with stress, anxiety, depression, and worthlessness will be raised. Although the starting point for these issues is often outside of work they are very often made far worse within the workplace. This can be due to many factors, often mismanagement, to be truthful. This could also be down to the fact that our member does not want to expose that they are struggling to their manager or colleagues. It may also be that it is indeed the actions of their manager that is causing the initial issues and, therefore, the last thing they want to do is reveal that to them, or any of their HR or management team.

Poor mental health and wellbeing have an impact on every part of society and every part of society has a role to play in supporting mental health and wellbeing. Wellbeing is the key. A host of strong evidence shows that improving wellbeing dramatically reduces the risk factors of worrying anxiousness developing into longer

term mental health issues. This is why we are asking for a wellbeing support officer, a wellbeing champion, a wellbeing point of contact if you wish, to be established.

I have to be honest with you, colleagues, the CEC have asked for this to be withdrawn. They will have their reasons and they will bring them to you. Their reasons are that this is the employers' responsibility under a duty of care, that it would expose the union to potential legal claims and this would need a qualified mental health professional, none of which the union could do. We would absolutely agree there is a duty of care placed upon employers so why not just use the company's provision: because sometimes the company is perceived to be the problem. There can be a reticence to talk to bosses with a belief that it will not stay private.

Regarding the second two points, let's look at what we ask for: a greater level of support and signposting service for extra help. Unfortunately, I feel the CEC have misunderstood what we were asking for. If that is because of the way it is written then I apologise. What is a wellbeing officer? They are an individual who works to promote wellbeing and signposting to colleagues and local sources of support, so is approachable, has knowledge of support available, and is able to direct someone to the services available to them. Quite simply, it means informing people where they can access information and help from. This is not a mental health professional, it is not counselling, or intervention. It does not require a professional qualification and it is used by the NHS, local authorities, the police, and many companies. It is a signposting role to promote wellbeing. Congress, I urge you to support this motion and let's be part of society that plays its part in wellbeing and better mental health. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Secunder, please.

JULIE SHAW (Midland & East Coast): I am a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Wellbeing support, comrades, we are not asking for the GMB staff to become psychiatrists or psychologists but to be able to help direct our members to the right services and contact numbers so they can contact places such as MIND, Andy's Man Club, the Samaritans, and also the NHS services. I second. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The mover of Motion 19.

WELFARE RIGHTS REPRESENTATION

MOTION 19

19. WELFARE RIGHTS REPRESENTATION

This Congress instructs the CEC to act with urgency in training Officers and Secretaries of the Union in Welfare Rights advice. We further propose that the Union, nationally and regionally make themselves members of the Child Poverty Action Group and avails the Union of assistance that the CPAG offers.

NOTTINGHAM NO.1 BRANCH

Midland & East Coast Region

(Referred)

PETER McLAUGHLIN (Midland & East Coast): President, Congress, working people need our help now more than ever. Our members need our assistance to be directed to the right services when they ring our offices with their problems. We need to be able to direct them to a service that can help them. Also, we would like regions to adopt the Child Poverty Action Group and encourage members to support the CPAG. I move. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Secunder.

MICK BURNS (Midland & East Coast): I am a first-time delegate and speaker. (*Applause*) Thank you. Also my colleague who went before me failed to mention that he was also a first-time delegate and speaker. (*Applause*) As stated, working people need our help more than ever. The situation is only getting worse, especially under this Tory Government. Our members do need the assistance to be directed to these services to help them and when they ring the offices with their problems in a lot of cases that help is required quickly. We need to have the information to hand. Also, we would like the regions, like previously noted, to adopt the Child Poverty Action Group and encourage members to support the CPAG. Congress, I second. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The mover of Motion 20.

WELFARE RIGHTS REPRESENTATION

MOTION 20

20. WELFARE RIGHTS REPRESENTATION

This Congress instructs GMB to make aware of the lack of awareness generally of working benefits that members should receive whilst off work or through sickness or accidents. Furthermore, this Congress should make aware the very important role that the Union should adopt in regular contact with members who have sickness or accident issues. This, we believe, is important in retaining membership and also making Union membership attractive to other members of the family systems and resources to be put into place to make the above effective.

NOTTINGHAM NO.1 BRANCH

Midland & East Coast Region

(*Carried*)

NATHAN KEIGHTLEY (Midland & East Coast): Good morning, President, Congress. I am a first-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) I am moving this motion as it is close to my heart. There is a joke that you will get very soon. This time last year during Congress when I should have been here I had a heart attack and a triple heart bypass. I told you there was a joke about close to my heart. Five weeks was spent in hospital. My sick pay had run out. I tried to turn to the benefits system to see if I was entitled to get any help and I was astounded at how difficult it was, and found the whole thing very confusing and contradicting.

I am speaking today to make you aware the general lack of awareness and representation towards our members regarding the right to access benefits should they be off work through sickness, mental health, or accidents. I feel this is an opportunity for the GMB to make the union more attractive should employees require assistance

with applications and representation within the benefits system. I urge this Congress to support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Secunder.

MILES SHORT (Midland & East Coast): I come to second this motion. I feel that this is a motion important and retains membership, is attractive to new members and workforce. It is also in an effort to help people who are off sick and had accidents. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Are there any delegates who wish to speak in opposition to any of the motions? No. I call on Lorraine Winson, CEC speaker.

LORRAINE WINSON (CEC): Good morning, President, Congress. Speaking on behalf of the CEC on Motions 14, 17, 19 and 20.

On Motion 14, Wales and South West Region, the CEC is asking for the motion to be referred to the election review working party due to the request for a reserved seat on the CEC only. There are no geographical reserved seats on Regional Councils under rule unless there is a regional bylaw in place to that effect. The rule book already allows for Regional Councils to ensure all members are fairly represented on their Regional Committees.

On Motion 17, establish a wellbeing support officer at a regional level, the CEC is asking for this motion to be withdrawn. Legal responsibility for managing the mental health of workers in the workplace lies with the employer. The GMB does not have the internal expertise or the resources to advise on individual mental health issues for members and it is unclear where we stand legally if we attempt to do so. We do already have detailed guidance leaflets on stress management, general mental health conditions, and suicide prevention on the GMB website.

On Motion 19, Welfare Rights and Representation, the CEC would like to refer this motion back to the CEC Organising Sub-Committee so that a review can be made into what kind of training would be appropriate for this. It should be stressed that GMB activists and organisers will never be expected to offer individual welfare services or assist on members' claims for benefits as this could be construed as financial advice. We also have had a longstanding relationship with the Child Poverty Action Group and will review the engagement GMB staff have with the CPAG publications, making improvements to the understanding of the organisation. The Finance & General Purposes Committee would need to also review any funding, including affiliation regarding the CPAG.

Finally, on Motion 20, also called Welfare Rights Representation, our qualification is that while we agree that GMB organisers and activists should have an understanding of the current benefits, they cannot and will not provide advice which would amount to financial advice.

Therefore, Congress, please accept to refer Motions 14 and 19, for the region to withdraw Motion 17 and to support Motion 20 with the qualification. If the region

does not withdraw Motion 17 we are asking that you oppose it. Thank you.
(Applause)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Lorraine. Does Wales and South West accept the reference back on Motion 14? (Agreed) Thank you.

*Motion 14 was **REFERRED***

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Does Midland & East Coast withdraw Motion 17? No? In that case the CEC are asking you to oppose this motion. All those in favour please show. All those against? That is lost.

*Motion 17 was **LOST**.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Does Midland and East Coast accept the reference back on Motion 19? Yes? Thank you.

*Motion 19 was **REFERRED**.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Does Midland and East Coast accept the qualification on Motion 20? Yes? We will take a vote on Motion 20. All those in favour please show. Any against? That is carried.

*Motion 20 was **CARRIED**.*

CEC SPECIAL REPORT: TASKFORCE UPDATE

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Congress, that takes us now into 16, CEC Special Report: Taskforce. Congress, we have come to the first of our CEC Special Reports. Before I welcome our CEC speakers, I just want to remind regions that speakers should be ready at the front. I will call regions in alphabetical order to speak after the report has been moved and seconded.

CEC SPECIAL REPORT GMB TASKFORCE FOR POSITIVE CHANGE PROGRESS REPORT TO CONGRESS 2022

GMB Taskforce for Positive Change Membership

Barbara Plant – GMB National President

CEC Members

Gwylan Brinkworth W&SW (CEC)

Elaine Daley B&WM CEC)

Ann Dean SCO (CEC)

Margaret Gregg NWI (CEC)

Colin Gunter	M&EC (CEC)
Fiona Heneghan	SO (CEC)
Rachael Hookway	LO (CEC)
Mary Hutchinson	NO (CEC)
Farzana Jumma	YO (CEC)
Carol Robertson	M&EC (CEC)
Robbie Scott	LO(CEC)

Staff

Ruth Brady – Regional Secretary, Wales and South West Region

Victoria Austin – Unite/NNC rep, Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

Michelle Gordon – Regional Equality Officer, Southern Region

Jo Hepworth – Project Management, Northern Region

Tyehimba Nosakhere - Regional Equality Officer, Midlands and East Coast Region

Krissy O’Hagan – Unite/NNC rep, London Region

Jenny Preston – providing administrative support, Northern Region

Dr Helen Mott, Independent External Facilitator

We would like to acknowledge the work of the following members who stood down from the Taskforce during 2021/22 and thank them for their contributions: Nell Andrew, Emma Golding, Helen Purcell, Lib Whitfield, Nichole McIntosh, and Bally Sahonta

Foreword

The suffragette slogan of Deeds not Words is just as important now as it was then. Our members and staff will only believe that we are challenging sexual harassment and changing our culture if actions match the commitments given by the CEC and SMT, following the publication of the Monaghan Report. The Taskforce for Positive Change is making sure that this is happening.

The culture being created is one where reports of sexual harassment are always taken seriously and are always dealt with according to policy. That is why I am proud that, for the first time, we will have stand-alone sexual harassment policies for members and staff. This will enable consistency in how we deal with such reports, which in turn will build up the trust for members or staff to feel confident to report such incidents.

This is a continuous cycle, as outlined in the diagram below. We are also, at last, making sure that the recommendations from the Dr. Elizabeth Henry report are put into practice.



From the Fawcett Society's report on Tackling Sexual Harassment in the Workplace, November 2021. Reproduced with permission.

I want to put on record my thanks to all the members of the Taskforce for Positive Change, who have given freely of their time to make sure these changes happen and become embedded. We are extremely privileged to have Dr. Helen Mott, as our external facilitator, whose expertise in this field of sexual harassment and culture change is second to none.

Congress 2021 resolved that further reports would be given to future Congresses on the work of the Taskforce.

In line with the Rulebook and longstanding practice, Congress does not debate or determine GMB staff terms and conditions, which are a matter for consultation with the staff unions. It is appropriate to set out factual information, here, where these matters relate to progress on the recommendations of the Monaghan and Henry reports.

We celebrate improvements in gender diversity at different levels of our organisation, including through the appointment of three women Regional Secretaries for the first time in our history.

Transformational change is never quick or easy and there is still much to do, but we are on the right path - as this report outlines.

We can't just tick off the recommendations one by one. Behind each one of the 27 Monaghan and 9 Henry recommendations are values that include dignity, respect, inclusivity, and equality. We have to continuously live those values.

Barbara Plant
GMB National President

Report

In August 2020 Karon Monaghan QC submitted her report to the Central Executive Council (CEC), finding that there was a culture of “institutional sexism” in the GMB.

She described significant job segregation and underrepresentation of women throughout the ranks, and endemic bullying, misogyny, cronyism and sexual harassment.

As a part of its commitment to transparency, the GMB [published the Monaghan Report](#) and has a dedicated [page](#) on its website where members and others can access information about actions taken and progress made in the light of the report.

In its initial response to the report, the CEC was unequivocal about the need for change, stating the GMB’s commitment to achieving transformational change, to create a safe and inclusive place for all so that women in the union and women in society more widely are supported in the struggle for equality, inclusion and social justice.

All of the 27 recommendations in the report were agreed in principle by the CEC, some of which require a number of actions.

The CEC also raised the [report by Dr Elizabeth Henry](#) who aimed to undertake ‘a comprehensive race equality audit of the GMB union’ in 2002 (the Henry Report). The recommendations of this report had not previously been fully acted upon. The CEC committed itself to examine and refresh the recommendations and findings of the Henry Report in order to implement them, alongside those of the Monaghan Report, as part of the work of the Taskforce.

The Taskforce for Positive Change was established in January 2021 to set out the steps that GMB needs to take to ensure that each of the recommendations from the Monaghan are fully implemented and from the Henry Report are reviewed and refreshed prior to implementation, to take account of changes in legislation since 2002. Full implementation means:

- 1) make sure this happens, and
- 2) make sure that the change is permanent and ongoing.

In 2021, Congress adopted the CEC [Special Report of the Taskforce for Positive Change](#). That report outlined the work already done by the Taskforce and future areas of work that would be prioritised.

The Taskforce is committed to fulfilling the objectives it has been set by the CEC with the support of the Senior Management Team (SMT) of the GMB: the Taskforce holds no power to make things happen in and of itself, and does not seek that kind of power.

Instead, it does the work of identifying what needs to change and how, and then asks those who do hold power (the CEC, and the SMT) to take the steps it identifies for making those changes.

The past year has seen a refreshed leadership structure and the start of a refreshed regional structure in GMB which together are reinvigorating the Union's ability to deliver for its members on the issues of justice and equality for all. The Taskforce is working with newly appointed national officers, e.g. in communications and HR, to ensure that the recommendations of Monaghan and Henry are central to how the Union works for its members, as well as how it works as an employer of excellence in its own right, looking after the staff who look after and serve our membership.

The election of GMB's General Secretary Gary Smith, in June 2021, has contributed to the positive changes that the Taskforce and all GMB members and staff have been keen to see. The General Secretary has actively engaged with the Taskforce to establish a virtuous circle of consultation, engagement, policy, and practice that is committed to visibly demonstrating anti-sexist and anti-racist values. He is also committed to challenging all of us to demonstrate those values every day. This is the kind of powerful leadership action that we know gets results, hand in hand with the improvements to systems and structures and processes that are also underway.

Central to the progress of many of the recommendations have been:

1. Equality data and monitoring, because it is essential to know the baselines that we are starting from to be able to identify areas for improvement, drive change and demonstrate and celebrate progress
2. Ensuring that GMB is doing everything in line with best practice and with legislation, including equality legislation.

A lot of work has been achieved in the past year. The Taskforce are grateful to all Regional Secretaries who have facilitated the work of the Taskforce – including through providing capacity.

The Race Taskforce, which is a subgroup of the Positive Change Taskforce and which is led by and for staff and activists with lived experience of racial injustice and organising for anti-racist practice, has made excellent progress this year. The group has focused its activities on developing anti-oppressive values, positive inclusive culture, and real opportunities for people from Black Asian and minority backgrounds to progress.

An action plan is being produced with the full and safe participation of every nation and Region at its heart and with key consultation points and questions identified as well as internal and external stakeholder groups. Early engagement has indicated the need to develop specific Safe Spaces for all those at GMB from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background who need to use them, and guidelines for this have been produced. Analysis of current data shows the need to improve directed communications with Black, Asian and minority ethnic members.

A plan is in place for identifying credible Race Awareness and Discrimination Training that will make a positive and lasting difference. An in-depth membership analysis has been produced which pinpoints the differences and similarities and gaps in knowledge about Black, Asian and minority ethnic representation in the Union by membership as well as Reps and postholders in Equality and Race related roles. Race postholders with lived experience are too few, and do not have a sufficiently high profile as role models.

An intersectional analysis has offered insight into multiple intersections of identity. This has specifically identified the older age profile of Black, Asian and minority ethnic members as an issue of concern alongside the early exit of new members from minoritised backgrounds compared to white members. These insights lead directly into recommendations for the specific targeting of young Black, Asian and minority ethnic members and workers for engagement and empowerment, to provide them with a credible and powerful platform in the GMB. Key Henry Report recommendations on providing 'sufficient resources to lead and champion' the union's racial justice work are being met.

Sexual harassment has a deep and lasting impact in the lives of many women, and it is disproportionately targeted at the most vulnerable or marginalised in society including those who have the fewest workplace rights, such as workers on zero hours contracts. This past year has seen continued focus on tackling sexual harassment from government, trade unions, feminist and equality-focused organisations alike.

Since our last report to Congress, the Government Equalities Office published the largest ever survey of sexual harassment in the UK. The Government has committed to introducing a duty requiring employers to prevent sexual harassment. It will introduce explicit legal protections from 'third-party' sexual harassment (that means harassment done by customers or clients) and it will work with the Equality and Human Rights Commission to produce statutory guidance. It is also likely to increase the time limits for bringing cases to Tribunal.

ACAS published new, standalone [guidance](#) on sexual harassment. The Fawcett Society also published a detailed [report](#) with recommendations for best practice to prevent and respond to workplace sexual harassment and the TUC published its own [implementation framework](#) for preventing sexual harassment. Our taskforce members Barbara Plant, National President, and Helen Mott, independent facilitator, have been involved with these initiatives and have ensured that the work GMB is doing on sexual harassment meets the highest thresholds for best practice and is 'future-proofed' for the new legal requirements.

The main focus of the work on sexual harassment this year has been the development, consultation, legal sign-off and completion of our two landmark sexual harassment policies: for all GMB staff, and for all GMB members. These standalone policies meet the highest standards for protecting our staff and our members, and we are proud that they will be in place this year.

The members' policy met with unanimous approval at the first 'in-person' meeting of the CEC earlier this year, and we are all keen to see it implemented which will happen following the adoption at Congress of the rule changes that will allow the new procedures to be used. The Taskforce has worked hard on consultation so that all those associated with GMB will be assured of the very best policy and procedures for preventing and responding to sexual harassment, which takes into account all the new guidance as well as case law. The policies are on course to be fully implemented later this year.

Other work has also been ongoing with SMT to look at the Rulebook to make sure it will keep up to date with equality law and best practice. A Safeguarding Policy and Relationships Policy will be priority areas of work for the year ahead. Short guidance documents for using the policies, with flowcharts, have also been developed and work is underway with the comms team to make sure that all those covered by the policies are able to understand and use them.

Guidance on best practice emphasises the importance of leadership and it also emphasises the importance of asking what people feel and need, in their own particular circumstances. In the last year we have designed, sent out and analysed a simple '3 questions' survey and from this we learned that trust and consistency were key issues. We shared these findings with the CEC and SMT and know that they are working on increasing trust and consistency and culture change, for example through the exciting leadership development training being led by RealClear and through the guidelines that the Taskforce developed for Regional Positive Change Forums, so that Regions can build excellence in preventing sexual harassment and promoting race equality. Three Regions are currently piloting these structures and will let us know how they are working.

Work is ongoing on data, staff matters, and training to progress the recommendations of the Monaghan and Henry reports that relate to those areas, some of which are matters for internal consultation. We have been very pleased by the enthusiastic adoption of the new, updated [Zero Tolerance Statement](#) and [Code of Conduct](#). Delegates will have seen these in their delegate packs and we are working with Comms and HR to make sure that everyone in GMB is aware of, and supports, the messages in these key documents. Together we will work to make sure that our events and meetings are safe and enjoyable for every one of our members.

Leadership training on sexual harassment has been completed by all SMT members in the past year, and CEC Appeals Committee members have also received training on understanding bias and being guided by GMB values in complaint processes (both sets of training have been delivered Dr. Helen Mott).

Conclusion

The GMB is a campaigning and organising union and, through following GMB@Work, members collectively make their work better.

We now have a Women's Campaign Unit. This will form a core part of the union's industrial work over the coming years. And as this year's report on the Women's Campaign Unit sets out, gender equality in the workplace is about more than securing equal pay for equal work, or making sure that the work women occupy in the majority is no longer under-valued. It is also about making sure that workplaces are safe for all, and everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

This must apply within our own union, and the Taskforce for Positive Change is working hard to make sure that this transformational change is embedded in our union's policies and procedures. We are creating a culture that prevents discrimination and harassment from happening. To this end, the Race Task Group continues its work on implementing the Henry report recommendations, and this will be helped enormously through the introduction of extra capacity.

We can be proud that we have led the way for others. The TUC has also now produced their own set of policies and guidance for reps on tackling sexual harassment in the workplace, based largely on the work of Dr. Helen Mott and the GMB.

Union power is based on solidarity, in which all members are equal and respected. There should be no behaviour that puts up barriers or creates conflict that breaks that solidarity. Unity is strength, and where we have collective strength, we can challenge employers to make work better.

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: I would like to invite Elaine Dailey from Birmingham & West Midlands Region to the rostrum to move the special report. Elaine is a member of the Race Sub-Committee of the Taskforce for Positive Change. Barbara Plant will second the report on behalf of the CEC and the Taskforce. Elaine.

ELAINE DALEY (Birmingham & West Midlands): Thank you. President, Vice President, Congress, I am speaking as a member of both the CEC and the Race Sub-Group of the Taskforce, moving this Special Report.

Congress, I am proud to announce that we have just appointed our new National Race Organiser, Ty Nosakhere. (*Applause*) His appointment fulfils one of the recommendations of the Dr. Elizabeth Henry Report, which was submitted to GMB 20 years ago. We have waited 20 long years but change is now happening. (*Applause*) The Henry Report forced us to confront serious problems within our union, including in our structures and in our culture. As a union we recognised that we needed transformational change.

The Taskforce was established by the CEC to bring together members of the Executive and staff all of whom have lived experience of the need for change, to advise on how the recommendations of both the Monaghan and Henry Reports can be implemented. Some of those recommendations will take time. As the report says, we still do not know enough of the equalities profile of members within our union but, Congress, real change is not a slogan or a declaration to be made in the moment and then forgotten. As this report says, we must make sure that change is permanent and ongoing.

We are tackling those issues and in the last year the Taskforce has produced two landmark policies on sexual harassment which covers staff and members. In consultation with our members from ethnic minority backgrounds we have produced an action plan covering each nation and region and we are tackling the need for better communication. The Taskforce has also been instrumental in the updates to the zero tolerance statement and the code of conduct which set out the protections delegates can expect at Congress. Training has been carried out for senior management which will be extended in the year ahead to make sure that equality is at the heart of our culture, and the Taskforce is looking at our rule book so that the spirit of those recommendations is fully reflected in the foundational documents of our union.

Last year Congress resolved that you would be provided with updates on the work of the Taskforce which this report sets out. I would like to thank all those who have supported the work of the Taskforce, including its members, GMB staff, and members of the senior management team who have released resources in support of its work. Thank you, Gary, our General Secretary.

Congress, there can be no place in our union for discrimination or harassment of any form. We will work hard to continue the work of change in the year ahead. Please support the report. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Elaine. I call on Barbara to second.

THE PRESIDENT: Vice President, Congress, Barbara Plant seconding the Special Report.

Congress, two years ago we faced one of the most difficult moments in our union's history. It was perhaps the most difficult moment. GMB aims commit us to strive for equality within our union and end discrimination against people, including on the grounds of their sex or their race, but our union had fallen short of those values. That must never happen again. (*Applause*)

The words in the Monaghan Report were painful to read. They are still painful to read. But I am proud that the GMB published that report in full and committed to implementing it and the Taskforce is leading that change. (*Applause*) As Elaine has said, I am delighted that a member of the Taskforce, Ty, has been appointed as our first National Race Organiser. (*Applause*) I think he will be joining us at Congress on Tuesday. I hope. Fingers crossed.

Fulfilling one of the key recommendations from the Dr. Elizabeth Henry Report, I want to thank the members of the Taskforce, including our external facilitator, Dr. Helen Mott, whose hard work and expertise is invaluable. A great debt of thanks is also due to those who stepped down from the Taskforce during the course of the year and all the GMB members and staff who are supporting our work. I want to thank Gary also for his personal commitment to achieving change that is meaningful and enduring. (*Applause*)

Congress, this report sets out the progress that is being made towards a union that embodies those ideals. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Barbara. Could I have a speaker from Birmingham, please?

JANICE WADRUP (Birmingham & West Midlands): Soon to be "Midlands" when the merger takes place in July.

We commend the Taskforce for the work done so far and the Special Report brought to Congress. We have seen in recent months the issues highlighted by the Monaghan Report that are not exclusive to GMB. As a union we must be proud of the way the issues are being dealt with. In the foreword to this report Barbara Plant, our President, said: "Real change is a process and not a single event." With every recommendation achieved and every single day we are all moving forward to make the GMB union the members union and a union to be super proud of. Initially, at branch level following this report, Gill Ogilvy, our officer at the time who decided to go for a better job and got the senior organising job, started at branch level working closely with our employer on the lack of diversity, especially at senior management level. The employer through negotiations and with our new officer and our branch reps have now introduced a Race Equity Charter, a new policy has been adopted and they have also adopted GMB's Equality for All to ensure equality of opportunity, for example, for underrepresented groups. The Monaghan Report has been discussed at

length in our branch meetings as has the Taskforce for positive change. We have regular meetings on this. I support. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Janice. London.

BRIAN SHAW (London): Vice President, Congress, and proud Chair of the London Region Equality Forum, speaking on behalf of the region on the Taskforce Report.

Congress, London Region delegates accept the report and the clear way it has been set out. We recognise the work that has been done into both the Monaghan Report and the Henry Report by members of the Taskforce. However, in future we would like to see a number of additions, first of all, to detail what has happened around each of the 27 recommendations in the Monaghan Report. The report also correctly explained the Taskforce holds no power. It is for the Central Executive Committee and Senior Management Team to take the steps to make the changes needed, with the Central Executive Committee covering the lay structures and the Senior Management Team on the employer's side.

We therefore need in future years for the report to be widened out to include how both the Central Executive Committee and the Senior Management Team have taken the changes necessary. This applies equally to the Henry Report. Whilst the report refers to the action now being produced around the Henry Report it provides little information. We need to know what it looks like and how it will be implemented.

Again, when it comes to training we need to ensure that every equality strand is included in that development. The appointment of a Race Officer, Ty Na Nosakhere, – well done, congratulations, Ty, well deserved I say – (*Applause*) is to be welcomed but again what is the remit and let's cover every strand in the future. We need to change the union and that journey has begun but we need to just look at pages 3 and 4 of the Final Agenda to see that more has to be done.

So, London is supporting the report but looking forward to a wider report next year from the GMB Taskforce for positive change, including the Central Executive Committee and the Senior Management Team action report. Hey, that is a catchy sounding report title. London Region support but let's expand the report in future in 2023 and have more information. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Brian. Midland.

PATRICIA WILLMOTT (Midland & East Coast): Good morning, Congress. First-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) I could not be prouder to be part of the GMB, a mighty union of working people organising and making work better. (*Applause*) In workplaces and care homes, schools, factories, councils, and manufacturing, sites across the UK, it is the GMB defending the interests of working people against cruel employers and the Tory Government and a cost-of-living crisis. These next years will define our union and make us fit for the future. That starts by looking at ourselves as we also look outwards to build a better union. Transformational change is not quick. It never is. Congress, at times the last few years have been tough. Addressing difficult subjects is taking huge courage and I

applaud those who have created this report and, of course, the leadership and the will that has been shown on this by Barbara and Gary.

The positive changes outlined in this report represent a great leap forwards in creating a GMB ready for the future. We will be stronger, bigger, organised, and focused on our campaigning and winning for our members. Our union is built on twin solid foundations: first of all, our roots in workplaces expressing the collective voices of working people and, secondly, the icons of our movement, especially the women who have built the union we know today. In November 1873, the cofounder of our union, Eleanor Marx, visited Harrogate as her father recovered from illness. As we assemble today in Harrogate like her we must lead by example. To that end please support this report. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Patricia. Northern. (*Formally*) Anyone from Northern. North West. (*Accept the report*). Scotland.

CIORSTADH REICHLÉ (GMB Scotland): Speaking in support of the CEC Special Report on the Taskforce for Positive Change. First-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*)

The Monaghan Report exposed an age old problem in our union, our labour Movement, and in our society, the Positive Change Taskforce and Race Taskforce have both been long overdue. Thankfully meaningful process has been made. This is in large part due to the input of black Asian and minority members and women who have experienced discrimination firsthand in our union. These groups have been placed first and centre of advising and taking action. The new Women's Campaign Unit (WCU) is also ensuring that the issues that disproportionately affect women workers are front and centre of our campaign priorities. Scotland's WCU was formed prior to the National Unit and has been the tip of the speed in tackling inequality and improving women's representation in our union.

The WCU is also ensuring that we are not just tackling the internal issues of sexism, but we are actively going into workplaces to empower women workers to protect their rights, that is women workforces in care, for example, who have been disproportionately unpaid and mistreated. Where we can make progress on implementing recommendations and providing training to staff and members, the culture change required will unfortunately take much longer.

Congress, although processes will be made to tackle inequalities in our union we still have much further to go. As the report states, full implementation means to make sure that change is permanent and ongoing. Even when the recommendations are complete we have to keep a constant watch for discrimination. We cannot slip back on the progress we are making. Congress, I support the report. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, colleague. Southern.

DAVID McMULLEN (Southern): President, Congress, it was mentioned by my good friend, Donna, yesterday that it would be good for a man to speak in support of this because it is not just a fight for our sisters in the union, this is a fight that we all need

to get behind. (*Applause*) There are many things that I am proud of in our union but the Monaghan Report did bring some shame and this is what we need to work towards and we cannot be complacent. We have done a lot already but there is still a lot to do so, Congress, I support this Special Report. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, colleague. Wales and South West?

MARK BOWLER (GMB Wales & South West): Speaking in support of the report. As we have heard, the Taskforce was set up following a low period of GMB history and is the recommendation proposed by both the Monaghan and the Henry report. We appreciate and give praise to the success of all the achievements gained by this forum aware of the hard work, time, and dedication each member had to contribute to bring about such positive new goals for GMB.

GMB has already implemented some leadership changes. The TUC has commended our transparency and is seeking to implement changes of their own inspired by the success of this Taskforce. GMB Senior Management have completed the sexual harassment training which is currently rolling downwards throughout the union. This training is seen as vital in our ongoing fight to educate and respect one another. The Monaghan noted job segregation was significant and the representation of women.

Well, colleagues, times have changed. GMB women and staff lay members are getting opportunities and as we have learnt a first for this Congress we have had three women reach Secretary successfully appointed without having to fret about unconscious bias of misogyny being a barrier at interview. They themselves will be driving positive changes and will continue to develop the principles of this Taskforce into GMB. The Women's Unit is continuing to bring changes to the GMB.

We also congratulate the dedication and work of the Race Taskforce who with the same vigour are tackling racist injustice, working with the same aims to make our union inclusive for all.

The sexual harassment policy has been implemented and we see it is run off several policies developed and subjected to rigorous scrutiny making sure that they meet legal requirements, satisfying the mandates, and will now be built into the structures of GMB. These policies will help protect the union moving forward away from the previous heinous issues that have marred our past. We also wish to acknowledge ----

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Can you wind up now, Mark, please?

MARK BOWLER (GMB Wales & South West): -- Thank you. I support.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Yorkshire.

DIAN BURKE (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): First-time speaker. (*Applause*) I have been a GMB member of Yorkshire & North Derbyshire since 2006. This morning I have come to this podium to talk a little about the Karon Monaghan Report and its findings. Miss Monaghan found several things within the union and its systems that in the 21st century were discreditable. The union acknowledged its own failings and recognised that the 27 suggestions given would necessitate a number of

actions. This acknowledgement led to the creation of the Taskforce for Positive Change. This body of people as well as ensuring all 27 recommendations would be implemented, going forward policy and its continuous updating would ensure changes and amendments would be adhered to.

A sub-group of the Policy for Change Taskforce is a Race Taskforce that focuses on the 2002 Dr. Elizabeth Henry Report consisting of four lay activists whose focus is to develop anti-oppressive values and other incredibly important values to ensure all members of this our union and the communities they live amongst have their value in the workforce recognised and respected. It will take a long time to implement the ignored report's recommendations on institutional racism in the GMB. After 20 years we are so proud to know that these matters are not being ignored. We have a National Race Officer appointed just days ago which shows our GMB commitment to tackling race matters. A few minutes to speak about each of the reports does not give enough justice, importance, or weight, to the sort of work each and every person involved with these sorts of things undertake but I know as a member of this our union I am grateful for all they do and have done to ensure equality and inclusivity presides. The foreword of the Special Report begins with a poignant slogan of the suffragettes, "Deeds not words." The first step towards the great leap to change, to acknowledge it needs to happen, and to keep momentum towards other policy change is unity. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dian. Colleagues, we will go straight to the vote. All those in favour of the Special Report please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

The CEC Special Report: Taskforce was ADOPTED.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you for that. We are now moving on to our only rule amendment of the week. Can I ask Donna Spicer of Southern Region to move CEC Rule Amendment 1, and then Malcolm will second.

**CEC RULE AMENDMENT 1
RULE 5 & 6,**

**GMB CONGRESS 2022
CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
RULE AMENDMENT 1**

Delete: existing Rules 5 and 6; Insert new Rules 5, 5A and 6

GMB

U N I O N

GMB CONGRESS 2022
CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
RULE AMENDMENT 1

**MAKE
WORK
BETTER**

GMB CONGRESS 2022
CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL RULE AMENDMENT 1
Delete: existing Rules 5 and 6; Insert new Rules 5, 5A and 6

Rule 5 Membership

No.	Current Rule	New No.	Proposed new rule	Reasons for proposed change
1	GMB is an open and democratic organisation and welcomes into membership people from any industry or walk of life who are committed to upholding the aims and rules of the Union	1	GMB is an open and democratic organisation and welcomes into membership people from any industry or walk of life who are committed to upholding the aims of the union and will agree to abide with these rules.	Amended to make clear that any person becoming a member will need to agree to abide by the rules of the union.
2	The Central Executive Council may create temporary grades of membership if they think they are necessary	2	The Central Executive Council may create temporary grades of membership if they think they are necessary, on such terms and for so long as they consider appropriate	The power of the CEC to create temporary grades is extended to provide for the terms on which those grades are created and for the CEC to determine for how long they may be available
3	Despite anything set out in these rules, the Central Executive Council may, by giving six weeks' notice in writing, cancel the membership of any member, if this is necessary to keep to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a decision made by the Disputes 	3	Despite anything set out in these rules, the Central Executive Council may, by giving six weeks' notice in writing, terminate the membership of any member, if this is necessary to comply with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a decision made by the 	The reference to termination of membership by reference to a recommendation of the independent review committee has been deleted, in the absence of clarification as to what this refers

	<p>Committee of the Trades Union Congress (TUC).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a decision arising from an inter-union disputes committee set up by us and another union; or <p>a recommendation of the Independent Review Committee, set up with the support of the TUC.</p>		<p>Disputes Committee of the Trades Union Congress (TUC); or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a decision arising from an inter-union disputes committee set up by us and another union- 	
	<p>The Central Executive Council, a regional council or a regional committee has the power to suspend a member from benefit or ban them from holding any GMB office, or ban a member from taking part in GMB business and affairs, in any case for as long as the council or committee feels necessary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if they believe the member is guilty of trying to harm the union or acting against the rules; • if the member makes or in any way associates themselves with any defamatory or abusive comments made against any of our officials or committees; • if the member, alone or together with any other members or people opposes or acts against any of our policies; • if the member acts against the best interests of the GMB 	4	<p>A member may be disciplined in accordance with this rule, Rule 5A, GMB policies and any guidance issued under this rule or Rule 5A.</p> <p>The Central Executive Council or a regional council or regional committee may, subject to clause 5 of this rule, take action under clause 6 of this rule,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. where they determine that a member has <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ acted in a manner which has brought, or may bring, the union into serious disrepute or has harmed or may harm the union ○ breached the rules of the union; ○ harassed another member, 	<p>This part of rule 5 is now expressly drafted as a disciplinary process, which will operate by reference to the rules and any policy or guidance issued under this rule (or new rule 5A)</p> <p>The proposed offences have been extended to include action in a manner which has brought or may bring the union into serious disrepute in addition to the existing offence of trying to harm the union, which itself has been amended to action that has harmed or may harm the union.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if the member encourages or takes part in the activities of any organisation or group whose policies or aims are racist or promote racist beliefs, • or for any other sufficient reason. 		<p>a member of the union's staff or a third party related to any protected characteristic;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ made or in any way been associated with abusive, defamatory, or scurrilous written or oral comments made about the union, any of our officials or committees; ○ alone or together with any other members or people, breached any of the union's policies; ○ acted against the best interests of the GMB; ○ encouraged or taken part in the activities of, or communicated with, any organisation or group whose policies or aims are racist or promote racist beliefs; ○ acted in breach of clause 13 of this rule; or <p>b. for any other sufficient reason.</p>	<p>The current offence of opposing a policy of the GMB runs the risk of being breached if there is a debate on whether an existing policy should be maintained. This has been amended so that the offence is breaching a policy rather than to opposing it.</p>
		5	Rule 5A, and not this rule, will apply to any allegation that a member has	

			engaged in unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of another member, a member of the union's staff or a third party, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.	
5	Regional councils or regional committees have the power to recommend that the Central Executive Council cancel, and the Central Executive Council (with or without a recommendation) has the power to cancel, the membership of any member for any of the reasons set out in clause 4 above. The Central Executive Council will make the final decision on a recommendation from a Region. A member who has their membership cancelled will not be eligible to rejoin without the permission of the Central Executive Council or the appropriate regional committee.	6	<p>After reaching a determination under clause 4: -</p> <p>a. the Central Executive Council, a regional council or regional committee may</p> <p>i. suspend the member from benefit</p> <p>ii. ban them from holding any GMB office, and/or</p> <p>iii. ban a member from taking part in GMB activities (including attending any branch meeting or voting in any branch vote),</p> <p>in any case for as long as the Central Executive Council. Regional Council or Regional Committee considers appropriate; or</p> <p>b. a regional council or regional committee may recommend to</p>	<p>The potential disciplinary offences have been separated from the potential sanctions.</p> <p>The previous sanction of banning a member from taking part in GMB business and affairs has been amended to give some clarity as to what is intended</p> <p>The two-stage process for an expulsion if recommended by the regional council or</p>

			<p>the Central Executive Council that the member be expelled from membership; and</p> <p>c. the Central Executive Council may, following a recommendation from a regional council or regional committee, or of their own volition expel a member from membership.</p> <p>If the Central Executive Council do not accept a recommendation from a regional council or regional committee, to expel a member then the Central Executive Council may impose a sanction under paragraph a above.</p> <p>A member who is expelled from membership under this clause will not be eligible to re-join without the permission of the Central Executive Council.</p>	<p>committee is clarified.</p> <p>The sanctions include a regional council or regional committee recommending to the central executive council that the member be expelled.</p> <p>To clarify what happens if the central executive council do not accept that recommendation, express provision is made for the CEC to impose their own sanction.</p> <p>It is made clear that once expelled from Membership, permission of the central executive council is required to re-join. As the member cannot be expelled by a Regional Council or regional committee, the rule now provides that only the CEC may readmit.</p>
6	If a regional council or regional committee takes disciplinary action against a member under clause 4 of these rules and the member is not satisfied with the decision, he	7	If a regional committee or regional council takes disciplinary action against a member under clause 6a of this rule or makes a recommendation	This rule addresses the right of appeal to the central executive council which applies where disciplinary action has been imposed under clause 6 by either the regional council or the regional committee or in the event of there being a recommendation made to

	<p>or she can appeal by writing to the general secretary within one month of the decision being made. The case will be referred to the Central Executive Council, who will make the final decision. In giving its decision, the regional council or regional committee must tell the member, in writing, about their right to appeal. The Central Executive Council may order an appeal to be struck out for scandalous, vexatious or unreasonable behaviour by an appellant or for excessive delay in proceeding with the appeal. Before making such an order the appellant will be sent notice giving them an opportunity to show why the order should not be made.</p>		<p>for expulsion to the Central Executive Council under clause 6b, the member can appeal against the disciplinary action or the recommendation provided written notice of appeal is received by the general secretary within one month of the decision, or notice of the recommendation, being sent to the member. The appeal will be referred to the Central Executive Council to be dealt with in accordance with any guidance made from time to time by the Central Executive Council. There shall be no further right of appeal against the decision of the Central Executive Council.</p>	<p>the central executive council that the member be expelled. If the member does not appeal against a recommendation to expel and the central executive council then proceed to expel the member, there is then no right of appeal against the expulsion.</p> <p>The provision governing the striking out of an appeal has been moved to clause 9, and applies to both an appeal to the CEC and the Appeal Tribunal</p>
7	<p>If the member is not satisfied with the Central Executive Council's decision under clause 4 or 5 (except where the Central Executive Council has made the final decision on a recommendation from a Region) of this rule, he or she can appeal by writing to the general secretary within one month of the decision being made. The case will be referred to the Appeals Tribunal, who will make the final decision. In giving its decision, the Central Executive Council must tell the member, in writing, about their right to appeal. The Appeals Tribunal may order an appeal to be struck out for scandalous,</p>	8	<p>A member may appeal against the decision of the Central Executive Council under clause 6c of this rule (but not a decision to expel based on a recommendation from a regional council or regional committee), provided written notice of appeal is received by the general secretary within one month of the decision being sent to the member. The case will be referred to the Appeals Tribunal. There shall be no further right of appeal against the decision of the Appeals Tribunal.</p>	<p>The right of appeal against decision of the Central Executive Council does not arise where their decision to expel a member follows a recommendation to expel from a regional council or regional committee (for that the member needs to appeal the recommendation).</p> <p>The provision governing the striking out of an appeal has been moved to clause 9, and applies to both an appeal to the CEC and the Appeals Tribunal</p>

	vexatious or unreasonable behaviour by an appellant or for excessive delay in proceeding with the appeal. Before making such an order the appellant will be sent notice giving them an opportunity to show why the order should not be made.			
		9	The Central Executive Council, or as appropriate, the Appeals Tribunal may order an appeal to that body to be struck out for scandalous, vexatious, or unreasonable behaviour by an appellant or for excessive delay in proceeding with the appeal. Before making such an order the appellant will be sent notice giving them an opportunity to show why the order should not be made.	This provision now applies to both an appeal to the CEC and the Appeal Tribunal, and reflects the provision previously found in the rules governing an appeal to the CEC and the Appeals Tribunal
		10	Where an appeal under this rule is against a recommendation to expel or decision to expel a member, a decision to ban a member from holding any GMB office, or a decision to ban a member from taking part in GMB activities, the member will not be able to participate in any union activities and/or will be suspended from any office held pending the determination of the appeal.	Where there is an appeal against a decision to expel, the rule now provides that pending the outcome of the appeal the member cannot participate in the activities of the union, and specifically may be suspended from any office held.
7a		11	If the conduct alleged against a	This new sub rule introduces powers for the regional committee or (subject to regional committee

			<p>member is deemed at any stage to be of such a serious a nature that requires it, then the Regional Committee or Regional Secretary may resolve at any time to suspend the member from any office held by the member and/or bar the member from taking part in any union activities (including meetings) of the union pending the outcome of the disciplinary process. Where the decision to suspend and/or bar is made by the Regional Secretary, such suspension and/or barring from taking part in union activities will cease at the end of the next following meeting of the Regional Committee, unless that suspension and/or barring is ratified by the Regional Committee at that meeting. A resolution under this rule by the Regional Committee to suspend and/or bar from taking part in union activities or ratify a decision of the Regional Secretary under this rule will require a two thirds majority of the members of the Regional Committee present and voting in favour. There shall be no right of appeal against such decision.</p>	<p>ratification) the regional secretary pending the outcome of the disciplinary process to suspend a member from any office, and, in addition or as an alternative, to bar the member from taking part in union activities (such as attending any meetings of the union).</p> <p>These powers are included to protect the union against a member damaging the union's interests when subject to the disciplinary process and are only available where the conduct alleged is of the most serious nature, due to their potential impact, which could include implications for a postholder's job (eg their full time release).</p> <p>It is proposed that to exercise these powers or to ratify a decision of the regional secretary, a 2/3rds majority of the regional committee present and voting in favour is required. The requirement for a 2/3rds majority is intended to provide protection, for all parties, against misuse of this power</p>
8	At each hearing before the regional council, the regional Committee, the Central	12	Before any disciplinary action is taken under this rule, (except under	This sub rule now brings together the provisions that govern different parts of the process and includes new provision for the CEC to issue guidance further

	<p>Executive Council or the Appeals Tribunal, the member will have a reasonable opportunity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to hear the evidence against them, to answer it and to question witnesses; • to present their case orally or in writing, and • to support their case with written statements or by using witnesses 	<p>clause 11), and before any decision is made on appeal, the Regional Council, the Regional Committee, the Central Executive Council or, as appropriate, the Appeals Tribunal will so far as reasonably practicable allow the member a reasonable opportunity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to hear or be provided with a record of the evidence presented against them, • to answer that evidence and to question, or raise questions to be asked of, any witnesses giving evidence against them; • to present their case in person or in writing, and • to support their case with written statements or by using witnesses. <p>In notifying the member of any decision under this rule, the member must be notified in writing, about any right to appeal under these rules.</p> <p>The Central Executive Council may publish guidance governing any parts of the procedure to be followed under this rule as they may from time to time determine, to include when and how any hearing might be held</p>	<p>to regulate the process. That guidance is to include guidance as to how any hearing might be held remotely.</p> <p>The underlying protections provided to a member facing disciplinary action are broadened to allow for a modified procedure if it would be inappropriate for the reporting member and the member facing action to be in the same room together, and leave the process for the disciplinary body to determine within the constraints of the rule</p> <p>Currently guidance is provided internally but is not directly referenced within the rules. It includes procedural guidance which as a matter of practice is issued to members who are subject to the rule 5</p>
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			remotely	<p>process and some which is not.</p> <p>The benefit of making express provision to the guidance in the rules is that it gives clear authority for that part of the guidance issued to members. However, if this approach is adopted, it may well be appropriate that there be a separation between the guidance (which would be made available in full to members) and what might then be best described as an explanatory note to be made available to regional secretaries and others operating the process, and which can in time include model letters etc</p>
		13	<p>Any member of a decision-making body under rule 5, 5A or 6 must be free to undertake their role on that body without interference from any other member such as by attempting to influence a decision, sanction, or outcome. Interference by any member is a serious disciplinary offence and any attempt to interfere with due process should be reported to the General Secretary.</p>	<p>This is a new rule seeking to address concerns about interference with the process. It can only address the actions of members. If there is a requirement to regulate the conduct of employees, then that needs to be addressed through their contracts of employment, or the staff handbook</p>

Rule 5A Sexual harassment policy for members

			<p>The Central Executive Council will issue a sexual harassment policy for members, which terms will include a procedure which will</p>	<p>This is a new rule making express and separate provision for the sexual harassment policy to apply, including the procedure for considering complaints and allegations made. Neither rule 5 nor 6 will apply to</p>
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		<p>apply in respect of any complaints or allegations that a member has engaged in unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment against another member, a member of the union's staff or a third party. In the event of a conflict between the terms of these rules and that policy, the terms of the policy shall prevail.</p>	<p>sexual harassment and the position will be governed by the policy alone</p>
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Rule 6 Complaints procedure for members

1	<p>Any member who wants to complain must do so to their branch secretary who will take the matter to the branch. If the member is not satisfied with the branch's decision or the branch decides it does not have the authority to deal with the matter the member can appeal in writing to the regional committee within one month of the branch meeting. The regional committee will make the final decision. The Regional Committee may order a</p>	1	<p>Subject to other provisions within this clause, any member who wants to complain should ordinarily do so in writing to their branch secretary who will take the matter to the branch.</p> <p>If the complaint is one of sexual harassment, the member should raise their complaint under the sexual harassment policy issued under Rule 5A and this rule shall not apply.</p> <p>Any member may raise a complaint with their Regional Secretary if the complaint concerns the</p>	<p>The intent has been to seek to simplify this rule, make clear that the rule does not apply to sexual harassment complaints against members, and allows for the member to complain to the Regional Secretary, where the complaint relates to the branch secretary "or for any reason, it would be inappropriate for the matter to be raised with the Branch secretary and considered by the branch in meeting"</p>
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	<p>complaint to be struck out for scandalous vexatious or unreasonable behaviour by the complainant or for excessive delay in proceeding with the complaint. Before making such an order the complainant will be sent notice giving them an opportunity to show why the order should not be made</p>		<p>branch secretary or for any reason it would be inappropriate for the matter to be raised with the branch secretary and considered by a branch meeting, when it will be considered by the Regional Committee</p> <p>If raised with the branch secretary then if either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the branch decides it does not have the authority to deal with the matter or provide a remedy; or b. the branch considers the complaint, and the member is not satisfied with the branch's decision and provides written notice of appeal to the regional committee within one month of the branch meeting. <p>the Regional Committee will consider the complaint.</p> <p>There shall be no right of appeal against any decision of the Regional Committee.</p> <p>The Regional Committee may order a complaint to be struck out for scandalous vexatious or unreasonable behaviour by the complainant or for excessive delay in proceeding with the complaint. Before making such an order the complainant will be sent notice giving them an opportunity to show why the order should not be made.</p>	<p>Though it has been suggested that the regional committee decision might be subject to appeal, this is not a legal requirement and there may be merit in the handling of complaints having early finality (assuming not referred to rule 5).</p>
2	At each hearing before the branch or the regional committee the member will have	2	At any hearing under this rule the Branch or the Regional Committee will so far as reasonably	This rule has been amended to reflect the new rule 5.12.

<p>a reasonable opportunity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to present their case orally or in writing • to support their case with written statements or by using witnesses • to hear the evidence against their complaint, to answer it and to question witnesses. 	<p>practicable allow the member a reasonable opportunity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to hear or be provided with a record of the evidence against presented against them, • to answer that evidence and to question, or raise questions to be asked of, any witnesses giving evidence against them; • to present their case in person or in writing, and • to support their case with written statements or by using witnesses. <p>The Central Executive Council may issue guidance governing any parts of the procedure to be followed under this rule as they may from time to time determine, to include when and how any hearing might be held remotely, and when a matter should be referred for consideration under Rule 5.</p>	<p>Provision has been included for the CEC to issue guidance governing the procedure which are expressly intended to include how any hearing might be held remotely, and as to when the matter should be addressed under new Rule 5.</p> <p>The benefit of making express provision to the guidance in the rules is that it gives clear authority for that part of the guidance issued to members. However, if this approach is adopted, it may well be appropriate that there be a separation between the guidance (which would be made available in full to members) and what might then be best described as an explanatory note to be made available to regional secretaries and others operating the process, and which can in time include model letters,</p>
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				recommended timescales for hearing complaints etc
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(Carried)

DONNA SPICER (Southern): President, Congress, before I go into the details of rule amendments I want to make it clear why we are bringing these to Congress. In 2020 the Monaghan Report found GMB to be institutionally sexist and have a toxic culture where women in particular were targets of sexual harassment. We are here to clean up and shape up. We will not have the rules of our union found wanting on matters of conduct and abuse.

The rule amendments put forward are measured and consistent with the recommendations of the Monaghan Report which Congress agreed would be implemented. Congress 2019 referred Motion 19, which called for a review of the guidance for Regional Presidents, Regional Committees, and Regional Secretaries, on the operation of the rule book disciplinary and grievance procedures under rules 5 and 6. In considering this review it was felt that rules 5 and 6 themselves should first be reviewed. That review has now concluded taking in legal advice and recommendations from the Monaghan Report, feedback from the SMT and from the CEC culminating in CECRA1 now before Congress.

The proposed rule amendment before Congress is set out in five columns. Columns 1 and 2 of the document are the current rules from the 2021 GMB rule book. Column 3 of the document is the proposed new rule or clause number, column 4 of the document is the proposed new wording of each new rule or clause, and column 5 of the document sets out the explanation and reasons for any changes that are proposed. Without going through each clause one by one I will just highlight the major changes that are proposed.

On rule 5, these are, separating the disciplinary offences and the sanctions across two separate clauses, in clauses 5.4 and 5.6 extending and clarifying some offences and clarifying some of the sanctions, expressly stating that where a Regional Committee recommends a member is expelled that member cannot participate in the activities of the union pending an appeal.

Introduce into the rule the provision to suspend a member pending the disciplinary process either by the Regional Committee or subject to ratification by the Regional Committee but caveated by only being used in the most serious of allegations and protected by the requirement for Regional Committee endorsement with a two-thirds majority voting in favour.

Introduce into the rule the CEC agreed sexual harassment policy for members with references in new rule 5.4 and new clause 5.5, in rule 6, and a new rule, rule 5A. This new rule 5A also states that when this policy is engaged then it takes precedent over rules 5 and 6 which will not apply.

On rule 6 this has been simplified and now allows complaints against Branch Secretaries or matters deemed inappropriate to be dealt with by the branch, to now be submitted direct to the Regional Secretary for consideration by the Regional Committee. Furthermore, 6.1 now expressly states that any sexual harassment complaint should be raised under new rule 5A and rule 6 will not apply. In both rules,

5 and 6 rule book authority is now given to those parts of the guidance that are issued to members during rule 5 or rule 6 processes.

Congress, I know that was detailed but these are essential changes to our rules. Without these changes we will be failing our members. We have a fundamental responsibility to keep our members safe. The CEC is asking Congress to adopt CECRA1. I move. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Donna. I will now ask Malcolm to second.

MALCOLM SAGE (Vice President): Congress, it is important to remember that we are an organisation which at its core makes life better for people. We have to uphold the high standards of behaviour and treatment of people or we cannot be credible. As it has been referred by our colleague, if CECRA1 is adopted by Congress then the related interim guidance currently being used by Regional Presidents, Secretaries, and Committees, will in turn be updated. That updated guidance will include model letters and will set out time scales for dealing with rule 5 and rule 6. The updated guidance will also address the issue of suspension pending a disciplinary procedure and how it was determined if this option was triggered, and how this might impact upon certain members such as those members who have full-time facility time. The guidance will set out steps GMB would take to safeguard the employment position of an individual in any related negotiations, the employment position of an individual in any related negotiations and representations with their employer making clear that any suspension pending the disciplinary procedure is interim and is a neutral act.

Turning back to the rule amendment itself, the CEC is asking Congress to adopt the rule amendment, to update these rules, actioning the Monaghan recommendation and tidying up, simplifying, and clarifying the operation of those two rules. Congress, I second and ask for your support. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Malcolm. Does anyone wish to speak in opposition to this rule amendment? No? In that case I will put CECRA1 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against? Thank you. That is carried.

CEC RULE AMENDMENT 1 was CARRIED.

UNION ORGANISATION: REPRESENTATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to Union Organisation: Representation & Accountability and I call on Southern Region delegates to move and second Motion 24. Mover?

SUPPLY OF GMB BRANDED MERCHANDISE MOTION 24

24. SUPPLY OF GMB BRANDED MERCHANDISE

The GMB Union should pass this motion asking that Regions should supply merchandise to Branches for Reps and members. The current system is not cost effective as minimum order quantities can be over 100 items and require Regional approval if they are over the £300

branch limit. There is also a time factor to be taken into consideration, which can result in a delay in supplying our Reps with professional looking equipment to get the job done.

Regions should also make better use of the facilities available on line(eg Yammer) to allow staff and activist to share items and equipment purchased that are used by branches infrequently (eg tablecloths, flags and stands).

As most Reps don't make it to Congress, they should be welcomed into their new role with a gift pack. If the Region is unable to bear the cost, they can be charged back to the Reps branch as is currently the case with other work items.

We call on this conference to:

- To encourage Regions to procure startup kits for Rep (eg a GMB computer bag, GMB A4 folder, GMB lanyard, GMB metal badge and GMB Hi-Viz jacket etc)
- Have a dedicated channel on Yammer to create a marketplace/swap shop to maximise use of goods that would otherwise be gathering dust.

C60 CROYDON BRANCH

Southern Region

(Referred)

AVA PAYNE (Southern): Here we go again. Morning, Congress. This is a bit of a broad title but the union should pass this motion. We are asking for the region to supply merchandise. It is not a big ask. It is quite simple. The mechanics of it are written in the motion. We can buy it, we can bring it in. We all look like a cohesive whole. We are a brand. We need to be recognised. You look at me, you see me, but when you look at me when I go into the meetings, you are not quite sure who I am. It is like, "Who are you?" I say, "I am GMB," and they would know that if I had this lovely lanyard round my neck. Us as members of this organisation need to be able to project with the merchandise that we are it. I never want HR to embarrass me again and say, "You need a better bag." I was just mortified. It is not necessary. We can do it. We all have our gifts for Congress today. When a rep becomes a rep and they turn up and they do their training can you just give them a bag, please? It used to be, "Give us a job," but now it is, "I would like you to give us a bag," or a badge, or a lanyard. That is all I am really asking for in this motion and I am really not waiting 10 years or 20 years for it to happen, just so you know. I understand this is going to be referred and I will be watching the referral with interest. Congress, I move.

(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ava. Just before I ask the seconder can I ask if London Region are ready we are running a bit ahead of time, if we can take Motion 61 and Motion 62 as well, please, this morning. I know you have now just been thrown into thinking you had the lunchtime to get ready. If you could come down to the front, the seconder for Motion 24, please.

DAVINA BROWN (Southern): Good morning, Congress, President, and delegates. I am seconding Motion 24. As Ava mentioned, it would be really useful if once people are trained up as reps they received a start-up kit. These are cost effective investment for our promotional marketing. It is a way to promote our cause, attract new

members, and engage with our current ones. It also gives a sense of one team. The merchandise can be used across all branches showing that we work in collaboration. It gives better brand recognition and has a great shelf life. It also helps to give more personality and is capable of bringing strong loyalty and member retention. It would also be great if we can use some online facilities, such as Yammer, which is a good tool for reps to connect, share ideas, and engage. It is also a transparent way to share information across all regions. Again, this would support the one team working approach. It would also allow branches to post items on Yammer, merchandise items that they may no longer be using and this could also be used by other branches. This would help to save money and reduce duplication. Promotion is the best medium by far for getting us to take action. Let's stand out from the crowd. I second this motion and I ask Congress to support. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Davina. Does anyone wish to speak in opposition to this motion? No? In that case can I ask Brian Farr from the CEC to respond?

BRIAN FARR (CEC): Good morning, Congress. Congress, the CEC is asking for Motion 24 to be referred. GMB reps are the lifeblood of our union. We recognise the essential role that they play in helping making work better and the importance of supporting their activity, their communication, and their profile. To ensure the GMB establish consistent and effective actions in this area we recommend reference to the CEC Organising Committee and Finance & General Purposes Committee. On Tuesday I will be speaking on procurement so this has to be considered as well. Therefore, the CEC is asking for Motion 24 to be referred back for the reasons I have outlined. Thank you, Congress. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Brian. Does Southern Region agree reference back on Motion 24? (*Agreed*) Thank you.

Motion 24 was REFERRED.

THE PRESIDENT: In that case we do not need to take a vote and we can move on to Motion 61, London Region. Mover, please.

UNION ORGANISATION: UNION BENEFITS & SERVICES

GMB CONVALESCENT HOME PROVISION

MOTION 61

61. GMB CONVALESCENT HOME PROVISION

This Congress calls on the GMB to look at the provision of a new convalescent home. We urge GMB to seek alternative affordable provision so members recovering from illness do not miss out on this cherished benefit as it assisted members in their recovery and wellbeing.

ISLINGTON APEX BRANCH

London Region

(*Carried*)

CHRISTINE HUSTON (London): Congress, as a union we pride ourselves in supporting and caring for our members. Imagine how surprised we were to hear that

the only GMB convalescent home in Devon has now closed and there are no other alternatives available. For those of you who were not aware of this, the union had a convalescent facility at Railway Convalescent Home known as Bridge House in Dawlish, Devon. Members could stay there for up to two consecutive weeks at no charge. GMB met their travelling expenses and in addition paid them a small weekly allowance. Members could use this facility three times in their GMB membership life, even if they chose to attend for only one week at a time and were even allowed to bring a companion, but they would have to pay.

Accidents and ill health can cause long-term stress that affects your work and your relationships which can lead to depression, anxiety, and sleep problems. Recovery means gaining and retaining hope, developing and understanding of one's abilities and disabilities, engaging in an active life and a positive sense of self. Now, there is a much greater push for mental health awareness and just like physical health it is known that the benefits of building good relationships and healthy behaviours aid recovery. A facility is needed for our members when they are recovering from trauma or illness and in need of recuperative break that allows them to meet other colleagues face-to-face, share experiences, and learn new ways to live the life they want.

I have spoken to members who convalesced at Bridge House and they have expressed what a tonic it was to be looked after and supported by professionals whilst recovering from their trauma in a place that provided a safe and friendly social atmosphere with the added benefit of being able to return each year to renew acquaintances in familiar surroundings.

Sadly, during our London Regional Council meeting held on Teams over lockdown council members were told that due to Covid this facility had been unavailable since the start of lockdown mid-March 2020 and that the board had confirmed that due to the risk involved, both to staff and visitors, the home would not reopen for the whole of 2020. Last year the union was informed by the board that this home was to close permanently. The impact of this decision means there are currently no convalescent facilities available for our members.

Our motion is asking the union to look into providing a similar facility again as many of our members could benefit from this respite care and it would help members with their mental health and physical wellbeing. We understand that the union has other more pressing issues to deal with but urge you to continue searching, even if it is a shared facility. We also ask that if and when you find something suitable please make sure all members are aware of this benefit as it is not featured in the rule book. We would like also to make sure that in future any decision such as this that affects all members should be communicated nationally and not as any other business at a meeting. We should therefore continue to support the provision of finding an affordable convalescent home so our members do not miss out. Congress, I move.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Christine. Secunder.

SUSAN KELLY (London): Our convalescent home provision might not be something everyone is aware of. Before today most of us in this room might not even

have been aware of it. It is one of our lesser known and least used benefits but it is a benefit, and it is important to a lot of our members. It is a benefit that allows our members to recover from accident, injury, illness, in a safe space knowing that they are going to be looked after, that they do not have to worry about how they are going to get food, their shopping, their lighting and their heating bills for two weeks, and given the current shortage of care staff in all sectors, we all know that there are delays in arranging home care, and that a lot of our members who might normally provide home care to their family members we cannot assume that that is available and we also have to consider that people live alone and that family care is not something that is available to everyone. I am going to mention another union so, please, no boos just for a minute, all right: neither Unite nor Unison provide this service. We do, or we did. It has historically been something unique to us. Congress, no one is suggesting that we have not tried. No one is suggesting this is not something that the CEC and the staff members of the GMB have not looked at. All we are asking for in this motion is that we keep trying and that we do not give up. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Perfect timing, Susan. Thank you. A mover for Motion 62?

AWARENESS OF INFORMATION ON MEMBER BENEFITS MOTION 62

62. AWARENESS OF INFORMATION ON MEMBER BENEFITS

This Congress notes GMB Membership provides a range of benefits for those in work and for those who retire.

Not all members and especially family members will be aware of these. For those who retire, there is the opportunity and facility to be transferred to honorary Life Membership, subject to 5 years GMB Membership. By becoming an honorary Life member, the use of the Union Solicitors, and the GMB Funeral grant is still available.

At times of retirement or if your income has reduced, it's important that members and their families are made much more aware of these benefits. This is especially important at difficult times or with bereavement as such support (subject to eligibility) may understandably be missed.

Congress is requested to:

- Highlight these benefits in Union materials, newsletters and websites
- Investigate whether membership departments can facilitate reminders to members in advance of an expected/likely retirement date / auto generated
- Ask GMB Membership Departments to consider membership card wording to be added (or produce a separate card to be given to families/ friends) such as: "Please show this card to Family members/ Next of kin/ authorised persons and ring GMB on /contact for how GMB can help at this difficult time".

This would be a similar system to the Kidney donor card principle, but Members would:

- a) Need to be an Honorary Life Member or make arrangements to retain membership in retirement
- b) Members to make family members aware of their continuing membership on retirement

Congress is also asked to consider any research in this area and publicity through relevant bodies – TUC, Age UK and sister Unions as appropriate and promote any generic checklist to be used at times of bereavement.

EAST DEREHAM BRANCH

London Region

(Carried)

JAN SMITH (London): President, General Secretary, Congress, we all know not all our members join this union because of our benefits package. However, especially in today's cost-of-living crisis when members are thinking of leaving GMB, we ask that they ought or should also look at the whole deal that we offer within this union.

Colleagues, in this hall many of you know there is a set of national benefits and services and some regions have additional schemes. In making this motion we wanted to make sure that all our members know exactly where to find the benefits and the information. Of course, all regions are national and have a website, and of course all members have access to a members' area where they could or can get this information. We submitted this motion more so for our retired members or older members who may not have access to any form of technology, and I have to say even myself at times have problems to access it. As the Secretary of the GMB Retired Members Association, I can tell you I often receive upsetting phone calls from members of families who sometimes years after their relatives or loved ones have passed away and did not realise that they could have claimed the GMB funeral grant. I can give you a classic example.

At Christmastime when I sent out a branch letter and incorporated all London Region retired members I had a dear lady ring me up completely in tears. She had lost her husband three years ago severely suffering from dementia. On talking to her she did not realise that she could have received a family grant and can I say thank you to my region and to our branch, we did a hardship allowance to give her the benefit that she would have had at that time. A further example I can give you, a very dear friend of mine who was a very, very active member of this union and sat on many committees, she recently passed away and I am talking with the family, it was a classic example even with someone who was heavily involved in this union, that family did not know that they could claim the funeral benefit, and can I say thankfully I was able to sort out these cases. They are two examples. *(Applause)*

We are hoping that the CEC would agree with us to produce an additional card or a booklet, something similar to a donor card so that all members can give to their next of kin so that they know what is happening to them and call the GMB in the first instance. We understand this is not ideal and would involve additional expense. Surely we could incorporate something together to provide this membership card. We cannot put an age limit to it because for some of our members we never know when him up above is going to call. We know that members leave the GMB especially in today's cost-of-living crisis and for financial reasons but we really do need to look at this with offers for all our members linked to the GMB producing a card ----

THE PRESIDENT: Jan, could you wind up, please?

JAN SMITH (London): Yes. We also wanted to work with other organisations to create a checklist to be used at all times, especially at bereavement, a very distressing time. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. A seconder, please.

MARIE McCORMACK (London): I just took a stroll round the entrance vestibule and there are loads of leaflets on loads different types of benefits that one can get, i.e. free £5,000 cover on death, unfortunately only up to the age of 69, so we might need to look into that. There is lots and lots of benefits that we are just not aware of. If I ask you now just to Google “GMB benefits” you will see there is £20 off Butlins holidays, there is cruise opportunities with discounts, there is parking discounts at the different airports, there is loads of other types of benefits that you get apart from the knowledge that you are in a union and there is 600,000 people behind you if you are going into a disciplinary meeting, for example. I do urge you to look at those and Jan is absolutely right, I had a call from somebody who said, “My partner has just died, they were a member of the union, but how can I access the funeral payment?” They knew there was a funeral payment but they were estranged from the children and so they were not talking to the children of the person who had passed away, so it was getting that message across, and if the deceased had had that card that Jan is recommending then they would have been able to see it and access that benefit. She never came back to me so that person did not get the benefit in the end, although I did write to the family. There are loads of reasons why we should be supporting this motion today, including that one, apart from all the really fun things that you can do in your leisure time where GMB will get you a discount, including educational courses as well. So, there you are. I second this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mary. Does anyone wish to speak in opposition to these two motions? No? Can I ask David McLean from the CEC to respond?

DAVID MCLEAN (CEC): President, Congress, speaking on behalf of the CEC responding to Motions 61 and 62.

On Motion 62, the GMB convalescent home provision, the CEC is asking for the motion to be supported with qualification. Since RCH closed that facility used for convalescence in Dawlish, GMB have undertaken an extensive search for alternative facilities that are suitable for the benefit we have historically offered to meet the needs of those members who require this service, and also financially affordable. The small qualification is that to date no suitable facility has been sourced.

On Motion 62, awareness of information on members’ benefits, the CEC is asking for this motion to be supported with a qualification. The GMB recognises that for many the wide range of benefits provided both in work and in retirement are welcome additions to membership to our union. We support building awareness of these. The qualification to this motion is that we do not agree that changes to the wording on the membership card or an additional card for retired members are appropriate solutions given the limited space available for text and extra costs incurred. We suggest promotion on the GMB website and communication channels are better suited to this.

Therefore, Congress, the CEC is asking for both motions, 61 and 62, to be supported with qualifications for the reasons I have outlined. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, David. Does London Region accept the qualification on Motion 61? (*Agreed*) Thank you. On Motion 62? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Then I will put both of those to the vote. All those in favour please show. Anyone against? They are both carried. Thank you.

Motion 61 was CARRIED.

Motion 62 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, that concludes our first session of formal business. We have finished a bit early so you can have extra lunch. Thank you for your cooperation and good start to the week.

Ah, don't leave yet. Before we head to lunch we will finish off the session with the first of our regional success videos from Birmingham & West Midlands, Midland & East Coast, and London regions. They will be showing now.

Videos shown to Congress.

THE PRESIDENT: That is the end of this morning's business. There are the fringe meetings and you can look around the exhibitions, but be back on time at 2 o'clock. Thank you.

Congress adjourned for lunch.

AFTERNOON SESSION

Congress re-assembled at 2.00 p.m.

THE PRESIDENT: Delegates, I call Congress to order. Can you please switch off your devices or make sure they are on silent. I hope you all had a good lunchtime and enjoyed the fringes if you went to them. Just to let you know, the reps' badges that I spoke about this morning that I was wearing and the Congress badge have been given to your delegation leads so you will get one of those this afternoon.

OBITUARY LIST

THE PRESIDENT: Let me apologise by saying that there was a problem with the obituary list this morning which did not display correctly. We will therefore show this list again so we can pay our proper respects. To remind delegates, names will be shown on the screen and a copy of the Obituary list is on page 6 of the Congress Guide. In addition to published names, we have been since notified of the passings of Tony Herbert of London Region; Joe Warburton of North West & Irish Region and William Foster of Southern Region. Again, I ask delegates to stand or if you find it difficult to stand, please observe a moment's silence as a mark of respect of those departed GMB colleagues. (*Congress stood in silent tribute*) Thank you. Again, our

apologies because those people deserve our respect and pride. It was a shame that this morning's one went slightly wrong.

UNION ORGANISATION: EDUCATION & TRAINING

THE PRESIDENT: Can the movers and seconders of Motions 65 to 67 please make your way to the front. I also ask for the movers and seconders of Composite 6 and Motion 72 to be prepared to come to the front as well. I call Motion 65.

REGIONAL AUDITOR TRAINING

MOTION 65

65. REGIONAL AUDITOR TRAINING

This Congress recognise that the way forward is to have a financial structure and accountability that safeguards the GMB into the future.

Congress notes that training for Regional Auditors is not uniform throughout the GMB.

Training available within the GMB does not fully encompass this particular postholder role.

Congress therefore resolves to action the GMB Education Department to provide a standardised training programme applicable to all Regional Auditors both for those currently in post and to those elected in future years.

HUNTERSTON BRANCH

GMB Scotland

(Referred)

ANNETTE DRYLIE (GMB Scotland): President and Congress, I am from the Fyfe Public Services Branch moving Motion 65 on Regional Auditor Training.

Congress, a well-run trade union requires robust financial controls both internally and through an external audit to look after the financial interests of both its staff and its membership, to which it is accountable. Under rule 25 two elected members of the Regional or Scotland Council oversee the financial accounts of the region or country on a six-monthly basis. These elected regional or Scotland-member auditor reps may have some financial background to assist them with that responsibility. However, it is not a requirement for the rule book position. Let's face it, none or very few council members are fully accredited accountants.

This motion seeks to create a training package for both those members in post and future regional or Scotland auditors to ensure, firstly, that a standardised level of training package and the duties and responsibility of the lay regional or Scotland auditors throughout each region or country within our Union. Secondly, this motion seeks to create confidence building amongst our regional or Scotland council members that in standing for election to accept this rule book position, and they are not left to their own devices or understanding and undertaking this role.

This motion, therefore, seeks that the Education Department in conjunction with the National Admin Unit urgently creates a standardised regional or Scotland Auditor

Training package to be delivered at each of the regional or Scotland offices within the United Kingdom in conjunction with its regional or Scotland finance Officer. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Annette. Secunder?

KEVIN RITCHIE (GMB Scotland): This is my first live Congress and first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I second Motion 65, Regional Auditor Training as a newly appointed auditor for Aberdeenshire Public Services Branch. In seconding this motion we seek to improve the level of financial understanding and control mechanisms that govern the workings of our great trade union. Firstly, we have to ensure that the regional training of every auditor emphasises the right of access to our accounting records and to all other financial documents. Secondly, to specify that the regional auditors are entitled to require such information and explanations as they think necessary for the performance of their duties. Lastly, in the highly unlikely event that they fail to obtain all the information and explanations which, to the best of their knowledge and belief, are necessary for the purposes of the audit, they shall state that fact in the report. President and Congress, please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Kevin. I call the mover for Motion 66, please.

TRAINING OF WORKPLACE REPS AND HEALTH AND SAFETY REPS MOTION 66

66. TRAINING OF WORKPLACE REPS AND HEALTH AND SAFETY REPS

This Congress believes that the current model of training carried out by the GMB in developing new workplace reps is over reliant on block release and is no longer appropriate to cater for the challenges of the modern workforce.

The GMB reps curriculum is 20 days or more, and this is a burden to members without facility time and is a disproportionate burden on those with family commitments more usually women.

Workers who are able to take paid time off in the private sector to attend training are very rare indeed. Many of our organised workplaces do not have adequate facility time agreements.

We require training that caters for this group of workers alongside workers in the gig economy and all patterns of work.

This could include evenings, weekends and the use of technology used so successfully during the pandemic.

Congress calls on the CEC to carry out an urgent and thorough review and then implement the changes required to enable all our members the opportunities to become trained reps and ambassadors of our GMB union at work.

LONDON CENTRAL GENERAL BRANCH London Region

(Referred)

DAVE LEVY (London): Congress, I am from the London Central General Branch from London Region. We have a very disparate branch. We have, as far as we know, more than 250 workplaces with an average membership per workplace of under five. Making reps is hard. This motion asks for an easier to complete training programme to allow people to enjoy a better level of activism within our Union.

This motion is not designed to be critical of current provision or of personnel involved in training delivery. It is meant to be an expression of an insight from our branches' unusual but not unique organisational structure and coverage model. Our organisational problem is workplace communication. Yet to be a recognised rep, one needs to take 30 days of training in six five-day chunks. Our members find it hard since most do not have facility agreements. This can only be done through annual or unpaid leave and at 30 days it is somewhat excessive. The block-release requirement is likely to be difficult for those who are low paid and those with caring responsibilities. The most recent graduate in our branch of the training programme did it over two years. That, itself, is another problem.

I recognise that we are relying on independent certification for our training programmes and that is a significant strain on programme design, but maybe we should not.

Our organisational issues are compounded by the Union's requirement that we will not train or recognise health and safety reps alone. To force management to set up a health and safety committee we need two people. To win a recognition agreement, we need 50% of the workforce. Our failure to create accredited health and safety reps means, in my view and that of my branch, that we are missing a trick. We are convinced that the high training barrier to entry to becoming a rep is an inhibition to organisational success and that we can do better.

We also believe that a high training barrier to entry may discriminate against women and disabled members. In this post-Monaghan world, again, we should look to do better. If you are not a rep, you are likely to be considered unsuitable to stand for regional council, which is a further gateway to positions of leadership in this Union.

The motion asks the CEC to look at our training strategies and programmes and to make them more suitable for a modern, nomadic workforce, to make them more family-friendly, easy to provide a work-life balance and to split the training and accreditation for our health and safety reps and workplace organisers.

I am disappointed that this motion was not marked "To support with qualification", which, given the comments they made to us, they could easily have done. We are not prescribing an answer here. We are just asking people to have a think and see if we can do better on the lines that we propose. The CEC will ask us to refer and we agree. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dave. Can we have a seconder for that motion, please?

MARC SCHEIMANN (London): Right. While I am *here* I might as well take a photograph of you all because then, at least, I will know that I was actually here. There you go. Smile, please. Right. *(Applause)*

As a GMB member since 1989 why has it taken me so long to actually get here? I would ask and say that, as a trade union Movement, we need to support motions like this because if you are disabled and you are trying to get the training, other trade unions allow you to do virtual training, to do zoom-meeting trainings and have time off. Also they enable you to have access to use things like toilets because, as a disabled person, we need access to these sorts of things. *(Applause)* I will learn the art of pausing. I always want to knock them dead.

I am very upset that the CEC wants to refer back to this. I would question why, if a CEC refers back, those who move and second it and those who want to hear about it, don't get notifications at future times when it is going to be heard and how it is going to be debated because, surely, that is part of the democratic process that we belong to? I am proud to second this motion. I stand firm with you and solidarity to you all. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Marc. I hope you got a good photograph of everybody. I call the mover for Motion 67.

SUICIDE TRAINING FOR ALL REPS MOTION 67

67. SUICIDE TRAINING FOR ALL REPS

This Congress, should be aware that 4912* people died by suicide in England and Wales in 2020, although we expect this figure to be higher for 2021 when that data is complete.

- Male suicide rate was 15.3 per 100,000 compared to the female suicide rate of 4.9 per 100,000. This equates to the male rate being 3 times higher than that of the female.

- Males aged 45-49 continue to have the highest suicide rate.
- Suicide rates have generally been on a downward trend but the latest rates for males is like that in 2013, when it peaked, but remains significantly lower than in 1988 when it was at its highest.

- 1 in 15 of adults in England are estimated to have made a suicide attempt at some point in their life,

We want all GMB workplace reps to go on mandatory Suicide awareness training as part of their induction and to include current reps retrospectively.

GMB Reps are normally the first point of call for those in crisis, we would be ideally placed to recognise, support and be the first intervention where necessary for those in need. As GMB has circa 600,000 members covering all diverse groups we should be the first port of call for our members as those will include some who need our help most urgently.

If we can save one more life then it has to be worth the effort and achieving that goal and so much more.

***Source-ONS-England and Wales 2020 data**

**SCOTTISH GAS STAFFBRANCH
GMB Scotland**

(Referred)

CIORSTAI DH REICHL E (GMB Scotland): Congress and President, I move Motion 67 – Suicide Training for All Reps.

Congress, this country is in a mental-health crisis. This is very evident in the workplace with the cost of living, stress, increased workload, poor staffing figures and the expectation to fill gaps in the rota contribute to this situation. Employers have a duty of care and, let's face it, it's hard enough to get them to adhere to health and safety standards most of the time.

As workplace reps it is often ourselves who are there for our members' lowest moments when they reach the point that the support they have received so far has not been enough. They have turned in a crisis to the Union for help. When that email drops, the phone rings. It is never an invitation for a cup of tea, let's face it. No. It's a member at a point when they can no longer deal with the issue themselves. This can be work related or it can be life related. Either way, it has had a detrimental impact on their working life. Their job may now be at risk. This often is a cause of stress in itself. The chance of losing the financial support needed to pay bills, to put food on the table and the cost of petrol to get to work in the first place causes enormous stress. Congress, the cost of living is increasing with time, and we live in a country where too many jobs are underpaid already.

Our members are under immense pressure to work more and to earn more, and this takes its toll both physically and mentally. We must understand that members may not want to talk to their family or they might have been told that they can't talk to their peers. They possibly don't want to talk to their employer for fear of ridicule and mistrust. That, Congress, leaves us.

I came into the role of a workplace rep to help others and I, personally, don't want to do it half-heartedly. I would like to be able to recognise in another member the signs that they may not see any other way out other than suicide. At a time when workplace stress is at an ever-increasing issue, we, as a Union, need to be prepared. You only need to look at the figures in the motion to see the extent of the issue. GMB needs to be doing its bit to help our members.

I am based within the NHS in GMB Scotland. GMB Scotland recently did a survey which found that 83% of staff were worried about their physical and mental health. The survey also showed that 91% reported suffering from workplace stress. I don't have the skills to know if any of these 91% are suicidal. Do you? Therefore, Congress, I urge you to support this motion and provide reps with the skills, training, knowledge and be able to fully support our members through crises. GMB has an opportunity here to lead the way for the future. Let's not let any other members die. Thank you, Congress. Please support this motion. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ciorstaidh. I call the seconder for that motion.

NICK HILL (GMB Scotland): Congress, I am a first-time speaker and I second Motion 67 – Suicide Training for All Reps. *(Applause)*

I agree with Ciorstaidh that this country is in a mental health crisis which we feel in the working environment. Everything which the proposer puts forward as reasons for the situation are absolutely true – the cost of living, stress, increased workload and poor staffing. These can all increase the risk of suicide happening. As a trade union, we represent a large number of workers in varied sectors, all of whom are affected by these issues.

The official statistics around suicide are stark. Three out of four suicides are men. You are twice as likely to attempt suicide if you are compared to if you are rich economically, and the vast majority of suicides are people in the working age population. All of this must make suicide prevention a priority for this Union.

As the mover has stated, we, as workplace reps, are on the frontline engaging with members. Some of the factors proven to contribute to the risk of suicide can be seen daily when speaking with members, such as employment issues, economic hardship and relationship breakdown. All of these factors contribute to the risk of suicide. Given that these issues can be the reason that members engage with us in the first place, having suicide prevention training in the toolbox that reps can draw upon in order to help our members would be invaluable. With the current cost of living crisis I worry that we face a growing number of people feeling helpless. If one rep can help one person feel that life is worth living, and there is somewhere we can help signpost them to because we have been given this training, it would be more than worth it. I am delighted to second this motion, and hope that Congress will also support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Nick. Does anyone wish to oppose any of these motions? When you come up to oppose, can you make it clear which motion you are opposing?

JOHN ALAN MERCER (North West and Irish): I am supporting Motion 67. I support the fact that the training should be offered for those people who have not had the training. A lot of us have had the training but it didn't work. After one of the occasions when I had the training, I ended up off work for a month. So I don't think we should make it mandatory because some people may not be in a position to be able to sustain more of the stresses that come from this type of training. I do agree with the principle of the motion but I would like to add the fact that, maybe, it shouldn't be mandatory. Thank you. Thank you, Congress, and thank you, President. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Scotland, you do get the right of reply to that, if anybody wants to come up.

CIORSTAIKH REICHLER (GMB Scotland): I agree with what you are saying. I don't think mandatory is a good thing. I think it is something that should be open but the fact of the matter is that it should be available. It should be available for those who necessarily want to go ahead and do the training and think they can help. *(Applause)* Not only that, there should also be support for those who are doing the training

because, as my colleague said, it is very important that we look after ourselves as well because we can't help others if we don't look after ourselves. (*Applause*) I agree wholeheartedly. I think it is something that should be an option. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. I will now ask Shane Allison to respond on behalf of the CEC.

SHANE ALLISON (CEC): Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC, responding to Motions 65, 66 and 67. The CEC is asking that all these motions be referred.

On Motion 165 – Regional Auditor Training – the CEC is asking for the motion to be referred. The CEC recognises the importance of the role played by all lay auditors from national to branch level. A referral would give the CEC the opportunity to seek the development of a suitable training course to be developed to ensure that all levels of lay auditors appointed are equipped with the knowledge, their roles and responsibilities on behalf of the membership of the Union as a whole.

Turning to Motion 66 – Training of Workplace Reps and Health and Safety Reps – regions have the ability to organise their training in ways which suit activists. The CEC wishes to refer this motion to the Organising Sub-Group to look at how we might get some common principles on training in line with the spirit of the motion.

Finally, on Motion 67 – Suicide Training for All Reps – we thank GMB Scotland for raising this important and sensitive issue. It is a matter which needs to be considered seriously and carefully. We are asking for the motion to be referred for these reasons. Congress, if we can recall, Composite 9 involved mental health and dealing with suicide from Congress 2021, and it asked for reps to go through suicide awareness training, and Congress agreed to refer the motion.

The CEC is asking for this motion to be referred to the Organising Sub-Committee to assess whether this can be included in any training. We suggest this with the condition that the GMB stewards should never feel that they should offer any help or advice to members and only ever direct them through the professionals. Therefore, Congress, the CEC is asking for all three motions to be referred back for the reasons I have outlined. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Shane. Just as a reminder to delegates, and especially new delegates, if a region agrees to refer a motion, then it will be passed to the CEC for further investigation and we do not need to hold a vote. GMB Scotland, do you agree to refer Motion 65? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Does London Region agree to refer Motion 66? (*Agreed*) Does Scotland agree to refer Motion 67? (*Agreed*)

*Motion 65 was **REFERRED.***

*Motion 66 was **REFERRED.***

*Motion 67 was **REFERRED.***

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 2

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, we have another Standing Orders Committee report. I can ask Helen to come up.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Helen Johnson): President and Congress, I move SOC Report No. 2.

On the subject of withdrawn motions, the SOC has been informed that the following motions have been withdrawn: Motion 32, Branch Funding from Birmingham & West Midlands Region; Motion 35, Stop Commissions to Branches Being Cut from London Region; Motion 39, Changes to Branch Funds from London Region; Motion 40, Unilateral Changes to Branch Funds from London Region; Motion 42, Rule Book Conflict from Midland and East Coast Region; Motion 43, Branch Income from Birmingham & West Midlands Region; Motion 44, Branch Income from Birmingham & West Midlands Region; Motion 45, Branches Commission Reduction of 10% to 7.5%; Motion 52, Membership Contributions from Birmingham & West Midlands Region; Motion 172, Standing Together from London Region; Motion 181, Absence Monitoring Creating a Two-Tier Workforce from London Region; Motion 202, Labour Party from Southern Region; Motion 221, Digitalisation from London Region, and Motion 239, Social Isolation of the Vulnerable from London Region.

Also withdrawn are three composite motions. The first is Composite 3, Rule Amendments Rule 5 and 6 from Birmingham & West Midlands Region; Composite 5 – A Fairer More Inclusive Scale and Reduced Rates of Membership Fee for Members Earning Less Than The GMB Living Wage from Birmingham & West Midlands Region, and Composite 12, £15 an Hour Minimum Wage from Yorkshire & North Derbyshire and Birmingham and West Midlands Regions.

Finally, bucket collections. The SOC has agreed to three requests for bucket collections as follows: From London Region, for the Papyrus Charity, the SOC recommends that this one takes place at the close of the Monday morning session. From Northern Region, for MND, the charity for Motor Neurone Disease, the SOC recommends that this takes place at the close of play of the Tuesday morning session, and from Midland & East Coast Region, for Fit Mums and Friends, the SOC recommends that this bucket collection takes place at the close of the Wednesday morning session.

The SOC would like everyone here to know that a fourth request was made from GMB Scotland for Guide Dogs for the Blind. Very graciously, GMB Scotland has agreed to withdraw this request this year so that the other three charities may benefit. The SOC would like to remind you that donations are still gratefully received. If you would like to give anything, please see someone from GMB Scotland.

We would like to remind those people who will be carrying out those collections during the next three days, please can you adopt a Covid-safe manner in doing so because you will be handling cash from various people.

President and Congress, I formally move adoption of SOC Report No. 2.

THE PRESIDENT: I am now putting SOC Report No. 2 to the vote. All those in favour? Anyone against? That has been carried.

SOC REPORT NO 2 was CARRIED.

UNION ORGANISATION: EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to motions on equality and inclusion within our union. Our first motion is Composite 6, which will be moved by Yorkshire and North Derbyshire and seconded by London. After Motion 72, our next group of motions will be 78, 79 and 80. Please could speakers on those motions make themselves ready.

EQUALITY OF ACCESS FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING MEMBERS; SIGN LANGUAGE AT GMB MEETINGS & KEY EVENTS COMPOSITE 6

C6. Equality of Access for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Members; Sign Language at GMB Meetings & Key Events

Covering Motions:

68. SIGN LANGUAGE FACILITIES AT GMB MEETINGS AND KEY EVENTS - LONDON REGION

69. EQUALITY OF ACCESS FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING MEMBERS - YORKSHIRE & NORTH DERBYSHIRE REGION

This Congress, This motion calls for Equality of access for all deaf & hard of hearing members in our union.

On Tuesday 18 March 2003, the UK Government formally recognised British Sign Language (BSL) as a language in its own right.

This was a huge win for deaf & hearing-impaired people and changes to exams in education, for instance have been made.

This Congress notes that it has been brought to our attention by British Sign Language (BSL) that our members who have hearing impairments are considerably disadvantaged at key GMB meetings and events.

Whilst Microsoft Teams and Zoom meetings provide for sub-titles to be used, face-to-face meetings during the Covid 19 lock-down periods, when face masks had to be used, have prevented lip-reading.

Our union membership has a large number of members that have disclosed that they are deaf or hearing impaired and this could be even larger, if access was made easier.

The use of Sign Language interpreters at ALL conferences regardless of attendees would not only show how inclusive we are, and that Equality is truly at the forefront of our agenda, but aid those watching remotely especially during National Conference.

The spoken and written English is not a profoundly deaf persons first language and reading subtitles that are often quickly running at the bottom of the screen, mean they miss vital pieces of information. This is also very tiring when faced with lots of speeches and trying to keep up with processes of congress for example.

Congress, we call for Sign Language interpreters at ALL conferences to support our members and future members in taking full part in all proceedings.

We ask that this not be dismissed as a costly exercise - Equalities and Inclusion should not be dismissed because it does not meet budgeting costs. The Equality Act 2010 clearly states that it provides the 'basic framework of protection against direct and indirect discrimination'.

Dismissing this request would, we feel be in breach of this. The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. Let GMB be the first union to really lead the way forward in the wider society and meet the needs of this underrepresented population of our membership. We call on the GMB to facilitate sign language interpretation at key meetings and events, to make these more accessible for all members and eliminate exclusion.

Moving Region: YORKSHIRE & N DERBYSHIRE

Seconding Region: LONDON

(Carried)

ANDREW RONTREE (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Conference, I am a first-time delegate and speaker to move Composite 6. *(Applause)*

This composite is formed from motions by my region and London advocating provision of British sign language interpreters at all conferences and other key meetings and events. The reasons why we are backing this composite are, primarily, a matter of equality. Equality is a core value for our Union and for the labour movement as a whole. Every GMB member has an equal right to participate in all of our activities. Any barriers that prevent people from joining in or make it more difficult for them to do so have to be broken down. Lack of the right support for deaf or hearing-impaired members could prevent some people from playing their full part in the Union. It could discourage people from joining the Union in the first place.

Of course, there are other channels besides BSL, such as subtitles and lip reading. Subtitles can be very helpful for many deaf and hearing-impaired people, but they do have limitations. Following subtitles for long periods as they run at speed along the bottom of a screen can be exhausting. Many of our members would be better served by provision of a BSL interpreter. We have to remember that BSL is some people's first language, particularly those with profound deafness. For almost 20 years now the UK Government have recognised BSL as a language in its own right.

Lip reading can be a useful tool if you have difficulties with hearing but it is not much use when you meet people face-to-face and they are wearing one of *these*. *(Holding a face mask)* As we all know, that has happened a lot recently.

As to legal obligations, we are obliged to do this by law under the 2010 Equality Act, passed by Gordon Brown's government. We have to do everything we reasonably can to avoid indirect discrimination against deaf or hearing-impaired members. Providing BSL interpreters in all circumstances where our members can benefit from them is what we need to do to meet this requirement.

The CEC supports this composite with qualification. We appreciate the support and accept the qualification. The CEC is quite right in that our Union must always keep control of what we are spending, ensure that our activities are affordable, which is perfectly fair, and we agree totally that funding BSL interpreters must not be at the expense of the provision for members with any other kind of disabilities. Our branch is supporting this motion because we want to make an explicit commitment to deaf and hearing-impaired members and potential members. We will do whatever it takes to ensure equality access and opportunities to participate for all our members.

Finally, I would like to thank fellow Leeds General branch member, Cindy Gabbon, who is not here today, for preparing the original motion and submitting it to our branch. Thanks also to Redbridge branch and London Region for their motion expressing similar sentiments. I beg to move Composite 6. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. London to second.

STEVEN JONES (London): Congress, I am seconding this motion. This actually was a motion drawn up last year and submitted last year for this year's Congress from Redbridge Council and Redbridge branch in particular. So we are particularly pleased to hear it. Thank you very much for the reference to Redbridge.

First, I would like to thank the GMB for their Congress this year and for the middle screen. As we can all see, we have sign language that everyone can see. That is new and I would like them to be given a round of applause.

Moving on, I think we all have experience in dealing with people who have hearing impairments with varying degree of severity, whether it is slight or severe. Sign language is vital for those who suffer from complete hearing loss. It is a unique language all of its own and it is now classed as an official language as of April this year. That is a big step forward. TV programmes on some channels have sign language for the news and other things and sign interpreters. Sign language is now recognised the same as Welsh, Cornish and other languages. Ignoring the request – going back to the previous speaker – for sign language interpretation at GMB meetings and events could be construed as discrimination. I, therefore, fully endorse this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Steven. I now call the mover for Motion 72.

THE VALUE OF RETIRED REPS MOTION 72

72. THE VALUE OF RETIRED REPS

This Congress notes that there is a popular myth that retired people have place in society, that they are sitting waiting to die, this was basically said by a younger workplace rep, they said "How can you know what is going on in the workplace".

Well in our favour, we have time to research, our branch has been supporting Essex schools for nearly 20 years, talking with colleagues and we have checked on the status of Essex schools so know the performance and their standing in league tables of best schools.

Retired reps have a long history of knowledge which the branch respects and values and contribute to the team and branch, they have the same values where members are concerned.

Some retired reps also do private work, so have an overview of how private workplaces operates and will compare and learn.

Do not underestimate the value of our retired reps.

Sir Francis Bacon famously quoted, “knowledge itself is power” in 1597, so with age comes knowledge. We call on Congress to recognise and utilise retired reps and include them in the democracy of the Union.

ESSEX PUBLIC SERVICES BRANCH

London Region

(Carried)

SUSAN KELLY (London): President and Congress, I move Motion 72 – The Value of Retired Reps. I am a feeling a bit like a yo-yo as I have been at this podium so much today. We are an ageing population of reps and activists. If I take a look around this hall, and I suggest you all look at your neighbours, I do not see a massive amount of young workers and those under 30 or even under 40 in this room. Much as we want and need our young workers to be members and reps, we have to take it into account, which means that we need to value the experience that we have in our retiring reps. We need them to carry on. We need them to give us their experience. We need them to give us their time. We don’t just need them to hold the fort. We need them to train. We need them to help the officers, because our initial reps’ training can only do so much. It gives you information but it doesn’t give you the skill that you only gain with experience, mentorship and someone being on the end of the phone when you have silly questions that you really don’t want to phone up an officer and say, “Help. I’m stuck”. You think you’re going to sound stupid. I really wish I had had a retired or older member on the end of the phone for me when I started out being a rep 11 years ago. I did not have that, but many branches do. I don’t want us to lose that.

The point is that some of our retired members don’t feel appreciated. What this motion is asking is that we support and acknowledge the work that our retired reps do for us and just say, “Thank you. We know you’re there. We appreciate what you do. Please keep doing it”. I would really appreciate it if you would support this motion so we can keep them doing what they do so that they can keep bringing on the next generation. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Susan. A seconder for London Region.

MICHAEL FOSTER (London): President and Congress, I second Motion 72. I am a first-time speaker and first-time delegate. *(Applause)*

As the mover rightly said, the value of retired reps cannot be under-estimated. The average age of a union member is 49 and retired members, in particular, make up the largest numerical proportion of the membership pie chart. Retired members can usually offer a minimum of 40 years shopfloor experience, some including management and supervisory role experience, too. Other skillsets include mentoring, nurturing, support attributes, which are particularly useful for younger reps who are finding their feet, dealing with hostile management and negotiating favourable outcomes for members at tribunals, which are only gained with experience.

Being retired they also have the time and resources that other reps may lack to deal with case work, branch secretarial and other administrative work. They also have a

calm, relaxed head. As a retired rep myself, I am fully aware of the advantages I can bring to the table. Give retired members their due, think of all that experience. Thank you for listening. I am proud to be seconding this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Michael. Does anyone wish to oppose any of these motions? (*No response*) In that case, I ask Mary Hutchinson to respond for the CEC.

MARY HUTCHINSON (CEC): President and Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC, responding to Composite 6, Equality of Access for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Members; Sign Language at GMB meetings & key events.

The CEC is asking that this composite be supported with a qualification. GMB is committed to removing barriers for our disabled members, including members with hearing impairments, so that we ensure equality of access for deaf and hard of hearing members and recognise that British Sign Language is the first language of some of our members, otherwise known as BSL.

The online GMB Congress of 2021 was BSL interpreted. Members should be asked in advance by their branch, region, section or other union-body organisation meetings and events whether there are reasonable adjustments that are needed, including BSL. The CEC is committed to provide BSL interpretation when requested or it is known that a BSL user will be in attendance for any type of meeting.

The qualification to this motion is that whilst GMB Congress is BSL interpreted by default due to the numbers of members attending and the wide interest in the event, for other conferences it is recommended that the existing approach of providing BSL interpreters when requested by members continues. The motion rightly asserts that equalities and inclusion should not be dismissed as a costly exercise. However, we must ensure that barriers to access for disabled members are removed and reasonable adjustments are provided to all GMB members who request adjustments other than BSL, including physical access adjustments, non-automated sub-titling, printed materials in different formats etc. This requires taking a balanced approach to implementing a variety of adjustments when they are requested rather than by default.

Therefore, Congress, the CEC is asking for this composite to be supported with the qualification I have outlined. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mary. I think you said in your speech that Yorkshire & North Derbyshire accepts the qualification. (*Agreed*) And then London Region as well. Do you accept the qualification to Composite 6? (*Agreed*) Just to explain, Motion 17 does appear in your programme but it was ruled out of order for debate following your decision to carry SOC Report No. 1 this morning. The CEC is supporting Motion 72. So I will put Composite 6 and Motion 72 to the vote. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against? They are carried.

Composite 6 was CARRIED.
Motion 72 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to Employment Policy – Equality and Inclusion, which includes Motions 78, 79 and 80. We will then debate Motions 82, 83 and 84.

EMPLOYMENT POLICY – EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

WOMEN’S CHARTER

MOTION 78

78. WOMEN’S CHARTER

This Branch calls for a National Women’s Safety Charter.

In light of the Monaghan report and the Working party set up to tackle the issues within our Union, we call for a National Women’s Safety Charter to be set up to support women, not just in our union but in the workplace. The Charter would be a preventative measure in response to a complaint, specific action and or behaviour. GMB Greenwich wish to see this adopted to prevent women and girls becoming victims of harassment and or assault

L16 LB GREENWICH BRANCH

Southern Region

(Carried)

NICOLETTA PALERMO (Southern): Congress, I move Motion 78 – A Women’s Charter. I am a second-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)*

Women’s safety has never been more of a priority. The murders of Sarah Everard and Sabina Nessa just for being women show how important it is to get this charter in place. According to the latest figures from the Office of National Statistics, between April 2020 and March 2021 171 women were murdered in England and Wales, compared with 416 men. Of those women, 109 were killed by a man and 10 by a woman. In 58 cases there was no unknown suspect. This means that the suspects were known. 92% of women were killed by men in the year ending March 2021.

It is disgraceful that women feel unsafe or unable to walk home alone at night, that they feel have to be on the phone for their safety and carry their keys in their hands or need to have someone with them in case they are abused, attacked or followed.

We cannot change the situation outside of our Union without help, but we can put something in our Union to put in place a Women’s Charter to start moving in a positive direction to support our female colleagues in the workplace. The Monaghan report has highlighted the need for change within our Union.

Setting up the Task Force for Positive Change within GMB is the first step in moving forward. We then need to look to transfer this to workplaces with a Women’s Charter. Women don’t want sexual harassment, intimidation or violence. The women ‘s culture will pledge to promote a culture that does not tolerate or accept harmful language and derogatory behaviour. We will take a stance of zero tolerance on sexual assault. Any disclosures will be taken seriously and appropriate action taken. We will also pledge to deliver everything we can to provide an environment for women that is safe, inclusive and effective, which promotes women to feel

represented and heard. When women feel safe they are more likely to speak out and seek support. Only by speaking out can we change the cultures, making workplaces a safe place. No woman should feel that she is unable to come forward with any issues for fear of judgement or reprisal. We, as a Union, should be fostering an environment of inclusion and equality regardless of how you identify. Congress, please, I urge you to support this motion on behalf of Southern Region. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Nikki. Secunder?

LOUISE ADAMS (Southern): Congress, women's safety is important and well-established within GMB's policy. The establishment of a Women's Safety Charter would add value within the GMB and the GMB policies that would help women on harassment and abuse at work.

It is vital that the work of the Task Force, which is underway, should consider whether a charter would complement this. Please support this motion. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Louise.

SUPPORT FOR WORKING MOTHERS IN A LIGHT OF COVID AND CURRENT COST OF LIVING

MOTION 79

79. SUPPORT FOR WORKING MOTHERS IN A LIGHT OF COVID AND CURRENT COST OF LIVING.

This Congress is recognising hardship that mothers are going through in relation to very low statutory maternity pay when they are having baby, then high cost of childcare once they return to work. Currently the situation is even more dramatic because of Covid and increasing cost of living.

Issue is affecting working mothers - GMB members in all working sectors. Government is expecting mothers to survive with £151,97 per week or less for seven months and if they want more time with their baby another three months are without any financial support.

Majority of English Households nowadays are unable to afford paying bills just with one person working. New mums are practically forced to get back to work in order for their family being able to survive. That means that they are losing precious time with their baby, often feeling guilty for living very vulnerable little person with childminder, developing anxiety and depression.

Once mother is back to work another issue is arising. The cost of childcare. Huge percentage of GMB members are on very low pay. Those mums on the lowest pay do struggle with childcare cost. They are standing between choice - get back to work and spend literally all wages on childcare or give up their work and become totally depend on their partner. In both cases it is a struggle. Struggle of making the right decision and then struggle with cost of living.

When the child is ill majority of employers do not want to hear about mothers taking time out. Currently working mum can take paid 5 days off work. If she has to take more it is unpaid and in addition, woman often have to face unpleasant comments from management like "Can't

somebody else watch your child?”, “Take turns with your husband or ask family member to look after your child”, “Can’t you get baby-sitter?” or “Your child is ill too often”. Those comments can be very hurtful, in addition if child is isolating with Covid no one else will be willing to look after them. When child is ill for mum that is worrying enough, she shouldn’t be put in a situation that she is stressing about her job as well because of it. Time for ill children should be paid, unlimited and should not trigger attendance policy.

Compare to last couple of years cost of living doubled (cost of electricity, gas, council tax, groceries etc). The wages and maternity pay stays on pretty much the same level. Because of it, full time working mums are struggling to pay bills and can not afford basic things needed every day.

Congress notes that current support for working mothers is far from being acceptable in current situation.

Congress is to call on Government to change policies and to give more support for working mothers. To increase maternity pay and to prolong it to 12 months. Also, to reduce the cost of childcare and to protect working mothers in their workplace.

M27 LB MERTON BRANCH **Southern Region**

(Carried)

MARZENA ABROWSKA-HUGGETT (Southern): I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Motion 79 – Support for ~Working Mothers in a Light of Covid and Current Cost of Living.

President, Congress is recognising the difficult situation that mothers are currently in. The statutory maternity pay is very low and after nine months it is cut off completely. Until the child is three years old practically there is no support. We need to urge our Government to change policies to give more support to working mums. At present, the Government is expecting mothers to live on £151.97p per week. This sum will barely cover weekly family grocery shoppings. What about other bills? What about the mortgage/rent, fuel, council tax, electricity and gas? Mothers are practically forced to get back to work early when they are not ready and the baby is not ready.

Once mum is back at work other struggles are coming to light. On top of the anxiety and worry about the baby left at home, mothers are often facing a manager with a lack of compassion. How many mothers have heard “Your child is ill too often” when asking for time off or “You have used all your days this year allowed for your child”. In most of the cases, it is five days in a year. Five days in a year! I think this is a disgrace and it should be changed. Congress recognises that young children get ill more often than five days in a year.

How many times do mothers have to hear the comment “Can’t you leave your child with someone else?” I’ve heard that too many times. As a key worker during the lockdown, I was asked to leave my symptomatic little child with a neighbour and come to work.

There is not much help in regard to childcare costs until the baby is three years old. Congress needs to ask the Government the question why? Why are children under three not entitled to free childcare? The cost of living is rising rapidly. The cost of energy has doubled since last year. Why is maternity support staying on the same level? Why is there no support for those mums who return to work and have children under three?

Congress notes that current support for working mothers is far from being acceptable. Congress is to call on Government to take immediate action to change policies and to give more support for working mums, to increase maternity pay and prolong it to 12 months. Also the Government should provide 30 hours free childcare as soon as the mother returns to work, no matter the age of the child. This would help to protect working mums in their workplace from discrimination and hurtful and unfair treatment. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Marzena. The seconder, please.

OLAYINKA ADEBOYE (Southern): President and Congress, I am a first-time delegate. *(Applause)* I am from Branch M27 of the Southern Region. I am here to support Motion 79 – Support for Working Mothers in a Light of Covid and Current Cost of Living.

As we all know, everything is going up in price, yet wages are stagnant. The current support for mothers is so inadequate now. Congress, we require you to support this motion to lobby the Government to change policy. The Government must increase the maternity leave, maternity pay and, essentially, to offer a decent child-care support. This is particularly important because without decent child-care support, new mothers are forced back to work with a lot of guilt. If you are a low-paid worker, your wages are not enough to provide sufficient support. Please, support this motion to change policy to increase maternity pay. I second. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. I call the mover of Motion 80.

LGBT+ HATE CRIME

MOTION 80

80. LGBT+ HATE CRIME

This Congress notes that there has been a huge rise in hate crime against the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT+) community over recent years. Although there is no direct evidence as to the root cause of this, Brexit and a reduction in police staff numbers due to austerity are considered to be contributing to empowering a shift in public views against the LGBT+ community.

We know that despite a rise in incident reporting, many hate crimes are still not reported and there has been a significant increase in these crimes.

Therefore, in order to try and combat hate crime against LGBT+ community, this Congress calls for the National LGBT+ Committee to:

- 1) Work on campaign material aimed at combatting LGBT+ hate crime within the workplace.

2) To further promote working closely with LGBT+ organisations such as Stonewall and their diversity champion's programme, in order to promote a safe and inclusive environment within the workplace.

3) To encourage regions to work collaboratively with their local Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to help combat LGBT+ and hate crime.

B10 BANBURY NO.1 BRANCH
Birmingham & West Midlands Region

(Carried)

CHRISTINA DEARLOVE (Birmingham & West Midlands): President and Congress, I move Motion 80 – LGBT+ Hate Crime.

Congress, who recognises the famous name Alan Turing? Guess what? He was a victim of hate crime because society could not cope with the difference of his sexuality. He is the person out *there* who invented the modern technology by which you can look at your emails and social media.

There has been a huge rise in hate crime in the UK against all parts of the LGBT+ spectrum in recent years. Although there is no direct evidence to this, the suspected root cause is being Brexit and the reduction in police staff numbers due to austerity. These are considered to be a huge contribution empowering the shift of public views against the LGBT+ community.

So let's look at those stats from the GALLUP survey of 2021 when 14,670 LGBT+ hate crimes were reported between January and August alone last year. In the previous year, there were 11,841 in the same period. In the year before, there were 10,817. These are the only ones that were reported, yet thousands more would not have been reported.

Let's break those figures down a bit. Two-thirds of those respondents had experienced anti-LGBT+ violence and abuse. Of those who had experienced that, nine in 10 experienced verbal, three in 10 had been subject to physical and two in 10 sexual violence. More than nine out of 10 of those people were negatively impacted by their experiences of abuse. That is a whopping 94%! The impacts and consequences experienced were wide-ranging, to include physical injuries, emotion and psychological impacts, financial costs as well as behavioural changes. Only one in eight respondents reported their experience to the police.

So let's go back to looking at that 14,670. You need to put another two zeros on the end of that to look at a realistic figure. Less than half of those respondents managed to get the support they needed out there because of queues and issues to get it.

Congress, I joined this great Union because I was bullied and a victim of hate crime on my way home from work when I first came out. Congress, this situation cannot continue. We need to stand together and fight for our LGBT+ rights and safety in the workplace. Congress, please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Chrissy. Seconder.

CHERYL PERRY (Birmingham & West Midlands): It is great to be in the room and seeing you all personally. I am representing Birmingham & West Midlands Region for the last time as Christina and I will be joining London over *there* next year with the region. We look forward to meeting you all. (*Cheers and applause*)

If we understand one thing in our union Movement it is that hard-won rights do not necessarily stay won. We are facing pushback in our workplaces and in society generally against the fair-working practices that many of us have campaigned for years and, perhaps, had started to take for granted. The same is true with equalities legislation and the role of equalities in our day-to-day life. Our LGBT brothers and sisters are facing rising numbers of physical assaults and hate crime numbers are truly skyrocketing, as Christina covered so clearly. We all thought that this was something that was part of our past, not something that would be prevalent and increasingly prevalent in 2022.

As a trade union we are uniquely positioned to push back on this wave of intolerance and bigotry. By showing solidarity in our workplaces, by raising awareness with our members, we can become a powerful counterforce to bigotry and discrimination in our communities. We see it with all of the motions that come through at this Congress this week. Equalities work is a core part of any union. It is at the heart of what we do. I am very proud to support this motion today. My colleague, Christina Dearlove, a fellow Banbury member, and myself look forward to working with London Region in the future. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Cheryl. Does anyone wish to oppose any of these motions? (*No response*) Can I ask Fiona Heneghan from the CEC to respond.

FIONA HENEGHAN (CEC): Good afternoon, President and Congress. I am speaking on behalf of the CEC responding to Motions 78, 79 and 80, which are all being supported with qualifications.

Turning, firstly, to Motion 78, the Women's Charter, the importance of women's safety is well established in GMB policy. The establishment of a Women's Safety Charter could add value to GMB's current policies around women's issues, and further policy on harassment and abuse at work. The qualification is that the work of the Task Force is well underway, and it would need to be considered by the Task Force whether a charter complements that on-going work. GMB also holds national and regional women's events where specific criteria could be developed for the Charter.

On Motion 79 -- Support for Working Mothers in Light of Covid and Current Cost of Living -- GMB has an established history of support for increasing maternity rights and campaigning against low pay, especially with the cost-of-living increases. The qualification is that we wish to expand on the motions to include improvements on paternity and shared parental leave to enable non-birth parents to share the burden.

Finally, on Motion 80 -- LGBT+ Hate Crime -- the rise in harassment, abuse and hate crimes against LGBT people which has particularly but not exclusively affected trans

and non-binary people should appal all Union members. (*Applause*) It highlights an alarming regression after years of increasing LGBT legal and social rights and safety. We fully support *Stonewall* and its Diversity Champions Programme and are disturbed by the attacks on *Stonewall* during the past year. We encourage branches to campaign for major employers in the areas to sign up to *Stonewall* programmes. Our qualification is that GMB has an LGBT + strand leads' network rather than committee. We also believe the work to stop LGBT + hatred should go beyond hate crimes to eliminating the micro-aggressions and exclusions of LGBT people that continue in many workplaces.

Therefore, Congress, the CEC is asking for Motions 78, 79 and 80 to all be supported with the qualifications I have laid out. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Fiona. Does Southern Region accept the qualification to Motion 78? (*Agreed*) Do you accept the qualification to Motion 79? (*Agreed*) Does Birmingham & West Midlands accept the qualification to Motion 80? (*Agreed*) In that case, all those in favour of Motions 78, 79 and 80, please show? Thank you. All those against? That is carried.

Motion 78 was CARRIED.

Motion 79 was CARRIED.

Motion 80 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to Employment Policy: Harassment and Abuse. Can I have the mover of Motion 82?

EMPLOYMENT POLICY:

HARRASMENT & ABUSE

ASK FOR ANGELA

MOTION 82

82. ASK FOR ANGELA

This Congress asks for the Angela Campaign which was launched in 2016 and is currently used in clubs and bars where if an individual feels unsafe or threatened, to 'Ask for Angela' which is a signal that they need help. The member of staff will then give them the help they deserve. This could be reuniting them with a friend, seeing them to a taxi or by calling security or the police.

A colleague, whilst working security in a Job Centre, had been approached by a young woman and thankfully, having previously worked as a security officer in clubs and bars, was aware of what Ask for Angela meant and was able to get her the help she needed.

The branch is aware of friends and colleagues who have no knowledge of the Ask for Angela campaign and surprised that many had not heard of it.

A member of the branch speaking at the South West Labour Conference about the campaign was approached afterwards by a number of delegates asking for information because they had not heard about it.

Feeling that it would be useful to ensure that our members were informed, the branch contacted the Regional Secretary who immediately assigned an Officer to put some promotional materials together to make our members aware.

With domestic violence and abuse on the increase and many individuals feeling vulnerable, we now feel it would be useful to extend the Ask for Angela to be extended to other places such as shops and all public buildings.

We are therefore asking that the GMB make all of our members aware of Ask for Angela and launch a national campaign to have the scheme extended.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH P18 Wales & South West Region

(Carried)

NICOLA GRIFFITHS (GMB Wales & South West): Congress, I move Motion 82. This Congress asks for the Ask for Angela Campaign, which was launched in 2016 and is currently used in clubs and bars where if an individual feels unsafe or threatened, to 'Ask for Angela' which is a signal that they may need help. The member of staff will then give them the help they deserve. This could be reuniting them with a friend, seeing them to a taxi or by calling security or the police.

A colleague whilst working as a security officer in a Job Centre was telling me that he had been approached by a young woman Asking for Angela. Thankfully, having previously worked as a security officer in clubs and bars, he was aware of what 'Ask for Angela' meant and was able to get her the help she needed. Having spoken to a number of friends, colleagues and branch members, many have no knowledge of the 'Ask for Angela' Campaign.

Whilst one of our colleagues was speaking at the South West Labour Conference about the campaign they were approached afterwards by a number of delegates asking for more information because they had never heard of it. Feeling that it would be useful to ensure that our members were informed, the regional delegation was contacted and they immediately assigned an officer to put some promotional materials together to make our members aware.

A survey was conducted in 2020 and 72% of the population stated that they had suffered some form of sexual harassment in their lifetime. In the previous 12 months, 45% of the population reported incidents. Certain demographic groups were significantly more likely to have experienced at least one form of sexual harassment the last 12 months, namely, women, young people aged 15 to 24 and 24 to 34, ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ and those with disabilities. There were 31% reported incidents in clubs and bars, 28% on public transport, 42% while walking around and 29% in the workplace. Of those surveyed, 54% stated that the incidents had affected their quality of life.

In 2020 64 individuals lost their lives due to domestic violence, with 66,381 arrests being made. The London Metropolitan Police alone received 41,158 calls relating to domestic abuse between the 25th March 2020 and 1st June 2020. The survey reported

that there were a total of 59,305 child protection referrals due to domestic violence, an increase of 6%.

With cases of sexual harassment and domestic abuse on the increase, many individuals are feeling vulnerable. They may not have access to phones or even frequent bars. We now feel it would be useful to extend the 'Ask for Angela' campaign to other places and launch a national campaign to have the scheme extended. We also ask that the GMB ensures that all our members are made aware of 'Ask for Angela'. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Secunder?

SHARON HARRISON (Wales & South West): Barbara, could I have permission to say a few words before I second the motion?

THE PRESIDENT: It depends what those few words are but go ahead.

SHARON HARRISON: Our region, Wales & South West, would like to say a massive congratulations to Ruth Brady on becoming the first woman Regional Secretary. *(Applause)*

President and Congress, I am seconding Motion 82. This motion asks for the 'Ask Angela' Campaign, which is currently used in clubs and bars, to be extended to public places. The general idea is that if you are out on a date or even on just a night out and you are made to feel uncomfortable, you could ask a member of staff for Angela, and they would understand the situation and call for a taxi or help you to leave discreetly. In theory this is a fantastic idea which would help people to feel safer when going out at night to a pub, club or bar. However, what about other public venues?

There are many stories of individuals who feel threatened in public buildings. This motion highlights issues around gender violence and abuse, particularly in areas which are not covered within the usual night-time venues, which "Ask for Angela" was based around. We commend the colleagues who were able to assist the young woman due to their awareness of "Ask for Angela". This was because "Ask Angela" is recognised within certain areas and regions.

Wales & South West and London Regions currently have awareness of this campaign and frequently push acknowledgement of it and promote "Ask for Angela" through their networks and workplaces. We ask for regions to look at similar campaigns to launch within their regions and ensure this is developed to cover all public areas, not just night-time venues. We ask regional equality forums to adopt this and campaign within their regions and workplaces. Colleagues, we must still be reminded of the GMB Domestic Abuse Campaign, which highlights gender violence, abuse, workplace issues and provides education on these issues and the Model Workplace Charter.

We note that the most effective approach to eradicating harassment and abuse is to take the problem at its root cause, including through sex and relationship education, which addresses abuse and consent. Please support this motion and encourage your regions to research similar schemes and ensure "Ask for Angela" is not just used in

night venues but is covered throughout all areas and workplaces. I second.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Sharon. I call the mover for Motion 83.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

MOTION 83

83. SEXUAL HARASSMENT

This Congress agrees to formulate a policy that ensures that women members receive appropriate legal backing when they complain of sexual harassment/discrimination.

The decision for the union to take a case to an Employment Tribunal is judged on a fixed percentage element of winning a successful case.

Sexual harassment/discrimination is often concealed and muted by the perpetrators, this makes it difficult to secure witnesses or to provide the percentage of evidence required under present GMB guidance.

We cannot continue to say to our women members, come forward if you suffer discrimination or abuse and then abandon them when our usual criteria is not met.

We request that the CEC investigates and prepares a policy document that understands the particular obstacles that our members experience in these specific circumstances and establishes a method of proceeding to tribunal by use of different criteria.

GMB ORGANISING BRANCH

Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

(Referred)

CLAIRE BUTLIN (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): President and Congress, I am moving Motion 83 and I am a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* We ask Congress to formulate a policy covering sexual harassment to guarantee that women members receive the appropriate legal backing when complaints of this nature are made.

At present each case is reviewed and the decision to take a case to an employment tribunal is based upon a fixed percentage element of a successful case. The challenges we are faced with are that sexual harassment and discrimination is often concealed by the perpetrator, and it can make the current process described in the GMB Guidelines as “collecting evidence and securing witnesses” as a really challenging task.

As reps, we encourage women to come forward when they have suffered instances of sexual harassment, abuse or discrimination. As reps we pride ourselves on being supportive with members. So it is really difficult when we cannot continue to support them and we have to abandon them because we can't meet the criteria of the process.

We ask that the CEC investigates and prepares a policy document that takes into consideration and understands the challenges that we have and the obstacles that our members experience in these specific circumstances to establish a method of

proceeding to tribunal by using a different method. We would ask that you support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Claire. A seconder, please.

ADRIAN BLACKBURN (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): I second Motion 83. I agree with and fully support the request made by this motion asking that the CEC investigates the current policy used as not being fit for purpose in today's modern workplace. It is our belief that under the presence of GMB guidance too many of our members are not getting the justice they seek due to an outdated, fixed percentage element being used to decide whether or not a case has a chance of winning a tribunal hearing.

Recent times have slowly seen change for the betterment of workers. Company are being made more acutely aware that sexual harassment is not acceptable. More stringent and robust policies must be put in place. This can be partly attributed to the 'Me Too' movement, partly attributed to the work of Union activists and partly attributed to the courage of victims of sexual harassment coming forward and demanding to be heard and for justice to be served.

We request that the CEC look at today's current policies with fresh eyes and a new focus on victims' rights to be strengthened so justice can be sought and perpetrators educated and/or sanctioned. Too many victims are still being let down. Thank you. *(Applause)*

BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE

MOTION 84

84. BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE

This Congress believes that despite the few successes we have seen in workplaces, there is still a massive issue throughout the UK with respect to bullying and intimidation of the workforce. We see this as an endemic part of all public sector employers (Local Authorities and NHS) as well as in the private sector, both large and small. All too often in public services we see investigations end and management culprits moved department instead of being dealt with in a more appropriate manner, for us to see the issue to emerge there or to reappear in the same department because the culture is still there. Regardless of the situation and the employer, we call on Congress to support the campaign to eradicate this sort of behaviour from every workplace.

INVERNESS & HIGHLAND GEN (NOT COUNCIL) BRANCH

GMB Scotland

(Carried)

MARK VINCENT (GMB Scotland): Conference, I move Motion 84 – Bullying in the Workplace. I am a first-time delegate and first-time speaker. *(Applause)* What is the basic definition of "bullying", especially in the workplace? It is best described as "actions brought about which are unwarranted, undermining and humiliating to an individual or individuals". We, as a trade union, do our utmost to support and empower our members to challenge this behaviour with some degree of success. I say "some" because all too often we see the perpetrator protected by the employer,

especially in the public-sector organisations. They get moved around departments or to another area of the United Kingdom and we see the same behaviour being repeated because in the perpetrator's eyes, they got away with it.

This was the case in NHS Highland, where the interim CEO left just before the publication of the Sturrock Report as the bullying continued. It went to NHS Orkney and the culture of ignorance followed. There they became under pressure over inappropriate Covid movements and were moved again. Fortunately, the real bullies, the ones who have it in their nature, are few in number. The problem is that the culture they promote is contagious. It filters down through the staff and becomes commonplace. Why? Because all too often the staff witnessing the behaviour see it go unpunished and, because of the effectiveness of it on the vulnerable staff member, they adopt it themselves. So it become a contagious disease.

Finally, we see the bullying culture take hold in all levels and it is hard to eradicate once it gets that far. By employers being lackadaisical in their approach to dealing with this issue, we will never make this behaviour a thing of the past in the modern workplace. Employers need to understand the impact that this behaviour can have on their business. It leads, ultimately, to loss of productivity and profit, high staff absence, increased staff turnover, decreased loyalty, difficulty in recruiting due to reputational damage and, ultimately, if we as a trade union get our role right, law suits.

As a trade union, we are well placed to help our members with this issue. How we do it is up to us to decide. We have our power to campaign to the employer to improve their workplace, to the staff who feel they can take action and get results by collective grievances and our support to see it through.

During the past two years we have seen the worst cases of workplace bullying which have gone unpunished, such as fire and re-hire. We fought hard to stop it. However, it happened. Nearly two years on and we are about to see new statutory code of practice going through Parliament to deter employers from using this method. Will it be enough? Is the threat of a 25% uplift and compensation enough to deter those intent on breaching the guidelines already in place? Probably not if you look at the finances in the longer term. It is, as a trade union, our place to challenge it, and we should until it is stopped. We have the ability to push for zero tolerance with this devastating behaviour and to protect the workforce from it, to build a stronger education programme to support our members and workplace organisers in how to empower both groups to tackle the issue.

Congress, we ask that a national campaign is set up to make employers and the Government pay attention to ensure that those found bullying are accountable for their actions and not merely moved to different departments or boards to inflict their behaviour on another part of the workforce. We must make it a pledge by the GMB to our members. Congress, I ask you to support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Marc. I call the seconder, please.

LINDA WALKER (GMB Scotland): Congress, I second Motion 84 – Bullying in the Workplace. First, I would like to say, on behalf of GMB Scotland, congratulations to Louise Gilmore on being our first female Scottish Regional Secretary. *(Applause)*

Congress, in 2018 GMB called for an independent inquiry into bullying in NHS Highland, which resulted in the Sturrock Report. It is now three years since its publication and the bullying continues. We know that bullying in the workplace is also prevalent in many other organisations. Organisations need to build a culture where employees can work in an environment that is free from fear of intimidating behaviour. Poor organisational cultures lead to environments where bullying can thrive, especially where there is a focus on targets, over patient outcomes and where staff concerns are not listened to.

With the cost-of-living crisis, the realities of operating in an even more pressurised and financially-challenging situation cannot be an excuse for bullying and intimidation. People are the priority and we need to protect, as both the Sturrock and Francis Reports said, the freedom to speak up, because those who stand by and observe bullying and do nothing facilitate such behaviour continuing and contributing to the culture rather than changing it.

In NHS Highland it was said that there were considerable issues within the management. A particular issue in the public sector is that the perpetrator is often moved to another department within the organisation or moved to lead another public-sector organisation. This should not be allowed to be a resolution. The core has to be addressed, not moved, in order to bring an end to inappropriate behaviour infiltrating and influencing another workplace. People who bully have to be held accountable for their actions, even if they did not realise they were bullying, but this can be prevented by there being a requirement for those who progress into management positions to be appropriately trained for such responsibility and not merely promoted due to seniority or time served in a previous position.

I ask you to support this motion to ensure that those found bullying are accountable for their actions and not merely moved departments or boards to re-inflict their behaviour on another part of the workforce. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Linda. Does anyone wish to oppose any of these motions? *(No response)* No. In that case, I ask Donna Spicer to respond for the CEC, please.

DONNA SPICER (CEC): President and Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC, responding to Motions 82 and 83.

Firstly, on Motion 82 – Ask for Angela – the CEC is supporting with a qualification. We welcome the highlight this motions brings to gendered violence and abuse, particularly in the night-time economy but more widely. We commend the colleague who was able to assist the young woman, due to their awareness of ‘Ask Angela’. We remind delegates of the GMB Domestic Abuse Campaign, which highlights that gendered violence and abuse are workplace issues and provide education on the issue and a model workplace charter. We note that the ‘Ask for Angela’ Campaign is

active in some areas, including the South-West and London, but not across the whole of the UK and Ireland.

Our qualification is that rather than a national campaign we encourage regions to research similar schemes in their areas and work with employers to expand them out where appropriate.

Moving to Motion 83 – Sexual Harassment – the CEC is asking that this motion be referred. This motion raises an important issue. GMB is committed to ensuring that members, particularly women, have safe places, trusted procedures and policies in place if they have experienced sexual harassment or discrimination.

GMB has been taking significant steps to improve policies for members and employees of the Union. Indeed, safe spaces and protected disclosures have been adopted in a number of cases where regions have confronted historic cases and live allegations of wrongdoing. Legal assistance is covered under Rule 26 and there is no mention in the rule of a fixed percentage of winning a case.

Indeed, in questions regarding the use of disproportionate power, which often activates cases of sexual harassment, the moral imperative to see justice done is more important than a cool calculation of success rates. Change in any form of legal assistance requirements would need a rule amendment and a thorough examination of how that might impact the treatment of employment tribunal cases overall.

The CEC asks for this motion to be referred so that members of the Task Force for Positive Change can assess how the ‘asks’ in this motion might be incorporated into their work. The Task Force would also be best placed to undertake the research outlined in the motion.

Therefore, Congress, to sum up, the CEC is asking for Motion 82 to be supported with a qualification, and for Motion 83 to be referred. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Donna. Does Southern Region accept the qualification to Motion 82? (*Agreed*) Does Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region agree to refer Motion 83? (*Agreed*) So that one does not have to be voted on. The CEC is support Motion 84, so I put Motions 82 and 84 to the vote. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against? That is carried.

Motion 82 was CARRIED.

Motion 83 was REFERRED.

Motion 84 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: Before I go on to the next set of motions – 90, 91 and 94 on Health, Safety and Environment, I need to read out this announcement. “Delegates, as you will all know you have been issued with a code of conduct governing behaviour at Congress. I am therefore disappointed, to say the least, to have to announce to you that today we have had to send home a delegate who we believe has breached the code of conduct and fallen far short of the standards of behaviour we would expect of this proud Union. I must reiterate that we will not tolerate behaviour that is discriminatory, threatening or abusive. This decision was not taken lightly but

we are committed to ensuring that every member is safe and respected. I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who spoke up in this incident". (*Applause*)

EMPLOYMENT POLICY: HEALTH, SAFETY AND THE ENVIRONMENT BARGAINING FOR BETTER MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT IN THE WORKPLACE

MOTION 90

90. BARGAINING FOR BETTER MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT IN THE WORKPLACE

This conference notes that reporting of poor mental health conditions and challenges have gone up during the Covid pandemic and access to mental health services has been in decline for many years.

This conference also notes that many employers provide little support for those experiencing mental health problems and often the workplace can contribute and exacerbate mental health.

This includes but is not exclusive to:

- Cuts making working more stressful
- Putting pressure on staff to return to work before their sicknote expires
- Not allowing people to leave work when having a mental health crisis
- Not training managers in how to support staff experiencing mental health challenges

There is still huge social stigma against mental health conditions. This can be worse for those lesser understood conditions such as Personality Disorders, Eating Disorders, Bi-Polar disorder, PTSD, OCD and Schizophrenia

There is also a lack of support and flexibility for workers who care for those with mental health conditions.

This congress calls on the GMB to bargain with employers for the following improvements:

- Workplace Mental Health Policies which give managers a process which focuses on support for the individual
- Risk assessments to be carried out in a person-centred way to ensure staff are safe at work
- Reasonable adjustments to be put in place for example changing job roles if the work role is exacerbating the mental health conditions, an example being that working on self-scan checkouts in retail can increase anxiety
- Employer strategies to reduce stress, over-work and a lack of work life balance
- Paid sick pay
- Paid time off for those caring for someone with mental health needs
- Paid time off for treatment including attending therapy

This congress also calls on GMB to:

- Revise and update its 2016 Mental Health at Work Guide to include a range of industrial demands

W47 WILKINSON STORES Southern Region

(Carried)

ALEX BRENT (Southern): Good afternoon, Congress. I am a delegate of Southern Region and branch secretary for South London Universities. I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Thanks, Comrades. I was looking forward to that.

I am moving this motion on behalf of a colleague who, unfortunately, had to leave early but I am more than happy to move it. Mental health is an issue that is close to my heart. Depression runs in my family. My grandfather took his own life and I know of two people who have taken their own lives in the past year, including a friend from school. We cannot control what happens outside of work but we should be able to control what happens within it. I have represented members in entirely too many cases where mental health issues have been ignored, exacerbated and even created by bad managers, bad employers and bad or non-existent mental health policies.

Just this month I assisted a member who was in tears in their sickness-absence meeting because the constant calls and even a threat of dismissal had not only made their sickness worse but had created new ones – depression, anxiety and stress – because that is what mental health illness is. It's an illness that needs to be treated, just the same as any other. This member even turned up to work a full shift that day, despite having a sick note. That's how afraid she was of losing her job. The company is OCS, by the way, and we are coming for them as well.

This motion will address a lot of these issues and help prevent such incidents as happening by expanding the scope of reasonable adjustments and risk assessments, allowing staff to take paid leave for counselling and therapy and to care for those with mental health issues, to introduce employer strategies to reduce stress and overwork, and new policies to give managers an individual focused approach.

Finally, we need to raise and update GMB's Mental Health at Work toolkit.

Congress, please join me in moving this motion, which I am proud to move on behalf of my colleague as well as members. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Alex. Secunder, please.

TIM LANGLOIS (Southern): Congress, I am seconding Motion 90. GMB workplace reps know that our members are increasingly facing poor mental health. We reps know that the practical support we provide for our members with individual workplace issues will often be implemented by increasing levels of mental health issues that our members face. This situation has been made worse by over a decade of austerity cuts and the Covid-19 pandemic added to the cost-of-living crisis. Mental health is a workplace issue.

As a trade union we will continue to campaign and improve healthcare provision and make our Government provide better support for those who are experiencing poor mental health. However, our core business is to be campaigning in the workplace and bargaining with employers to reduce the likelihood of our members having poor

mental health because of their workplace and that employers provide for those members who do experience mental health problems. That must always be our focus. That is what this motion addresses.

We want to see more negotiations with employers and reduce the impact of workplace mental health. Let me give some examples of our Union bargaining with employers. These are policies which focus on individualised support for members, including proper risk assessments, time off and treatment including Talking Therapies. We need better sick pay, reasonable adjustments, including changing job roles if the job role is the cause of stress and mental health. Employers must deal with customers in the retail and service sectors that treat workers badly, including verbal and physical assaults. We need employers to reduce stress at work and a better work-life balance to reduce burnout.

The motion also calls for the GMB's brilliant 2016 Mental Health at Work Guide to be updated to include a wide-ranging set of industrial demands.

GMB will always campaign for people with mental health challenges and have a better treatment to breakdown stigma. This motion, rightly, focuses on changes that we have the ability to implement in the workplace. That is by bargaining with employers that they improve the workplace practices they are responsible for. I second. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tim. I call Motion 91.

**CAMPAIGN TO IMPOSE LEGAL ACCOUNTABILITY ON MANAGERS FOR MENTAL HEALTH INJURIES CAUSED BY THEIR ACTIONS
MOTION 91**

91. CAMPAIGN TO IMPOSE LEGAL ACCOUNTABILITY ON MANAGERS FOR MENTAL HEALTH INJURIES CAUSED BY THEIR ACTIONS

This Congress recognises the potential great harm done to employees' mental health by bullying, intimidation and discriminatory treatment from managers and others in charge of employees and workers.

This Congress also recognises that there is often no sanction imposed on managers for such behaviour, senior managers are inclined to 'close ranks' and protect them!

We have experience of vulnerable and disabled members suffering long term anxiety and depression which has been directly caused by managers yet no one was properly held accountable.

Further to GMB's support for a 'Mental Health at Work Act' Congress believes that there should be a campaign for legislation to impose legal duties on managers which would hold them personally to account for mental injury caused by their bullying, intimidation, and discriminatory actions, in a similar way to how they can be held personally accountable for physical injury caused by their health & safety breaches and omissions.

**BRAINTREE & BOCKING BRANCH
London Region**

(Carried)

ADRIAN STOHR (London): Congress, I move Motion 91, asking for a campaign to make managers legally accountable for mental health injuries.

We are pleased to be speaking on this motion because we have seen the results of members suffering bullying and discrimination by managers. It is difficult to find statistics on this, but the website *healthline.com* estimates that nearly two-thirds of workplace bullying is carried out by managers and supervisors. We have recent experience in our branch of two pregnant ladies being bullied resulting in extreme anxiety and panic attacks. One lady was initially bullied by a colleague and her managers failed to take her complaint seriously. To add insult to injury, they then made her pull up weeds from a cold yard surface in winter, and this led to extreme stress and humiliation. The lady who was homeworking and ranted down the phone for making a minor error feared being sacked and that led to her having a major panic attack. Both ladies needed extra care from their midwifery team -- this was at the height of the pandemic and before – as they were in danger of going into labour early. Clearly, that is very risky behaviour to the unborn child and to themselves.

We have a case of a lady with a known mental health condition being targeted by senior managers, the resultant stress and anxiety led to extensive time off work followed by early retirement.

Another case is that of a disabled employee who suffered serious stress. Because of discriminatory treatment, a manager insisted on his boldly-fought out Covid-19 health and safety measures being applied in his case. This resulted in him feeling singled out and excluded. He had to be off work for a long time.

Congress, we must remember the stress caused by these managers and managements. Actions may cause physical health problems, too, and could even result in suicide. Yes, suicide! We are sure that many of you will have witnessed or even suffered similar cases, yet in our experience when challenged senior managers tend to close ranks and support the offending colleague. Rarely is any meaningful sanction imposed.

Therefore, we would like to build on GMB's support for a Mental Health (At Work) Act. Please support and campaign to impose legal duties on managers and those in-charge of staff. We want them to be held personally accountable for the mental health problems caused by their bullying and discrimination. This would be similar to the way in which they can be held accountable for physical injuries caused by their health and safety breaches and omissions. We know that bullying, unlike harassment, is not currently illegal so it follows the campaign would aim to address this.

Congress, for the sake of their mental health, our members really need this campaign to be successful. Please support this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Adrian. Secunder?

TRUDI TEW (London): Madam President and Congress, I second Motion 91. Sadly, employers have been slow to recognise how harassment and bullying by

managers can affect employees' mental health and to act to stop it. This results in sick leave or staff resigning. If staff who have been invested in for training leave, the business loses experienced staff and has costs to recruit and train. If managers feared greater sanctions for their unacceptable behaviours towards staff, these costs could be reduced or even removed. That's how we can sell it to employers. Win-win! Happy employee in work – productive! Struggling NHS mental health services less needed. Employer faces inconvenience and cost and effective employee being off sick and/or recruitment of new staff, and doesn't have to deal with me or you in a sickness-absence process.

My son tried to commit suicide aged 17. I never want him or others to face mental health issues because of actions in their workplace. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Trudi. I call the mover for Motion 94.

CONTINENCE FOR ALL

MOTION 94

94. CONTINENCE FOR ALL

This Congress notes the average adult goes to the toilet between 4 and 10 times a day.

The average adult spends more than 1.5 years on the toilet.

Toileting is a need that we all have, some people have different ways to elevate themselves.

That if a person holds in their urine, they are more like to have a UTI which can lead to infections, confusion and possible falls which can lead to trauma and hospital visits and death.

Congress believes everyone should have the right to dignity whilst on the toilet.

Everyone should be able to use the toilet with space to meet their needs.

Everyone - not matter their ability - should be able to access a toilet that is adequate for them.

Congress resolves:

To lobby the government and other political parties to make a change in legislation regarding disabled access toilets having a toilet within the centre of the room to make it easier for 2 carers/assistants to transfer onto the toilet.

To actively make sure that any workplace we have recognition for also follow the same suit.

To make wipes available in bathrooms for use.

Just like sanitary towels, incontinence pads should be readily available in case of emergencies.

B23 BOLTON LOCAL GOVERNMENT BRANCH
North West & Irish Region

(Carried)

JO PITCHFORD (North West and Irish): President and Congress, “Taking a Leak”, “Having a wee”, “Spending a penny” and “Having to go” are all euphemisms for needing to go to the toilet. Research says that many people need to go to the bathroom up to 10 times to urinate in any 24-hour period. For many of us, that means the only inconvenience is needing to find a public convenience, whether in a building like *this* or in our workplaces or in the community when we are not at home.

However, if you have a physical disability which impacts on being able to use a bog-standard toilet and is reliant on needing to use what are often termed as “Disabled toilets”, that’s very often where the difficulties begin. If you use incontinence pads, have a colostomy bag or are needing the support of formal or informal carers to assist you to use a toilet, that’s where things can become much more difficult.

Speaking personally, my 79-year-old dad had to move into a care home at the start of the Covid pandemic. Communication was limited and we were fortunate to have pictures and communicate via video calls that we know we were so lucky to have. Fast forward to restrictions being relaxed over a year later, and we were finally in a place where we could take him out on outings. However, the man who had come through the care home doors wasn’t physically the same man. He was no longer able to communicate in advance his need to go to the toilet and reliant on continence and bell aids. Fortunately, having two daughters working in care was a blessing. Prep’d with the pads, wipes and the things that they thought would support him in the process, they whizzed into action. However, despite being trained in manual handling and how to support, they discovered that disabled bathrooms in pubs, restaurants and many public buildings are lacking in the space and, in some cases, the set-up that makes it so difficult to support somebody onto the toilet from a wheelchair. They may be fine for independent people who don’t require assistance. However, fitting three people into a bathroom space is often a challenge, even before you get the wheelchair in. For two trained care workers to support someone to use the toilet, there simply often isn’t the space. They put themselves at risk of musculo skeletal pain and the person they support at risk of injury. Statistics show that the leading causes of injury to carers include awkward posture. This makes the right to toilet both a moral and a Union issue.

Congress, we need to change things now. We need to campaign for better facilities which are safer for our members and safer for our families. Together let’s make life and work better for people. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Jo. The seconder, please. *(Formally seconded from the floor)* Great! Thank you. Does anyone wish to oppose any of those motions? *(No response)* No. Then I ask Kevin Hensby from the CEC to respond, please.

KEVAN HENSBY (CEC): President and Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC responding to Motion, Continence for All. The CEC applauds Bolton Local Government Branch on their awareness of toileting for all as a human right and not just a health and safety issue. Our qualification, therefore, is that the call for accessible toilets to have the toilet in the centre of the room looks to fit in with the calls of the Changing Places Campaign, which pushes for additional facilities on top of and not instead of existing accessible toilets. The design of the changing places includes a toilet in the middle of the room to allow spaces for two carers. The

existing design of some accessible toilets with the pedestal not in the centre of the room may enhance accessibility for some disabled people.

We, therefore, suggest that branches and regions campaign for employers to add additional changes to places instead of redesigning existing facilities. Moreover, we encourage branches and regions to negotiate with employers locally to provide free wipes and incontinence pads. Therefore, Congress, please support Motion 94 with the qualification that I have outlined. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kevan. Just to reiterate, the CEC is supporting Motions 90 and 91. North West & Irish Region, do you accept the qualification on Motion 94? *(Agreed)* Thank you. I can put all those to the vote. All those in favour, please show? All those against? Those motions are carried.

Motion 90 was CARRIED.

Motion 91 was CARRIED.

Motion 94 was CARRIED.

EMPLOYMENT POLICY: PENSIONS AND RETIREMENT

THE PRESIDENT: We are now on to Employment Policy: Pensions and Retirement, Motions 95 and 96. Can delegates also be advised that after these motions we will move on to Motions 111, 113, Composite 8, Motion 118, and 119, if you could be ready as well. Can I have the mover for Motion 95, please?

SECOND CLASS PENSIONS, SECOND CLASS CITIZENS, WITHIN THE PENAL SYSTEMS

MOTION 95

95. SECOND CLASS PENSIONS, SECOND CLASS CITIZENS WITHIN THE PENAL SYSTEMS

This Congress notes double standards of two-tier pension systems treating prisoners less equal to mainstream policy on pensions impacting on prisoner's family members, often wives, husband's or partners who are innocent of the crimes, which is a clear contradiction of the Equality Act 2010.

Prisoners cannot contribute as valued members of the state pension which is clearly unfair and inadequate, lacking help and assistance to those when leaving prison in older age being deprived of any independent income whilst unable to work in prison or able to contribute to the state.

In effect, an additional further punishment in onto older age for the prisoner in the form of inadequate retirement income affecting their rehabilitation back into the community plus financial impacts on their family members.

We call for the GMB union to campaign for the harmonisation of the points within the penal system equal to mainstream policy in line with equality and natural justice. In solidarity

CAMDEN APEX BRANCH

London Region

(Referred)

GEORGE EKONTANG (London): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Delegates, standard administration of pensions is creating a two-tier pension system treating prisoners less equal to other scheme members through the administration of mainstream pension policies. This is due to the fact that prisoners are not given the opportunity to make contributions to their pension even when they have worked in prison. Prisoners are not encouraged to prepare for life after prison with an ethos of self-reliance and work culture. Congress, prisoners do not contribute to the state pension which is clearly unfair. The current pension arrangements for prisoners are inadequate in that they do not make provision for prisoners when they are in prison in older age and deprive formally in prison pensioners of any means of independent income. They both can be changed as explained by Mark Fairhurst, National Chair of the Prison Officers Association. Prisoners should be paid the National Minimum Wage for their workshop jobs. The move would encourage a work ethos among prisoners while allowing them to build up thousands of pounds in saving by the time of their release enabling them to put down a deposit on a flat or make a fresh start in life. It would mean a major change in the economics of prisons. Workshop pay is typically around 50p per hour, with some of these workshops being run in partnership with private employers. In paying a minimum wage to prisoners a proportion could go to victim support, a proportion could go to saving for when they are released, and a proportion to spend in prison instead of the small discharge grant on their release.

Congress, we call for GMB union to campaign for a review of the impact of incarceration on National Insurance contributions the amount of pensions payable to prisoners on release and the amount of pension available to support their families. Please support this motion. I move. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, George. Secunder?

PAUL BLOCK (London): Afternoon, President. Afternoon, Congress. Congress, there is a clear differentiation between how prisoners and the general public are treated with regards to the state pension. When someone is in prison clearly they lose the ability that one normally has to make pension contributions. This will, therefore, have the effect that when the individual retires they would have a reduced pension. This will not only affect that individual but their family as well. If that person would have been the main earner or not does not really matter because the other partner would have had to assume full responsibility of any dependant children or ill members of the family, which in turn would impede their ability to contribute to a pension, or may do. This then punishes the family and other dependants of the person that was in prison which simply I do not think can be justified. The idea of prisoners, I understand, is to remove someone's liberty as a punishment and whilst they are serving their sentence hopefully to encourage a means of education and rehabilitation so that when they are released back into society they can change their lives and hopefully makes a fresh start. It rather defeats the object of this if society then persists to punish the individual and their family financially when they retire.

Congress, I ask that you support this motion and that the GMB lobby the government to seek fairness for people that have been within the penal system in order that they and their dependants are not at a financial disadvantage when they retire. Thanks for listening. *(Applause)*

TRIPLE LOCK FOR PENSIONERS

MOTION 96

96. TRIPLE LOCK FOR PENSIONERS

This Congress is deeply concerned at the removal of the Triple Lock for pensioners at a time when many are facing very significant rises in energy and other costs well above the anticipated inflation rate. Yet the Government have broken the protection that was put in place to ensure they did not struggle. Over 2 million pensioners in the UK are now living in poverty and we are seeing long-term life expectancy falling as a consequence!

This is a disgrace for a modern economy in an affluent country. Since 2013/14 Pension Poverty has grown by a third! According to Age UK nearly 1 million older people cannot afford an unexpected bill of £200 arriving on the doormat. What hope then for pensioners when inflation is running amok, and the protection has been removed!

Again, the Government has broken a promise while many of their well-paid supporters are making millions on the back of Covid.

We call upon the GMB to work with Age UK and other lobby groups to highlight the plight of pensioners and to get the Government to reinstate the triple lock. The Government must do more to protect many vulnerable pensioners and to stop the rise in pensioner poverty. We ask the Government and welfare benefit agencies to look urgently at the heating allowance paid to pensions this winter and to increase the payment to meet the unprecedented cost of heating, lighting and cooking; the essential needs of life for many pensioners.

Q22 MANCHESTER CENTRAL BRANCH

North West & Irish Region

(Carried)

KEVIN FLANAGAN (North West & Irish): Old-time delegate, old-time speaker. *(Applause)* Brothers, sisters, you know me I have always been honest and I am sorry to say – I am delighted to say – at one level since we last met I have actually crossed the threshold. I am actually one of the pensioner team. I know, I look too young! I know. I know.

This Government decided for this financial year it would break the guarantee of a triple lock as they believe it would be too expensive when others were not getting the benefit rises and austerity was biting hard. They created the austerity, didn't they? The increase was based on the Consumer Price Index. The rise was 3.1%. What a crafty move. This is much lower than was anticipated had they have kept the triple lock yet this year we know already the inflation will be 10, 11, possibly 12% so pensioners again will be left with a decision to choose between heating, eating, or a reasonable quality of life. What a disgrace.

Congress, the full state pension is now £9,630, £26.38 a day or £185 a week. Electricity costs have seen a 53% increase. Transport costs are rising by 13%. Many pensioners and other people's housing costs are up by 13%. In recent years you have heard me speak of poverty on many occasions because it deeply concerns me and I know it does you. We have over a million pensioners, two million pensioners close to poverty now, a million pensioners who cannot afford if a £200 bill came through the

letter box to pay it, that is the reality of Britain today, and that is a disgrace. Many pensioners have no other means to increase their income. They are dependent on the state pension. That is the only income they have and what they must rely on, and bear in mind this Conservative Government as part of its policy originally was going to try and lock it down to just the two locks, not the triple lock.

Well, well, well, I always say if Boris and his mates, his drinking mates, have a plan they are very crafty how they implement it and if you smell a rat you can usually believe there is a rat. Be careful because this may be a long-term move.

£26 a day means people have to make a choice, pensioners have to make very difficult choices. They say we cannot afford it. Oh, we can't afford it, is that the truth? £4bn we are about to burn of PPE that they got from their dodgy mates. Tell me you can't afford it, Boris, because you can afford it, and the triple lock, £4bn is going to be burnt by this Government.

Congress, I welcome the extra payments for heating allowance, I welcome some of those moves, but let's have decent pensions going forward. Congress, I move and I ask for your support because pensioners need it and they need it now. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kevin. Secunder?

MAREK KROLIC (North West & Irish): Congress, first-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Congress, some say that the pensioner issue should not be for younger people like me so pensioners get more when we are also struggling. Congress, that is rubbish. Be clear, this is an issue for all of us. Keep the triple lock and we will get a good pension for the future. Then when it is vital for a pension we will reap the benefits by keeping the value now. Good private pensions for life have gone, so what do the part-time and lower paid workers today have to hope for their retirement. There is only hope for a good state pension. Congress, this is an issue for justice now and for the future. Keep the triple lock and improve the state pension. Don't let the Government devalue it over the next few years. As a disabled campaigner I am proud to share this battle with pensioners, a win for them is a win for all of us. We have to protect our future. Congress, support this motion. Thank you for listening to me. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to speak in opposition to these motions? If not, I will call on Dean Gilligan to respond on behalf of the CEC. Dean.

DEAN GILLIGAN (CEC): Hello, wonderful people. It's great to be back, ain't it! And I have to follow Kevin and Marek. Come on! Look, I am going to go easy. All right. President, Congress, Dean Gilligan, speaking on behalf of the CEC responding to Motions 95 and 96. First of all, the CEC is asking that Motion 95, Second Class Pensions, Second Class Citizens within the Penal System, be referred back. The Motion raises an important issue about members of society who can be excluded from the state welfare system. The CEC is asking that this motion be referred back so that the CEC can investigate the implications this may have on National Insurance contributions and how that might affect the wider policy.

On Motion 96, Kevin and Marek, the Triple Lock for Pensioners, the CEC is supporting the motion with a qualification. The CEC is against the changes to the triple lock on pensions. This is yet another betrayal by this Tory Government. We shall hold them to account over this decision. While Government have said this is a temporary measure, we cannot trust them at their word. The motion states we should work with Age UK and other lobby groups. Our small qualification is that we will undertake a proper vetting on groups before working with them so we are sure their aims are in line with ours. If they require any funding that goes to the Finance & General Purpose Committee for scrutiny.

Therefore, Congress, to sum up, the CEC is asking that Motion 95 be referred back and that you support Motion 96 with the small qualification I have outlined.
(Applause)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dean. Does Northern Region agree to reference back? *(Agreed)* Thank you. North West Irish, do you accept the CEC qualification on Motion 96? *(Agreed)* Thank you. With that we will go to the vote on Motion 96. All those in favour please show. Any against? That is carried.

Motion 95 was REFERRED
Motion 96 was CARRIED.

EMPLOYMENT POLICY: RIGHTS AT WORK & INDUSTRIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY GENERAL

THE VICE PRESIDENT: We now go into the Employment Policy. Congress, we now have our largest group of motions for this afternoon. These are the motions on rights of at work. Can the speakers on Motion 111 please make their way to the front? It will take some time but after these motions we will debate Motions 178, 179, 180, and 188. Can the speakers of those motions also be ready? Thank you. Can I now have the mover of Motion 111?

NIGHT WORKERS DESERVE BETTER PAY AND CONDITIONS MOTION 111

111. NIGHT WORKERS DESERVE BETTER PAY AND CONDITIONS

This Congress notes that there are 3.5 million people in the UK who do night shift work.

There has been a steady flow of studies over recent years that suggests long-term night-working is extremely bad for your health. It's a sobering thought for those who have to work at night due to their preferred profession. Women also account for more than two thirds of the growth, following an increase in care work and nursing.

- One in eight employees work night shifts, according to a TUC study
- Analysis shows that 1 in 3 night-workers earn less than £10 an hour
- Key workers are twice as likely to do night shifts than other workers
- Many working overnight are on low pay and insecure contracts, warns the union body

Workers, particularly women, are at greater risk of harassment and attacks in their journey to and from work when it's late at night.

Congress, as well as being detrimental to family life, the health risks of regular night work include cardiovascular disease, diabetes and depression.

We can see through medical research which indicates that those people who work nights – especially night and day shifts on a rotation, actually die earlier. It seems unfair that people are paying into a pension for a shorter retirement. It is also increasingly likely that night shift workers will be unwell – diabetes, increased likelihood of breast cancer, sleep deprivation etc so not just a shorter retirement but less enjoyable one also.

Congress, could there be some sort of retirement 'credit system' where for each hour worked between certain hours you are credited with time to retire earlier on full pension??

We fundamentally believe that there should be a mechanism that enables night workers to retire earlier and have full access to their pension without a reduction in benefits.

This motion seeks an overhaul of night shift workers pay and conditions including:

- Night shift worker minimum pay
- Annual health Checks for all night shift workers
- Night Workers' safety protection rights
- Early retirement on a full pension

We urge you to support our motion for better pay and conditions for night shift workers.

CITY OF LONDON BRANCH

London Region

(Carried)

ABDI DUALE (London): First-time delegate and first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Congress, one in eight employees in the UK work nightshifts, that is 3.5 million people. Key workers are twice as likely to work nights. An increasing number of nightshift workers are women, partly driven by an increase in nursing and care work. Many of the people who work nights are on low pay and insecure contracts. Many are at greater risk of harassment and attack in their journey to work and from work. Numerous studies have found that those who do long-term night work can suffer severe health impacts. That is an aside from the important impact it has on family life and relationships.

One security nightshift worker, Luke, told us, “Working nights makes you feel jetlagged and constantly feeling rundown. I also worry about leaving my family at home at night.” Another, Monica, told us, “Working nights affects everything you do, your mental health, your physical health, your relationships, and your family.” Their experiences are supported by medical evidence which shows that nightshift workers are more likely to suffer from diabetes, cancer, and sleep deprivation, and that they are likely to die earlier, especially those who work day and nightshifts on rotation. Yet too often not enough is done to protect workers against these health impacts and the impact on health and life expectancy is not recognised when it comes to retirement and pensions. Nightshift workers are paying in for pensions for retirement that will be shorter due to early death, and less enjoyable due to the increased health problems.

This motion proposes there should be a mechanism to enable night workers to retire early, with full access to their pension and without a reduction in benefits. We propose that there should be greater protections against those negative health impacts which lead to reduced life expectancy with a minimum nightshift worker pay rate, improved safety protection rights, and annual health checks for all nightshift workers. We all depend on nightshift workers and, Congress, they should not be paying for it with shorter lives. Please vote to support the motion to protect night workers. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, colleague. Secunder?

LORNA GAYLE (London): Night work, who wants to do night work? Congress, it is clear from what we have just heard that the valuable workers who help keep the country running are not being offered the best possible pay and conditions, and protections, that the Government and the industry can offer in order to support them financially in their retirement years. For most people it is not only key workers that will suffer. It seems like we have become a 24-hour working country, therefore the demand for shift work, unsocial hours, and in particular night work, is increasing rapidly.

The current benefits and conditions are inadequate for these hardworking employees and must be changed as a matter of urgency because people are retiring daily and they are losing out. While the Government is in Parliament busy partying by day or by night, it seems like they are partying all the time so we do not know whether it is day or night, there are people working through the night to keep the country running. They deserve to be rewarded for their hard work, for their hard labour, and we say that they should retire early on full pension. Congress, I urge you to support. I second. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Lorna. Mover of 113?

REPRESENTATION IN INVESTIGATION MEETINGS MOTION 113

113. REPRESENTATION IN INVESTIGATION MEETINGS

This Congress calls on the GMB to campaign to formally change legislation that will allow union reps to represent members in investigation meetings.

Currently there is no right for our members to be represented in an investigation meeting, it is solely down to the employer's discretion. Members often feel intimidated in these meetings and often panic and end up not coming across well. Just having a rep there is enough to put members at ease and can be enough to help the process and get a good outcome for the member before it gets to a formal hearing.

This Congress mandates the GMB to make this official policy and implement it into to future collective agreements whilst campaigning to make this a legal right.

NORTH DEVON BRANCH NO4 Wales & South West Region

(Carried)

PAUL HUNT (GMB Wales & South West): Congress, this motion calls on the GMB to campaign to formally change employment legislation in the UK that will allow union reps to represent their members during investigation meetings. Currently, in a disciplinary investigation meeting the employee or worker has no legal right to be accompanied but it states in the ACAS code guideline that it is good practice for employers to allow representation. However, we all know that most employers out there will not allow trade union representation at the investigation stages, if they have no legal right to do so. Before any investigation the employee or member has no legal right to see any evidence against them, and the majority walk into these meetings having no knowledge of why they have been placed under investigation. It is a harrowing experience and not understanding why they have been called just adds to the worry and causes anxiety.

While an investigation should be completed as quickly as possible, this is not always the case. We understand the investigation needs to be thorough and fair but, colleagues, how is it fair when our members sometimes have no understanding of why they are under investigation and the intimidating situation knowing they are not allowed to be accompanied by the union who they trust and rely on to be at their side. Being under investigation can be very stressful so it is important that members can have some sort of comfort knowing they will have their representative to guide and advise them. It should be vital that as trade union representatives we can look out for all our members' wellbeing and offer support from start to finish of the process. As trade union representatives we can ensure that our members are communicated with in the right way and given step-by-step clarification to ensure the process is being undertaken correctly. If the evidence which is to be investigated is more serious or complex, such as potential gross misconduct, discrimination, then the employer may appoint someone more senior or experienced to undertake the process. This in itself makes the process completely unfair and unbalanced. It is essential, colleagues, that we push to ensure that in all disciplinary investigations our members have the right to be accompanied and that fairness is enshrined throughout all meetings that are undertaken.

Congress, GMB members and all trade union members have the right to have support, guidance, and representation, within these meetings. It is essential you support this motion to imbed fairness throughout all disciplinary meetings. I move. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Paul. Secunder?

DEREK BREWER (GMB Wales & South West): Congress, as my colleague has said, there is currently no right for our members to be represented in any investigatory meeting. It is exclusively down to the employer's discretion. Members often feel intimidated in these meetings. They often panic and give up far more than they should. Just being a rep there gives them that edge; at least you know what you are on about and they look to us reps and want to know that we are there for them. We put their mind at ease. Apart from everything else that my colleague has said, there is only one thing I can say, I second. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Derek. Mover of Composite 8.

ANTI TRADE UNION LAWS COMPOSITE 8

C8. Anti Trade Union Laws

Covering Motions:

114. ANTI-UNION LAWS - GMB SCOTLAND

115. TRADE UNION LAW - SOUTHERN REGION

This Congress notes and re-affirms:

- Policy adopted at the 2021 congress to “campaign against the introduction of new anti-union laws and to campaign for the scrapping of all anti-union laws” and to “campaign for a comprehensive charter of workers’ rights to be put on the statute book.”
- The specific proposals for such campaigning contained in the motion passed at the 2021 congress (production of GMB campaigning material, coverage of campaign in GMB publications, lobbying MPs, calling on MPs to support strikes in their constituencies, joint campaigning with other unions).

Congress further notes that a number of unions have recently adopted policy advocating a national trade union demonstration against the anti-union laws, and that the last TUC congress adopted policy in favour of a national rally against the anti-union laws.

In order to progress existing policy, Congress therefore instructs the Central Executive Council to:

- Support a national demonstration against the anti-union laws and approach other unions with the same policy, with a view to holding such a demonstration.
- Promote closer working with other unions and campaigns which share the policy of scrapping all anti-union laws.
- Pursue implementation of the proposals contained in the motion passed by the 2021 Congress.
- Present a report to the 2023 Congress on campaigning undertaken by the GMB against anti-union laws.

Moving Region: GMB SCOTLAND
Seconding Region: SOUTHERN

(Carried)

HAILEY MAXWELL (GMB Scotland): Between 1979 and 1997, the Conservative Government passed eight pieces of legislation attacking trade unions. The goal of that legislation was straightforward. As industry after industry was laid waste by Thatcherism as more and more of the public sector was privatised, as one community after another was ravaged by deindustrialisation, the Tories wanted to destroy the ability of our Movement to defend our members and to deplete our identity. The blows they struck then have scarred us.

After 18 years of Tory rule we had 13 years of Labour Governments but not a single anti-trade union law was taken off the statute book. After the Tories returned to power in 2010, we saw more legal hoops and complex bureaucracy to jump through before we can go on strike. We saw even greater restrictions on picketing and longer advanced notice of strikes for employers. The 2019 election promised more anti-trade union laws in the shape of minimum service agreements. There is a cost-of-living crisis in this country which will put workers, especially the lowest paid, most precarious, and unorganised workers into unemployment, deprivation, and misery. Working people in this country are cold, hungry, and out of options.

For Tories and employers Covid-19 has meant an excuse to sack workers, to fire and re-hire workers, like the despicable actions of P&O, and to attack workers' pay and conditions of employment, while the Tories and employers line up for a new assault on workers' rights within the Labour Party. In Scotland too we have the SNP Ministers for Fair Work and Just Transition telling us to be sensible and compromising when asking for affordable wage increases. Boris Johnson plans to put forward an agenda of corporate welfare, economic deregulation, and cuts, cuts, cuts, while blaming workers who dare to demand better wages for a broken economy, where Patel continues to criminalise process and civil disobedience with a hard hand.

A summer of discontent is already brewing with the biggest transport strike in a generation planned this month, yet a spokesperson for Keir Starmer has commented, "The strike shouldn't go ahead. Nobody wants to see industrial action that is disruptive." The point of industrial action and striking is to withdraw our labour and to use our power. The point is to be destructive and to cause inconvenience. (*Applause*) We need to prioritise getting all anti-union laws off the statute books and hold the politicians we fund to account when they are complicit and upholding the laws which domesticate and weaken us. (*Applause*) We will not beat back the attacks on the working class by petitioning, letter writing, and lobbying. We will not build worker power by relying on tribunals and courts. We will raise workers' standards of living by industrial organising through protest, direct action in the workplace, by strikes, and by refusing the legal restrictions imposed on us by a government who laugh as they break their own laws with impunity and send police to our pickets to take union officials away in handcuffs. We cannot continue to allow our power to be taken from us by politicians, police, and lawyers. It is time to take power back into the hands of the labour force of this country.

Congress, our union was founded by Eleanor Marx and others in the strikes of the Match Girls and the Gas Workers, and the Dockworkers, in the 1890s. They did not hold a postal vote before they went on strike, they did not give employers advance notice of their strikes, and they did not have just six members on a picket line. They did not provide a minimum service during their strikes and they did not hesitate to strike in solidarity, and that is why they won.

Congress, I urge you to support this Composite and more importantly campaign to scrap all anti-trade union laws. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Hailey. Secunder?

DAVID TUCKWELL (Southern): President, Congress, Blair once described Britain as having the most restrictive union laws in the Western world. These laws came in over years of Tory rule and shamefully were left untouched by 16 years of a Labour government. They constrain when and how we can take industrial action and over what issues creating an imbalance of power in the workplace. Notice periods for ballots and action mean what we are trying to prevent has often happened by the time we can take industrial action over it. A ban on secondary action prevents us striking in solidarity with other workers. We cannot strike over political issues like climate change or in defence of the NHS. A Tory manifesto commitment to bring forward

new laws imposing minimum service requirements will effectively ban all-out strikes in the transport sector.

This motion is not reaffirming the policy. It commits us to action and recommits GMB to a clear policy, the abolition of all laws restricting workers' ability to organise and take action, a comprehensive charter of positive workers' rights, to work with other unions, such as RMT, and Unite, and the TUC, who have all committed to do so already. So let's get going. We should demand Labour commits to repealing these laws which successive Labour conferences have called for but we cannot wait for a Labour government. We must act now. Congress, the right to withdraw one's labour is a fundamental democratic and civil liberty that now exists - (*Applause*) - only in the distorted and highly constrained form. The labour Movement is at its best when it is a tribune for democracy; that means fighting for trade union freedom. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, David. Mover of Motion 118?

PROFESSIONAL BODY FEES

MOTION 118

118. PROFESSIONAL BODY FEES

This Congress notes that, while we acknowledge and welcome the efforts brought forward to the pay negotiations for the inclusion of registration to professional bodies which are a mandatory part of employment, this has been solely targeted to the health and social care sectors. We feel that this falls short of what we should be doing for our members and the wider workforce. There are a multitude of jobs where the registration to a professional body is a mandatory requirement, and as such, the responsibility to provide finance for this should fall to the employer. In a time of ever-increasing financial pressures to the workforce through increases to tax, national insurance as well as pay rises falling short of the increased cost of living, we call on Congress to support a public and government campaign to make this a part of common employment terms.

INVERNESS & HIGHLAND GEN (NOT COUNCIL) BRANCH

GMB Scotland

(*Carried*)

LINDA WALKER (GMB Scotland): President, Congress, registration fees, what are they? They are part of the contractual obligation that employees in the NHS and care industry, whether private, local government, or third sector, have to pay annually out of their own pocket to be able to do their job. These registration fees are in place to protect the public. The General Dental Council states their role is to protect patients and regulate the dental team. The Scottish Social Services Council states their role is for public protection and regulating the workforce. The Nursing & Midwifery Council states their key role is to regulate, and the Health & Care Professionals Council states their role is to protect the public, and the list goes on.

Whilst those I have mentioned have to pay registration fees out of their own pocket to be able to do their job, some also have to pay for professional indemnity and this is to protect themselves, but it is a requirement of registration again paid out of the worker's own pocket, some have to pay application fees to get registered as well as

the registration fee at the same time as paying an annual retention fee, yes, we really do have to pay to go to work.

For local authority employees who are required to hold a special driving licence, i.e. HGC, LGV, PCV, or any other special driving licence, the costs of obtaining this licence are paid for by the employer and the roles are predominantly male. Construction workers, also male dominated, require a construction skill certification scheme card to provide proof that they have the appropriate training and qualifications for the job they do on site. These are paid for by the employer.

In the Health & Social Care industry workers are predominantly female. Many working females often have other caring responsibilities be that children, parents, or other family, which often leads to less than full-time paid employment, yet registration fees are not adjusted as to how many hours you work; the same fee is payable whether you work full-time or part-time.

We are in a time of ever-increasing financial pressures with increases to tax and National Insurance and this is on top of recurring unacceptable pay awards that are not in line with the rising cost of living. Families have to make tough decisions to eat or heat, yet registration fees either have been frozen or have risen but not reduced or removed. Health & Social Care workers need to work to support themselves, and their families, but they also need to be there for you and I when needed. How can we expect these workers to have added financial worries over whether they can afford to pay their registration fees so that they can continue to work? It is time for parity and removal of indirect discrimination, having the employer take responsibility for registration fees, especially if they are there to protect the public and having a mechanism for reduced registration fees for less than full-time workers would support addressing this paying to go to work financial burden. The Health & Social Care workforce is haemorrhaging at a rapid pace. It is buckling under the modern-day pressures of a system not fit for purpose, but that is another issue for another day. We have members working in these systems and we need to address this issue and stop paying to go to work. We call on Congress to work with the affiliates to formulate and support a public government campaign to make working fees part of common employment terms and reduce the inequities currently in place. Congress, I ask you to support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Linda. Secunder?

TIM FRASER (GMB Scotland): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) My colleague in her motion has placed her point well and may I reiterate these fees must be paid for Social Care Wales, Northern Ireland Social Care Services, and Social Work England. These too all state to protect the public. However, we need to do something that covers all professionals. It is a requirement for the employment whether you are in care, an environmental health officer, or a building standards inspector, but the employer should be paying the fees. The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors registration fee for an associate is currently £292 per year. This is someone who is on a Scottish local authority pay of £26,000 to £39,000 salary at the bottom of the registration. It is a mandatory requirement for the job to protect against the actions of the person. This is not paid by the employer yet we see provisions for the ADR and the CPC certificates for some employees willing to be

paid for by the employer. These are certificates which are a requirement to do the job. When registration to a professional body is a requirement to do the job then shouldn't these fees be paid for too if we are to maintain a fair and equal work environment. All sectors of employment are suffering from recruitment issues and mostly in the health and care sector. This is a small way forward to help the issue. I support the call on Congress to support this motion that I second. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tim. Can I have the mover of 119?

BANK BRANCH CLOSURES

MOTION 119

119. BANK BRANCH CLOSURES

This Congress notes the large number of bank and building society branch closures across all our communities. Over the past few years, bank and building society branches have been disappearing from our high streets at an alarming rate.

Banks say that this has been driven by a rapid increase in online and mobile banking, and a rapid decline in the use of physical branches. This justification ignores the impact on local communities, small businesses, the vulnerable and banking staff. They are closing branches without proper consideration being given of their customers circumstances and show no loyalty to their customers in return for many of their customers own loyalty to them over the years, in particular pensioners.

They have pushed for and encouraged online banking and then use that as the reason for branch closures and staff redundancies. Some people, especially a large number of pensioners, do not have the facilities for online banking and have no aptitude with modern technologies, and there are those that do not trust online banking anyway! This leaves many of our pensioners facing the hardship of trying to get to a bank, sometimes miles away, by walking and using public transport as many no longer can drive. Some cannot even do that due to the problems brought on by old age so are isolated and helpless except for the phone which is also no longer possible for some, and therefore rely only on the posted bank statements and their friends / family for assistance.

Members of GMB Unite M23 Branch condemn the unfair practice of the banks closing branches throughout the UK. Research by consumer group "Which!" has found:

- Banks and building societies have closed (or scheduled the closure) of 4,735 branches since January 2015, at a rate of around 54 each month. Along with the rest of the figures, this includes branches at 20 major current account providers.
- The NatWest Group, which comprises of NatWest, Royal Bank of Scotland and Ulster Bank, will have closed 1,110 branches by the end of 2022.
- Lloyds Banking Group, made up of Lloyds Bank, Halifax and Bank of Scotland, has shut down 723 sites, rising to 770 in 2022.
- Barclays is the individual bank that has reduced its network the most, with 841 branches having closed - or scheduled to - by the end of 2022.

The Government needs to recognise that the banking sector has social responsibilities and is a vital public service and closure decisions must be influenced by the needs of the local

communities and businesses impacted. Public impact assessments are vital ahead of closure plans being made. The need for meaningful consultation with the local community is evident.

A branch closure can also have devastating consequences for small businesses and therefore the local economy. Extensive research has found that a branch closure is often linked to a reduction in lending to local small business. The closure reflects and drives a reduction in demand so that businesses are less likely to sell or to grow.

Rural communities have been particularly hard hit by the closure of large number of bank branches as there is simply no viable banking alternative for customers. A study by the University of Nottingham found that: “the faster than average withdrawal of branches from poorer socioeconomic areas raises concerns about the extent to which different types of financial institutions are present in areas of economic distress, and the implications of this. As mainstream financial institutions continue to pull out of economically distressed areas... so they are replaced by more predatory forms of financial institution.”

This motion calls for a national GMB campaign to call on the banking industry to stop abandoning the local communities and workforce which bring the sector its vast profits. None of the new technologies replace the experience and skill of bank branch staff. No app or website can provide some of the most vulnerable and socially excluded in our society with the face-to-face financial assistance they need.

GMB UNITE BRANCH London Region

(Carried)

OBI AMADI (London): Good afternoon, Vice President, Congress, This motion calls for a national GMB campaign to call on the banking industry to stop abandoning local communities and workforce, which brings this sector its vast profits. None of the new technologies replace the experience and skill of bank branch staff. No Apple website can provide some of the most vulnerable and socially excluded in our society with the face-to-face financial assistance they need. The number of bank and building society branches that are closing is large, so large, so many are just disappearing from our high streets. The banks justify closures as a result of the increased mobile and online banking leaving physical branch use in decline. No thought seems to have been given to the impact on the local communities, local businesses, or even bank staff themselves, who are losing their livelihoods.

So, as these institutions close down their branches, often in areas of economical distress, there is the rise of alternative or more predatory forms of financial institutions. There has been encouragement, indeed a push, to online and mobile banking and to use this as a reason for branch closure. There is no consideration for people in the community, the elderly and the vulnerable, who do not or cannot use online or mobile services for a variety of reasons, including the lack of trust. The vulnerable and elderly may need to walk or to use public transport, or even rely on friends and family to access branches now far away as they cannot drive, but some cannot even do that as they are isolated and rely on services supplied either on paper or by phone.

We are concerned about the practice of branch closures. Research by consumer group Which? has found banks and building societies have closed or have planned closures of 4,735 branches since January 2015, which averages at 54 per month. Another example, the NatWest Group, which is NatWest, Royal Bank of Scotland, and Ulster Bank, will have closed 1,110 branches by the end of 2022. I am sure you agree that that is ridiculous.

The Government needs to consider seriously the social responsibility the banking sector has and, as a vital public service, recognise the need to local communities and businesses. Public impact assessments should be done ahead of closures and this means meaningful consultations with local communities and users. It is not just financial transactions that happen in branches. There is a really valuable social element for very many people.

Closures also impact on small businesses. Research shows that branch closures are linked to a reduced lending to small businesses. This then drives a reduction in demand meaning businesses are less likely to be able to sell or grow which then impacts negatively on the local economy.

We have given them our loyalty and custom for years but it is not being reciprocated. Thank you, Congress, please support this motion to campaign. I move. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Obi. Secunder?

UNA BYRNE (London): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Almost half of Britain's bank branches have closed since 2015. Closing local branches shuts many people out of vital financial services and it impacts their ability to access their own money. Closing local banks means local job losses and that in itself can have a wide range of negative impacts for the workers themselves, their families, and the wider communities. Bank closures also increase social isolation for the users of the banks. Banks often point to decline in footfall and the rise of digital banking as justification for the closure of banks but LINK, which runs the majority of Britain's cash machines, estimates that as many as five million people still rely on cash.

The effects of branch closures can be particularly severe in rural communities where residents often have to travel for miles to reach their nearest alternative source of cash and where digital infrastructure may be poor, making it harder to embrace online banking and payments. The proliferation of self-service technology and online platforms remove the opportunity for human contact and social interaction, thereby increasing loneliness and feelings of isolation. Online banking can also often be an extremely stressful experience: you spend an hour on a credit card application and then the online form crashes. Often it is just easier and nicer to deal with a person. Not everybody has Smart phones or laptops, not everybody can access the internet, and not everybody can afford unlimited data.

Shutting bank branches, making shops cashless, and resources and services only accessible to digital platforms, is exclusionary. We must ensure that nobody is left behind by the digital revolution. We need to keep physical resources and facilities like banks open. In a world defined by money, where people can literally starve without it, we need to ensure that people, and particularly the most vulnerable in our

communities, can access their money. I second this motion. Please support.
(*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Una. Does anyone wish to speak in opposition to the motions? No? I will now call Margi Clarke to respond on behalf of the CEC.

MARGI CLARKE (CEC): Vice President, Congress, speaking on behalf of the CEC responding to Composite 8 and Motions 118 and 119. On Composite 8, Anti Trade Union Laws, the CEC is supporting this with qualifications. Our qualifications are, first of all, that whilst demonstrations are a key pillar of our Movement, we will reserve the right to consider carefully taking this action in the interests of GMB members. Our second qualification is that we will commit to reporting progress in the General Secretary's Report in 2023 should any significant progress have been made.

On Motion 118, professional body fees, the CEC is supporting this motion with a qualification. The motion raises an important point about workers essentially not having to pay to work. GMB has members in the security sector, for instance, who will have to pay for FIA licences. Some GMB organised employers pay the costs of these professional body fees already and will do so because we have won through negotiation and our members' industrial pressure. Our qualification is that while we agree that employers should pay these fees, we would want to prioritise campaigning on these issues through members' claims in the workplace rather than pursuing a legislative change at this time.

Finally, on Motion 119, bank closures, the CEC is also supporting this motion with a qualification. The CEC agrees with the motion in almost its entirety. The qualification is that while GMB represent members in the cash-in-transit sector, we do not represent bank branch workers. Therefore, developing a national campaign would possibly interfere with the work that the leading and recognised trade unions are undertaking on this issue. Elements of this can be incorporated into the *Access to Cash Campaign* without interfering with sister unions' efforts.

To sum up, Congress, the CEC is asking that Composite 8, and both Motions 118 and 119, be supported with the qualifications I have outlined. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Margi. Colleagues, the CEC is supporting Motion 111. All those in favour please show. Any against? That is carried.

Motion 111 was CARRIED

THE VICE PRESIDENT: They are also supporting Motion 113. All those in favour show. Against? That is carried.

Motion 113 was CARRIED.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Does Scotland accept the qualification for Composite 8? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Does Southern accept the qualification for Composite 8? (*Agreed*) The CEC is supporting with a qualification. All those please show. Any against? That is carried.

Composite 8 was CARRIED.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Does Scotland accept and support with a qualification of 118? (*Agreed*) Thank you. All those in favour please show. Any against? That is carried.

Motion 118 was CARRIED

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Does London accept the support with a qualification for 119? (*Agreed*) Thank you. All those in favour please show. Any against? That is carried.

Motion 119 was CARRIED.

INDUSTRIAL & ECONOMIC POLICY: CORONAVIRUS AND REBUILDING THE ECONOMY

THE GOVERNMENT HANDLING OVER THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS MOTION 178

178. THE GOVERNMENT HANDLING OVER THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

This Congress condemns the Government for errors and delayed decisions for lockdown spring 2020.

The confusion over mask wearing delaying lockdown and many hospitality venues shut.

The pandemic affected everyone however hotels, bars, restaurants had many redundancies or they had to furlough their staff.

The hospitality sectors were facing ongoing closure, job losses many of our members dealing with mental health issues due to redundancies, staff shortages as employees leaving hospitality sectors to find employment elsewhere.

The Government should consider more support for the hospitality sectors to help them recover from the coronavirus crisis.

LONDON HOTELS & CATERING BRANCH London Region

(Carried)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Congress, we will now debate motions on Covid-19 and rebuilding the economy, and those are Motion 178, 179, 180, and 188. After these motions we will debate Motions 88 and 89. Can we have the mover of Motion 178 to the rostrum, please?

MARK WATSON (London): This motion was originally written by a member of the London Hotels & Catering Group. I have edited it to make it easier for me to read but I hope it covers what he wants to say. He was rightly very angry.

As a hospitality sector worker I would like to move that this Congress condemns the Government for the delays and errors in their decisions in implementing the lockdown

in 2020. None of us will ever forget the year 2020, the year when this Government put millions of people into extended lockdowns, when they issued confusing communications, and as it has been shown took absolutely no notice of their own guidelines. Hospitality was the first victim even before lockdown. Be careful of crowded places, they said, and the public did. Pubs and restaurants, all of hospitality, began to become a ghost business even before lockdown began for the rest of us. The public made great sacrifices throughout the pandemic. They stayed at home. They did not meet friends or extended family. They missed milestone birthdays and important celebrations. People were separated from dying loved ones, they were unable to hold their hands as they died, they were unable to attend funerals because they followed the Covid rules. The thought that Boris Johnson, the man who has set these rules, was in fact breaking them is horrific and shocking to millions of decent people in this country.

The pandemic affected everyone but some industries were hit harder. As we were the first sector to experience a lockdown so hospitality was one of the last sectors to fully open up. We were particular victims of the stop-start approach to the virus control. Many pubs and restaurants had been driven to collapse by this approach. Hospitality could not start at a moment's notice; it required planning and a long lead in. Some decisions did not help us. The hospitality industry is on its knees in many places. Many workers left us to go back to Europe. There is a chronic shortage of staff. The staff who are there work longer and longer hours, often without pay, to keep struggling businesses afloat. If you think that your pubs and restaurants, and hotels, should keep going then, quite frankly, the Government should give urgent help to this sector. I call on Congress to support the motion and lobby the Government to greater help for this sector. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mark. Secunder, please?

VICKY HOOD (London): First-time delegate, first-time speaker, and a wee bit nervous. (*Applause*)

Thankfully, I do not work in hospitality any more and I have to say thankfully because those who do are some of the lowest paid workers on the most precarious contracts with the worst terms and conditions in the country. Zero-hour contracts and wrongful and constructive dismissal are all common practice in an industry that is criminally underrepresented by trade unions. Over the last two years many of us were able to work from home, some were furloughed and relied on savings to top that up. Well, you cannot build up savings when you are on minimum wage and for some hospitality workers who were already on the breadline that 80% furlough pay meant the choice between heating and eating. Many workers were forced back into work early lest they face dismissal, fearing for their lives as Covid cases continued to rise and some lost colleagues who caught Covid at work in the summer of 2020 for the sake of serving us half-price meals under the *Eat Out to Help Out* scheme. Those who could leave did, leaving the industry heavily understaffed. Some still suffer from long Covid with no sick pay and continue to work 12, sometimes 16 hour shifts under distress. Often in rented accommodation some hospitality workers are still paying off arrears built up during the pandemic and the UK government has failed and continues to fail those workers. Now we face an energy crisis, a fuel crisis, a general cost-of-

living crisis, which is to say they continue deliberate widening of the gap between the rich and the poor in the UK by the Tory Government.

As a trade union we have the power and the responsibility to speak up for the most precarious workers in society and call on the UK and devolved governments to do better. I will finish by asking you not to applaud for me but for the hospitality staff who are working in this building and serving us all week. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Vicky. A mover for Motion 179?

PLANNING FOR PANDEMIC

MOTION 179

179. PLANNING FOR PANDEMIC

This Congress calls for a fully funded and fully provisioned plan for emergency services and the NHS, in particular to deal with a major incident and/or pandemic.

The lack of PPE service provision throughout this present pandemic has been appalling. In the outset in relation to PPE, but ongoing in relation to test and trace, vaccination passports, NHS and social care.

The Department of Health and Public Health England need a plan to deal with a pandemic / major incident prior to it happening.

BARNESLEY HEALTH BRANCH

Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

(Carried)

SARAH YOUNG (Yorkshire and North Derbyshire): I only wrote this speech last night knowing I was speaking today. For that I apologise. However, my reasons for not being quite prepared are valid. The NHS is under pressure like never before to catch up on all the work we could not do in the past two years, from the operations to outpatient appointments. Covid, or this Government has certainly left a mess. We are working flat out with no breaks on more than one occasion. I have sometimes worked 12 days with only one off and a lot of NHS staff have worked for two weeks, sometimes more, and that is time which will never get taken back in full. This has to stop.

Goodwill is running out but I digress, both are the result of what the motion is about, the cause is even worse and people have lost their lives because of this Government and Matt Hancock getting it wrong. There was the pandemic while they partied. Matt Hancock, well, what can you say for him?

Going back to March 2020, a time no one will forget, the first thing I and other reps and staff noticed was grossly out of date PPE stock that was delivered to us all. Surgical masks that ran out of date in 2016, and relabelled on top to 2019, they had not even bothered relabeling after that but were most insistent that we use them. Others were out of date in 2015 and some even further back and I have photos to prove it.

Then there was the £10bn Track and Trace contract given to private companies that just did not work and left people suffering from Covid with phone calls which were more bothered about threatening them if they went out than if they needed care.

There was the care home scandal where elderly and vulnerable patients were discharged to care homes with Covid that spread like wildfire, and immense suffering and deaths followed.

We all clapped while the Government, as we now know, partied. None of this can be allowed to happen again. A&Es all over, nurses and doctors, and NHS staff, continue to work short-staffed and run about like there is no tomorrow, while the Tories take no-confidence votes about parties that were against the law. While they sacked care home staff and threatened NHS staff who were without vaccination, and the passports, that was all dropped when they were caught partying. The care home staff await reinstatement of jobs. My Dad died in 2020. He died on his own. I was five minutes late getting to him because I was not allowed through the doors of the hospital, and this Government partied.

This Congress calls for a fully funded and fully provisioned plan for emergency services in the NHS in order to deal with a major incident or a pandemic and that work takes place to implement this prior to a major incident or pandemic now before it happens again. I move. (*Standing ovation*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you so much, Sarah. Secunder, please?

HASHIM EQUIANO (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Good afternoon, President. Good afternoon, Congress. Instead of making a statement, Congress, I have some poetry, if you don't mind.

Back in 2019 there was an outbreak in China
It hit the world as a big reminder
In 2020 it hit our shore
The Tory Government chose to ignore
We started with one contamination and then there were two
All this time the Government did not know what to do
The Tories would not even bat an eye
All they kept doing was feed us with lies
We looked across the ocean and they were all wearing a mask
But all Boris could do was tell us it's not our task
As people started to die he scratched his head
Each day the news reported how more and more were dead
He eventually put the country into lockdown
He even supplied PPE and made announcements without a frown
He spoke to the British people as if we were fools
He spoke to some like idiots and some like tools
Whilst we were in isolation they were having parties and fun
As the rest of us were unaware and just looked on
By this time next year we will have had vaccines aplenty
Maybe 10 or even 20
So what do they have in place for future pandemics

Maybe a trip to Scotland or a trip to the Caribbean with Dominic.
Congress, I second this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Hashim. A mover for Motion 180, please.

LONG COVID AND THE EFFECTS IT HAS ON EMPLOYMENT MOTION 180

180. LONG COVID AND THE EFFECTS IT HAS ON EMPLOYMENT

This Congress calls on the CEC to demand that the Government follows the Welsh Government and work with Trade Unions, businesses, and other employers to ensure that long COVID is taken seriously and put support measures in place to help employees.

In January 2022, it was estimated that 1.3 million people living in private households in the UK (2.0% of the population) were experiencing self-reported long COVID.

The majority of people who reported long COVID reported that their ability to undertake their day-to-day activities has been limited a lot (20%). Fatigue is the most common symptom.

These symptoms are being compared to ME and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence recognises that patients are not receiving the full picture on recommended treatment.

How is all this affecting our members? The lack of treatment is reducing the chances of most from being able to recover and return to full employment. Some may never be able to return to their substantive post such as Drivers, Mechanics, Engineers etc. Whilst off with long COVID there comes a point when the employer will have to look at reducing their pay or employees left to manage on Statutory Sick Pay.

The Government claims that an additional £150 million has been made available for the NHS with regard to long COVID. This includes funding to research the condition and help support GP's to better diagnose it. However, this could take a long time while our members are left with very little support.

A08 TAMESIDE BRANCH North West & Irish Region

(*Carried*)

JOHN MERCER (North West and Irish): Good afternoon, GMB rules. Good afternoon to our Linda who is watching from home; she is looking after our Carl at the moment who is having a few problems.

Long Covid and its effects, and the effect it has on employment. This Congress calls on the CEC to demand that the Government follows the Welsh Government and work with Trade Unions, businesses, and other employers to ensure that long Covid is taken seriously and put support measures in place to help employees.

In January 2022, it was estimated that 1.3 million people living in private households in the UK (2.0% of the population) were experiencing self-reported long Covid. The majority of people who reported long Covid reported that their ability to undertake

their day-to-day activities has been limited by at least 20%. Fatigue is the most common symptom. These symptoms are being compared to ME and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence recognises that patients are not receiving the full picture on recommended treatment, which is quite a scam, isn't it?

How is all this affecting our members? The lack of treatment is reducing the chances of most of them being able to recover and return to full employment. Some may never be able to return to their substantive post such as drivers, mechanics, engineers, etc. Whilst off with long Covid there comes a point when the employer will have to look at reducing the pay or employees left to manage on statutory sick pay.

This Government has done lots and lots of things to reduce training, so some of these people may benefit from training, of course. The Government claims that an additional £150 million has been made available for the NHS with regard to long Covid. Hard to believe this. This includes funding to research the condition and help support GPs to better diagnose it. £150 million is not a lot to research it, never mind support it. However, this could take a long time while our members are left with very little support. I move this motion and ask Congress to move this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, John. A seconder, please?

JOHN PITCHFORD (North West and Irish): According to the Office of National Statistics a record two million people in the UK are estimated to be suffering from long Covid. Around 3.1% of the British population are suffering with symptoms that have existed for more than four weeks following their infection of Covid 19. There is around 376,000 people who first caught Covid around the start of the pandemic and who have reported symptoms lasting at least two years. Nearly one million people have been experiencing symptoms for at least a year and around 1.4 million have had lingering symptoms at least three months after their initial infection.

The ONS said that the rates of Long Covid were highest among women, those aged 35 to 69 – sorry, girls – people living in more deprived areas, those working in social care, teaching in education or healthcare, and those with other health conditions or disabilities. Estimates for long Covid in the UK have risen sharply in recent months climbing from 1.3 million at the start of the year to reach 1.5 million by the end of January, and 1.8 million in early April so that figure could be way past two million by now. The figures from ONS revealed that there continues to be a higher rate of long Covid cases among those working in frontline public sector jobs. Around one in 40 of social care workers said they had been suffering long Covid since the first time of the virus at least 12 months ago.

Congress, after reaching this grim milestone we currently have, this Government we have cannot bury their head in the sand any longer, they must urgently classify long Covid as an occupational illness, provide some formal guidance to employers, and increase funding for research into treatments. Congress, please support this. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, John. A mover of Motion 188.

FITTING TRIBUTE

MOTION 188

188. FITTING TRIBUTE

This Congress notes the unprecedented challenges our Union and GMB members have faced during the global pandemic. Our members working at the frontline have sacrificed so much, helping others such as the vulnerable who are unable to care for themselves.

In many unfortunate circumstances, our members have lost their livelihoods, and tragically, many have also lost their lives whilst compassionately and unselfishly caring for others.

Our Union should be proud of the support our Branches, activists and staff provided during what has been an incredibly unsettling period in our history.

Congress therefore agrees to explore options for how we can collectively capture and embrace through commemoration or a lasting tribute, the dedicated and unwavering loyalty so many have shown to our Union and its members in such troubling and uncertain times.

BARKING AND DAGENHAM LGO BRANCH

London Region

(Carried)

MARK WATSON (London): President, Congress, when Covid struck in 2020 not everyone was furloughed. In local government where I work people continued as before. If they could not do their own work then they might be moved to another role. Some of us worked at home but others worked in physical places and we still saw people. Our libraries closed but our librarians ran food banks. They provided guidance on benefits or accommodation. Later they ran vaccine centres. When the public were not allowed into the libraries, they continued home loan services to the vulnerable. In fact, they ran a campaign to increase the services lockdown started. They devised a complicated scheme for quarantining hundreds of returned books. In our schools the TAs, dinner staff, and caretakers stayed on to deal with the children of key workers. Where children had free meals the dinner staff made up food and the TAs delivered it and checked up on vulnerable children. Never underestimate your TAs. The bin men, well, they just continued as normal. This was before we had PPE, when we still did not understand how fully the virus might transmit, and when we had only anecdotal information as to which types of people were most vulnerable. This was before lateral flows when the only way you knew if you had it was when you went to hospital. This was before the vaccines.

This was just one council in one part of London. Across the country hundreds of other groups kept providing services for people, in hospitals, in cleaning and catering, and transportation, in energy, in things that just needed to be kept going for the future, like zoos and parks. It was as whole workforce movement.

We call upon Congress to explore options of how we can collectively capture and embrace, maybe through commemoration or a lasting tribute to the dedicated and unwavering loyalty so many have shown to our union and its members in such troubling and uncertain times. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mark. A seconder?

UNMESH DESAI (London): Proudly seconding Motion 188. President, in your opening remarks you said that we have been through the most challenging period anyone can remember and I could not agree more. During these unprecedented times it was our front line workers who emerged as the real heroes and heroines. Some of them are members, GMB members, working in sectors such as care, hospitals, refuse, and other public services. I join you, President, in acknowledging and paying tribute to our branch reps and activists working in isolation, meeting on Zoom, working in the most stressful circumstances one can imagine. As our President said earlier this morning, not for them and our front line workers parties and jollies because that is what they really were, they were certainly not working ones, and like those who recklessly partied and openly flouted rules like Dominic Cummings, and the Prime Minister, shamelessly, shamelessly profited through getting PPE contracts. *(Applause)* What a contrast. What a contrast. Such behaviour. The selfless unselfish work of our reps and activists, staff and front line key workers, sadly as this motion knows many members lost their livelihoods and tragically many also lost their lives while compassionately and unselfishly carried on working. So whilst we wait for this Government to recognise the value of front line workers, who is going to pay the bills? We can show our appreciation for what our members did in such troubling and uncertain times by working out how we can recognise and remember the dedication and sacrifice in the form of a commemoration or a lasting tribute which can continue to inspire not just us but future generations of GMB members and activists. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Unmesh. You kept your promise to me. Does anybody wish to oppose any of these motions? In that case, the CEC is supporting all four motions so I put Motion 178, 179, 180, and 188 to the vote. All those in favour please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried.

Motion 178 was CARRIED.

Motion 179 was CARRIED.

Motion 180 was CARRIED.

Motion 188 was CARRIED.

EMPLOYMENT POLICY: HEALTH, SAFETY & ENVIRONMENT

THE PRESIDENT: We now move to our last two motions for the day. Can I have the mover of Motion 88, please?

RISK ASSESSMENTS AT HOME

MOTION 88

88. RISK ASSESSMENTS AT HOME

This Congress notes that one of the unforeseen results of the two years of pandemic has been a dramatic change in working practices for our members throughout the country. People who could not work at home for logistical reasons were suddenly sent home and equipped with new technology in preparation for the so called “New Normal”. After two years the “New Normal” was either total home working or the “blended” or “hybrid” mode that saw people in the office only a few days a week. For some this is a dream come true. For others it has become a nightmare.

Imagine being told that your contract is now changed and that you can never come back to work and never see your colleagues again. Your offices have been sold and there is no space. Isolated, micromanaged by your manager in your own home and when this motion was written, it was cold and the homes of our members need to be heated. Not every home is suitable. Not every household can accommodate home working permanently. Not everyone has broadband or appropriate technology/ equipment.

By law, employers must conduct a 'suitable and sufficient' risk assessment of their employees' working environment.

If an employer is not able to carry out a full risk assessment, they should provide their employees with information on working safely at home. If changes are needed to make sure an employee can work at home in a safe and healthy way, employers are responsible for making sure they happen. How many did that? How many will do that? At most many just got a chair from the office.

Congress therefore agrees to survey our members to see how many are affected and then make recommendations to the Government to strengthen legislation to make businesses more responsible for the well-being of their workers "at home". We need to ensure that mental health as well as physical health is included and that workers have the right to "work at work" where possible as well as "work at home".

BARKING AND DAGENHAM LGO BRANCH

London Region

(Carried)

MARK WATSON (London): I promise you it was just the luck of the draw! President, Congress, in Spring 2020 most of the workforce of the United Kingdom was sent home from work with the instruction that they should work at home until otherwise instructed. I was surprised how quickly and easily all this happened. It seemed that only a few months earlier I was being told, "Of course that worker cannot work at home, think of the GDPR." Very soon the changes in work practices took on a momentum all of their own. Buildings which were now under-occupied were eliminated, staff were told working from home was now to be the new norm, and then contracts were rewritten to keep people away, it made good economic sense to many employers.

Many people do love it, full home or blended work they enjoy the freedom it gives them and appreciate how it restores their work/life balance; others, however, find the whole thing debilitating. The manager who you once could keep at arms length when you left the office has now been invited into your home like a vampire. *(Laughter)* Well, they are! Some homes are ill-equipped to become workplaces, the lighting is bad, there is not enough space for a home office, the space is not private enough, and now heating the office is to become extortionately expensive. As well as the purely physical considerations there is the mental toll. The isolation from others can become crippling. One worker abandoned his work in a call centre for a betting shop so that he could talk to real people.

By law employers should conduct a suitable and sufficient risk assessment of their employees' working environment. If they cannot do that then they must provide information on how to work safely. If changes are needed then they, the employers, are responsible for making it happen; sometimes it might. ACAS says that employers should make sure that their employees have the necessary equipment and information to work safely. Employees might experience pain if they do not have the right working equipment. As an example they talk about back pains caused by unsuitable chairs or desks. In Barking & Dagenham we transported hundreds of chairs across the country from London into the Home Counties and across East Anglia. How long will that sort of response continue, how many now only get a laptop and instructions on how to sit and at what height to position their PC.

The world of work has changed more in two years that it has done since the end of the Second World War. We call on Congress to survey our members across the country to see how many are affected by this new working from home and then with that information to make recommendations to the Government to strengthen legislation and to make businesses more responsible for the wellbeing of their workers at home. We need to make sure that mental health is taken as seriously as physical health and that workers have a right to work at work where possible as well as a right to work at home. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mark. A seconder, please?

UNA BYRNE (London): The Covid-19 global pandemic and ensuing lockdowns dramatically changed the nature of work for many of us and forced a fundamental rethink of the concept of the workplace and two years on working from home and hybrid working are far more common and there is greater appreciation of the benefits of working from home for both the worker and employer. Many find working from home to be a positive experience. However, some people find it difficult. Most of us do not have home offices, many of us do not even have desks, or a tiny bit of quiet private space in which to work. There are risks associated with working from home, the lack of social contact can be isolating and lead to feeling disconnected from work, and colleagues, and this can lead to stress and anxiety. The lack of separation between home and work can be hard especially if home is not a particularly safe space anyway. Unsuitable work space and equipment can lead to health problems. Home workers are often lone workers and this brings about risks of its own. The home worker may also find it harder to access trade union and workplace support. Employers have the same health and safety responsibilities for people working at home as they do for any other worker. Employers have an absolute duty to conduct a suitable and sufficient assessment of risk under the management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, and the safety representatives, and the safety committee regulations require employers to consult trade union appointed health and safety reps in good time with regard to any measure at work which may substantially affect the health and safety of the employees, including risk assessments and home working. The trade unions must be consulted and involved in all aspects of risk assessment to ensure that workers are safe wherever they work. The union will need to ensure that health and safety and industrial reps are trained to deal with these new ways of working. The union will also need to consider the implications of increased home working to ensure that they are able to adequately support and represent home

workers. Everybody should be safe wherever they work. Congress, support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Una. The mover of Motion 89?

**HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK (COVID 19), WORKERS PROTECTION;
HSE RESOURCES AND INSPECTIONS; REPORTING OF COVID 19
OUTBREAKS**

MOTION 89

**89. HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK (COVID 19) , WORKERS PROTECTION ; HSE
RESOURCES AND INSPECTIONS; REPORTING OF COVID 19 OUTBREAKS**

**GMB has criticised the end of Face Mask restrictions as premature (GMB statement 27th
January 2022 - No longer compulsory to wear face masks in indoor venues)**

**GMB has rightly said “GMB members working in retail and on public transport have the
right to feel safe; it’s good many businesses still insist on face coverings”**

Congress notes that these sectors are not exclusive –there are others. Whilst many employers are acting responsibly, this is despite Government changes to Covid safety rules

- Congress notes that to date only 1/3rd of workers report that employers have been proactive in reducing the impact of Covid.
- Congress notes that Covid 19 has exposed further weaknesses in the resources of the HSE; that reporting guidelines/legislation don’t yet take full account of Covid 19; and believes that HSE guidance is not robust enough to mitigate in the future
- Congress notes the additional demands placed on Health and Safety reps in the pandemic, and the need for maintaining, supporting and extending training for reps with additional time off, and will survey reps about current experiences
- Congress asks that Health and Safety reps monitor any absences/shutdowns due to Covid 19 against the employer’s own risk assessment and Covid secure declaration
- Congress asks that with sister Unions consideration is given to campaign so that Covid 19 is explicitly added to RIDDOR as a “Dangerous Occurrence “
- Congress with sister Unions will expect increased spot checks by HSE on Covid 19 and data on these published, alongside any HSE Inspectorate vacancies
- Congress notes that the HSE does not consider face coverings to be classed as PPE, and which would otherwise be covered by the Health & Safety at Work Act.
- Congress believes that as minimum Face Coverings should be replaced by FFP2 masks to ensure proper protection for members regardless of work environments, and until WHO (World Health Organisation) declare an endemic situation.

EAST DEREHAM BRANCH

London Region

(*Carried*)

HARRY CLARKE (London): President, Congress, I have the most exciting slot of the day, I think, to grab your attention. The pandemic has shown up how vulnerable many workers, our members, are in many sectors, industrial, retail, transport, and education, to diseases like Covid, it is primarily an airborne disease spread in confined environments but not exclusively and, yes, you can catch it again and again

– sorry, folks – and it will come back in some form, and how we are dependent on employers acting properly, and the Government too, and regulators given the right tools, powers, and resources, and many workers now, I think, appreciate this even more. I make no apologies for getting passionate on this, not only as a former risk management and health specialist, and NHS worker, but someone like many of you I have lost three friends to Covid-19 as well as being clinically vulnerable myself.

A healthy economy needs a healthy workforce; they go hand-in-hand, they are not two separate things, and whilst many employers have been responsible a significant number have not been. Many workplaces have relied on an in-house risk assessment and sign-off. Do we have to hope that these are not more than just a tick-box exercise? We should not. Guidance is not the same as the law and that is why I think we need Covid-19 as a starter to be added to RIDDOR, it could then be included in statistics and can be dated and monitored. We do also need increased spot checks by the Health & Safety Executive and for the data to be published regularly and shared and due to Covid-19 the HSE have still not published the full number of enforcement notices issued and by sector. There has been a decrease, which will not surprise you, over the pandemic in 2021 of about 58% of enforcement notices by the HSE, and whilst the TUC, the CBI, and the Health & Safety Executive, have issued a joint call in April 2020 for the safe working to be guaranteed this must be reinforced. We know at least of 93,000 workers who self-reported catching Covid at work and this is the tip of the iceberg. So, what GMB and Congress call for is campaigning for additional time, paid time, and training in this area for Health & Safety reps, a survey of Health & Safety reps by the GMB, and for GMB to campaign with others to add Covid-19 to RIDDOR, and where protection is required this must be proper PPE with FFP2 masks. Please support this powerful motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Harry. Then the last speaker of the day, the seconder to Motion 89?

ALAN LAW (London): I am very pleased to support this powerful and necessary motion. We all know of workers, colleagues, family members, who have been affected by Covid over the last two years, either catching this disease themselves, exposure at their work, or where the factory or establishment has shut down temporarily due to the outbreak. It is clear that we need to do more to minimise and protect workers in the future. We all deserve a safe environment. The pandemic has shone a light on the world of work which we knew very little about and now every living person is affected, demands and challenges of front line workers, including those in health, utility sectors, energy, water, and so on. Reference has been made to tick-box exercises. We can only guess or suspect this. That is why I second this motion to improve Health & Safety reps' positions and strengthen the HSE. Let's campaign in time before we get hit again with more outbreaks and seize this opportunity. Congress, I second this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Alan. Does anyone wish to oppose any of these motions? No? In that case can I ask Gordon Gibbs to respond for the CEC. Technically, you are the last speaker, Gordon.

GORDON GIBBS (CEC): President, Congress, responding to Motions 88 and 89, the CEC is supporting both with qualifications which I will outline.

On Motion 88, Risk Assessments at Home, I am working either permanently or as part of a hybrid working system likely to become an increasing element of members' working lives from now on. The qualification is that we will not only serve our members and make recommendations to Government but also develop our own guidance and advice to members on this issue.

On Motion 89, Health & Safety at Work (Covid 19), Workers' Protection; HSE Resources and Inspections; Reporting of Covid 19 Outbreaks. Covid-19 will likely remain a significant cause of workplace ill health for many years to come and campaigning outlined in the motions is highly appropriate. The qualification is that the campaigning identified will not just be performed with sister trade unions but also trade union congresses, pressure groups, and other interested parties.

Therefore, Congress, please support both of these motions with the small qualifications I have explained. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gordon. Does London Region accept the qualification to Motion 88? (*Agreed*) And the qualification to Motion 89? (*Agreed*) Thank you. I put those two motions to the vote. All those in favour please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried.

Motion 88 was CARRIED.

Motion 89 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: Just two bits of information before we conclude today's business. Congress, as you know, many of our refuse workers have been going out on strike for better pay. Members who work for BIFA in Wildon will be starting their seventh week – and I will say that again, they will be starting their seventh week – of industrial action. This is an incredible show of strength. There will be a show of solidarity tomorrow morning outside the Conference Centre entrance at 9 a.m. We encourage any and all delegates to make it then to show your support and I especially encourage public sector service members to be there. Let's keep the momentum going and show our colleagues we are behind them all the way. (*Applause*)

Then, lastly, can I remind everyone who holds a GMB Congress credential that you are invited to the Congress President and Vice President Welcome Event tonight, in the King's Suite, of the Harrogate Convention Centre. The event will start at 9 o'clock. The dedicated entrance for this event is in King's Road at Entrance 3, and doors will open at 8.45 p.m. There will be a live band so I hope people will join me on the dance floor. I do not want to be on my own. You will need to show your Congress credential for admittance and to obtain two free drinks vouchers. There will only be nibbles provided so please eat before you arrive but you do now have plenty of time. Malcolm and I look forward to seeing you there.

Please be ready, though, and in the hall to reconvene at 9.30 a.m. tomorrow, and at 9 o'clock a show of solidarity, and please do not leave any bags in the hall overnight. Thank you. (*Applause*)

Congress adjourned at 17.15 p.m.