

**GMB
CONGRESS 2023**

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

**Held in:
The Brighton Centre,
Brighton
on:
Sunday, 4th June 2023
Monday, 5th June 2023
Tuesday, 6th June 2023
Wednesday, 7th June 2023
-and-
Thursday, 8th June 2023.**

**PROCEEDINGS
DAY TWO
(Monday, 5th June 2023)**

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SECOND DAY'S PROCEEDINGS

MONDAY, 5TH JUNE 2023

MORNING SESSION

(Conference assembled at 9.30 am)

CALL TO ORDER

THE PRESIDENT: Delegates, I call Congress to order. Thank you. I hope you enjoyed last night, those of you who came to the President's and Vice-President's evening. It was lovely to see so many of you there. I want to thank all the staff behind the scenes who put that together for us because Malcolm and I don't do anything. We just arrive. *(Applause)*

This morning, we will be debating the CEC's Special Report on Social Care, and we will be joined on stage before lunch by a panel of our own social care worker members. Could I also ask movers and seconders of this morning's business to make sure that they are ready to speak.

I would like to announce that this year's Local Gift has been selected by North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region and the recipients will be Rape Crisis UK. *(Applause)* The presentation will be made to the region after Congress, and if any other region wishes to contribute they can do so directly with North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region.

I also have an announcement for Asda delegates. Please can all Asda delegates attend a photocall at 11 am with Darren Jones MP. Please gather in reception for the photo outside. There will also be an Asda and Wilco delegates' meeting with Angela Rayner at 5 pm to discuss equal pay, and the room numbers for that will be confirmed. It is essential, please, that all Asda delegates attend both meetings. Thank you.

Before we move on to the first set of motions, I would like to remind delegates that today's bucket collection will be for the guide dogs, as arranged by GMB Scotland. We even have a video for you to watch of the puppies that Congress has helped fund over the years. So roll the video. *(Video shown) (Applause)* Thank you, GMB Scotland, for that video. They are beautiful and cute little dogs, but you can see what a difference they make to people's lives and they can live independent lives.

We move on to section 2, which is Employment Policy and Pensions. Our first items this morning will be motions on pensions. Could the movers and seconders of Composite 6, Motion 100 and Motion 102, please, be ready to speak, come down to the front and get registered.

EMPLOYMENT POLICY AND PENSIONS

RETIREMENT AGE – WILL MY CHILDREN EVER GET A PENSION?

COMPOSITE 6

Covering Motions:

96: Reduction of the National Retirement Age (London Region)

97: Stopping the Increase in Pension Age (London Region)

98: Retire at 68 (London Region)

99: Will my children ever get a Pension? (North West & Irish)

RETIREMENT AGE – WILL MY CHILDREN EVER GET A PENSION?

This Congress recognises that the continued increase of the retirement age is detrimental to our members.

Congress notes that the pension age for receiving a State Pension is now being looked into with the view to bringing forward the increase in age much sooner. This Government is set to increase the state pension age to 68 in the coming years. At the current time the state pension age is 66 for all.

The increase will be in two stages: The first is scheduled to take place between 2026 and 2028 when it will increase to 67. It will then go up again between 2044 and 2046 to 68.

We all know that the plan is that between 2026 and 2028 the pension age will be 67. By 2044 and 2046 the pension age will be 68.

This must stop now! Can anyone really say, hand on heart, that they are still fit enough to do their job at age 65 as well as they did 5 years ago.

Increasing the age by even a year can have a significant impact on a person's retirement planning and how much they will need to make up for any shortfall. This is likely to impact many workers, particularly low paid workers.

We are dealing with members who are having to have adjustments at work, support put in place, capabilities, having to find a job that is less pay. How degrading it is for someone who has worked over 30 years in a business being put on capabilities because they can't do what they used to be able to do.

Congress notes that for many, retirement can be an issue that can be difficult to grasp. Moreover, not being empowered, lack of knowledge or correctly informed can lead to many in difficulties when they do retire.

Currently it is confirmed that life expectancy is in decline reducing over the last five years. There is also a disproportionate allocation on who receives it as people working manual work and more physical work are less likely to reach the age required due to the demands on their bodies.

We need a freedom of information request asking for Employers to provide current ill health dismissal cases and this would confirm this if the request asked for job roles.

In 1908 Lloyd George's Old Age Pension was passed through Parliament as part of the Social Welfare System.

By 1959 there had been many improvements to the State Pension.

1975 Onward mistakes were made by the Government of that time with the introduction of The Graduated Pension Scheme and SERPS (State Earnings related to Pension Scheme)

1986 The Social Security Act led to cutbacks in SERPS and so started the Personal Pension Scheme.

1995 equalising the pension age of men and women to 65.

From then on there was even more devastating schemes that enabled the Government and Employers to misuse Pension Funds, the biggest scandal of the time was Robert Maxwell using £406 million of his group pension fund to finance his business affairs.

2018 Women had a big jump on Pension Age in a short period of time. The jump went from 60 – 63 – 65 and most women hadn't been informed. Soon after pension age changed for both men and women to age 66.

DON'T THINK IT WILL STOP AT THAT!

Previously to receive a full State Pension you are required to pay the following.

- Men 44 years of NI contributions
- Women 38 years of NI contributions

But as we have seen you now have to pay basically up to retirement day which amounts to additional contributions running into hundreds or even thousands of pounds. This additional cost then has a knock-on effect to the Local Government Pension Scheme as people will think twice in joining the workplace schemes in order to cut the money they pay out of their earnings.

This Congress asks the CEC to challenge the government and stop the pension age from going up any further. Whilst we know GMB will always oppose this, we call on Congress to reopen the issue on State Pensions due to the fact that this Government is using the Pension Age as a way of getting out of paying in the future. We call on GMB to lobby Government to reduce the retirement age instead of continually increasing it.

Congress is asked to consider:

1. Raising awareness of the Government's intention and share what this means for members in the long term.
2. Raising awareness through webinars, as done previously, to guide and support members to enable and assist them to plan ahead.
3. Developing resources and tools so members can be better informed of the impact of the changes in retirement age. And, if felt appropriate, to use such resources/tools as a means to recruit and retain members.

Also, the GMB union should campaign to get the national retirement age reduced so that workers can have a choice on when they can retire, be recognised and appreciated for their service so that they can have a long and happy retirement.

Congress, we ask that we challenge the Government and stop the pension age going up any further. That we motivate our young members to be involved in Campaigning for their State Pension and have the ability to retire rather than work until they drop.

We call on Congress to look at raising this with the current Government and the Labour Party.

MOVING REGION: LONDON
SECONDING REGION: NORTH WEST & IRISH

(Carried)

DENNIS RISVEGLI (London): Mornin' all. Morning President and morning Congress. I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker and first time in Brighton. (*Applause*) I am moving Composite 6 on pensions.

President and Congress, we have already seen that young people starting off in employment are looking at the high cost of living rather than investing in their future with a workplace pension. The problem does not stop there and now all ages of workers are considering pulling out of their pensions, too. With thousands of workers having to use foodbanks to feed their families and worrying about paying their mortgages or rent, I am not surprised that they have forgotten about the financial challenges that lay ahead when it is time to retire.

Congress, our young workers, our young children, face a future of hell where you are born and work until you die. We can change this situation by making everyone aware that this Tory Government, which already have us working up to 67, want us to work not just up till 68 but to 70. Yes, this is a dirty secret plan.

However, fearing a massive defeat in the next general election, the Government announced in March 2023 that they would delay this decision until the next Parliament. We must fight for a better future for every worker and every family by driving home how they can change the situation now by making their voice heard at the next general election.

I call on Congress to support the launch of a GMB national campaign raising awareness of the dangers ahead, to create tools for our reps, to assist our members to understand, plan and campaign, to lobby the Labour Party to make it their policy that the retirement age will return to 65 when they are in Government. Finally, to reach out to the TUC, to the union Movement, to join our fight. President and Congress, thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Dennis. Thank you. I am so impressed by everybody keeping to time. I am really grateful for that because I think that helps you as well. It means that we can finish and enjoy the sun. It is all good. I call the seconder, please.

LINDA MERCER (North West & Irish): Congress, I am seconding Composite 6. You can study all the figures if you look in *this* book. You will find it all in pages 110 and 111. So will my children ever get a pension? My eldest son is 46 this year. I had a contract at the age of 15 that if I paid state pension until I was 60 I would get my pension at 60. I am 65 now and I am not going to get my pension until next year, and I have never, ever had a letter from the Government telling me that this is going to happen. I had to look it up myself. That is what it is all about. They don't

want you to claim your pension, either. The point is that you have got to inform them of the day you are retiring and that you would like to claim your pension.

My eldest son has had two years of going through cancer and his treatment is still not finished. So at 46, is he going to live long enough ever to get a state pension? Unless we do something now, unless our young people are motivated – that is those who are under 40 – we won't get that pension for them.

I second this composite and I hope that Congress will approve and help our young people by campaigning, supporting and taking action to get their state pension. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Linda. Our good wishes to your son. Could I have the mover for Motion 100, please?

PENSIONS – DEATH IN SERVICE BENEFIT MOTION 100

100. PENSIONS – DEATH IN SERVICE BENEFIT

This Congress notes that most workers in Britain are not covered by a pension scheme that includes a death in service benefit.

Many employers actively work to throw people with terminal illnesses off the pay roll to avoid paying out.

Congress believes that this situation is unjust, unfair and inhuman leading to the dependents of deceased workers facing loss of their home and other catastrophic life changing events.

Congress resolves to campaign for the next Labour government to introduce death in service benefit for all, set at a minimum of two times pensionable pay.

This legislation must ensure that all pension schemes are registered to provide death in service benefit as part of the package and for pensions to be available to all workers irrespective of the average earnings.

B43 BIRMINGHAM CITY GENERAL BRANCH Midlands Region

(Carried)

GARY BAKER (Midlands): Congress, I move Motion 100 – Death in Service Benefit. I'm a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Thank you.

The death in service benefit is a vital benefit that should be available to all workers. Unfortunately, most workers in Britain are not covered by a pension scheme that includes a death-in-service benefit. This means that many employers actively work to throw people with terminal illnesses off the payroll to

avoid paying out. This situation is unjust, unfair and inhumane, and this policy leads to the dependants of deceased workers facing the loss of their home and other catastrophic life-changing events. Congress resolves to campaign for the next Labour Government to introduce a death-in-service benefit for all workers set at a minimum of two times pensionable pay. This legislation must ensure that all pension schemes are required to provide death-in-service benefit as part of a package and for pensions to be available to all workers, irrespective of the average earnings. Thank you, Congress. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Gary. Thank you. A seconder?

ANTHONY BROWN (Midlands): Madam President, I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I am seconding Motion 100. The GMB backs this motion as it reflects the spirit of the Dying-to-Work campaign. However, I want to share something about Nottingham Trams and why we are supporting it. At the Tram, we campaign to get the company to adopt the Dying-to-Work Charter, only to find that when two of our members were diagnosed with terminal illness, the company's interpretation of the charter became very different from ours. The company wanted to backtrack on the promises that they then made, and they began a process of getting rid of our members. It was only after a successful ballot for industrial action that the company was forced back to the table and we agreed a deal that was satisfactory to our members.

This motion helps to create a framework or, basically, helps to start to create a legal framework which will help to protect the workers who are diagnosed with a terminal illness, helping to take away the worry and the financial hardship at a time when the family least needs it. Congress, I second this motion. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Anthony. I call the mover for Motion 102.

NATIONAL PENSIONERS CONVENTION MOTION 102

102. NATIONAL PENSIONERS CONVENTION

This congress agrees to work with the National Pensioners Convention to fight a vigorous campaign for a Living State Pension.

The National Pensioners convention believe that - the basic state pension should be set at 70% of the living wage (outside London rate) and above the official poverty level. This is currently £242.55 a week in 2022. This should be paid to all men and women, regardless of their National Insurance contributions. Also, every year the state pension should rise in line with the best of earnings, the Consumer Price Index, the Retail Price Index, or 2.5% whichever is the greater.

A55 BRANCH – AVON & WESSEX

Wales & South West Region

(Carried)

WAYNE EDWARDS (GMB Wales & South West): Good morning, President and delegates. Third-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I am moving Motion 102.

Congress, pensioner poverty is the bleak reality for two million pensioners in the UK scraping by on less than 60% of the UK average income. It is a figure that has been rising since 2014, with 200,000 more pensioners being plunged into poverty in the last year alone. There are multiple reasons why people live in pensioner poverty. Pensioners, generally, have a fixed income and those who have a low-earnings level during their working life are going to have a low income in retirement.

The suspension of the triple lock in 2022–2023, systematic pension inequalities and errors, poor insulated homes, loss of the over-75s TV licence, healthcare needs, the spike in energy prices, inflation and the general cost-of-living crisis have only exaggerated the issue further. The number of people living in poverty is growing at an alarming rate. That is why, colleagues, we need to help and campaign along with the National Pensioners Convention to ensure that the state pension should be set at 70% of the living wage outside the London rate and above the official poverty level, which is currently £242.55p a week. This sum should be paid to all men and women regardless of their National Insurance contributions. Pensions affect everyone. Future generations are going to be more reliant on their state pensions in their retirement than their parents and grandparents. Ensuring a decent state pension for tomorrow's pensioners means that we have to ensure a decent state pension for today's pensioners. Please support the motion. *(Applause)*

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

NICOLA GRIFFITHS (GMB Wales & South West): Congress and President, I second Motion 102.

Congress, women have clearly suffered from having lower wages and, therefore, lower pension contributions due to their caring responsibilities, maternity leave or insecure, part-time employment, or due to the impact of divorce on their pensions.

Colleagues, many women have been affected by the equalisation of the state pension age, and many do not claim National Insurance credits or carer's credits. The estimated gender pay gap in the UK in 2019-2020 was 37.9%, meaning that three million women are missing out on workplace pensions because they do not qualify for auto enrolment. Women would need to work an additional 18 years in full-time employment to close the gender pension gap. On top of a complex system that has historically favoured men due to the way its contributory design works, there have been a catalogue of errors by the Department for Works & Pensions affecting widows and widowers. This state of affairs has concerned women who paid the married women's stamp, back-dated state pension for transgender women, underpayment of second state pension and the payment of deferral amounts as well as the incorrect maximum figures used.

More than 230,000 people, mainly women, are thought to have been underpaid their state pension and could be due to a payout which could total £1.46 billion.

Congress, most people do not receive the full amount of state pension, and those on the old state pension are more likely to find themselves in poverty. Despite the availability of pension credit, 800,000 eligible people do not claim the 'gateway' benefit, meaning that £1.7 billion goes unclaimed each year and access to help with council tax, housing benefit, free TV licence, help with the NHS dental treatment, glasses, transport costs for hospital appointments, access to social tariffs and many more services are lost.

Colleagues, we must campaign alongside the NPC to ensure that the Government recognises they must change their policies to reduce inflation, to maintain the triple lock and retain pension benefits. Please support this benefit. I second.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Nicola. Does anyone wish to speak against any of those motions? (No response) No. In that case, I call Viv Smart from the CEC to respond.

VIV SMART (CEC): Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC responding to Motion 102: National Pensioners Convention.

The CEC is supporting the motion with a qualification. The motion states that we should work with the National Pensioners Convention. Our small qualification is that we will undertake proper vetting on groups before working with them so that we are sure that their aims are in line with ours. If they are fully compliant with GMB policy and if they require any funding that this goes to the F&GPC for scrutiny. Please support with the small qualification. Thank you. (Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: So the CEC is supporting Composite 6. They are supporting Motion 100. Wales & South West, do you accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) So I will put those motions to the vote. All those in favour of Composite 6, please show? Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried. Motion 100, all those in favour, please show? Anyone against? That is carried. Motion 102, all those in favour, please show? That is also carried. Thank you.

Composite Motion 6 was CARRIED.

Motion 100 was CARRIED.

Motion 102 was CARRIED.

INDUSTRIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY: TAX

COST OF LIVING CRISIS AND HYBRID WORKING

MOTION 166

166. COST OF LIVING CRISIS AND HYBRID WORKING

This Congress notes that during the pandemic, the government commanded that anyone who was able to, should work from home. However, over two years on it is clear that homeworking for at least part of the week, is here to stay.

According to the Office of National Statistics during the first three months of last year 9.9 million people used their homes as workplaces. For many workers, a hybrid or home-working arrangement has many benefits – such as the ability to manage caring responsibilities more effectively and a reduced commute.

However, there are benefits to employers too, with the cost of running premises and the provision of on-site facilities drastically reduced. This means that the cost of internet, heating and lighting that would ordinarily be paid for by the employer is now being passed on to workers.

Amid the cost of living crisis, with soaring inflation and impending recession - energy bills are expected to hit up to £4000 per year in Scotland. At present, workers can only claim tax relief or working from home expenses of £6 per week and HMRC rules around eligibility for claiming support are complex.

Workers cannot be expected to shoulder the cost of working from home any longer and especially not as we enter a recession this winter. The expectation to use household energy to complete work tasks is, for many already, experienced as a cut in take-home wages and will push workers further into in-work poverty.

Congress resolves to lobby the Government to use its powers over taxation to either change the rules and compel employers to make working from home payments proportionate to the cost of living crisis.

GLASGOW GENERAL APEX BRANCH

GMB Scotland

(Carried)

THE PRESIDENT: Can we have speakers for Motions 166 and 167 on Industrial and Economic Policy: Tax. I call the mover of Motion 166 to come to the rostrum.

TAM WILSON (GMB Scotland): Congress and President, I move Motion 166: Cost of Living Crisis and Hybrid Working.

Congress, in March 2020 we were instructed to work from home wherever possible. Three years on, for many, our homes have now become an office on a permanent basis. Statistics released from the Office of National Statistics last year suggested that 14% of working adults were exclusively working from home and 24% of workers were engaging in some form of hybrid working between home and a workplace. In many places employers are making huge savings when they switch to hybrid working, but rarely are these savings passed on to workers. Many workplaces are downsizing where others save money on bills and expenses.

It is true to say that some workers enjoy the added flexibility of working from home, of course, but for many other workers they are not even given the option. Our homes are forced to double as admin centres, as sales floors and as call centres. Regardless of the desire to work from home, workers should not be expected to absorb the costs associated with home working. For example, home working means that you need reliable internet. A reliable internet connection that does not drop out at peak times is more expensive. I know that, personally, in the last year my energy bills have skyrocketed, my rent has increased by £100 a month with my landlord finding a loophole in the Scottish Government's rent freeze, and my internet bill has risen by just over 20%. This is in a small-shared flat with a flatmate who has no option but to work from home as his telecoms job has moved exclusively to home working. Current rules state that workers can only claim tax relief or the work-from-home expense of £6 per week. HMRC rules around eligibility for claiming support are complex. Six pounds a week barely covers your internet costs, never mind the other costs associated with home working.

Of course, as a union, our priority should be on the wages of the workers that we represent, but this does not mean that we should not be using our weight to lobby the Government to recognise the new reality of home working, and either change the rules for working-from-home expenses or compel employers to make working-from-home payments proportionate to the cost of living crisis that we are all experiencing right now. I move this motion and encourage you to support. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tam. Secunder.

HAYLEY MAXWELL (GMB Scotland): Congress, I am seconding Motion 166. Media analysts might suggest that everyone who works from home is a high-paid executive manager with the luxury of taking meetings from home offices, a large

garden or even from somewhere sunny overseas. This might be true for particular jobs or particular salaries, but the reality is that for many of our members they have little choice but to work for most of their week from the confines of a small bedroom in sub-standard rented accommodation, often shared with other people. The situation for many in administrative and customer-service roles is that the cost of the lockdown situation, where they were expected to sleep and work in the same small room for 35 hours a week, has never actually ended. Many employers have been able to reduce dramatically outgoings on overheads by downsizing office space and moving to hot-desking models. Workers are absorbing these costs by supplying their own space, energy, internet and equipment at no cost to the employer.

The cost of the energy crisis over the winter highlighted major issues for this transfer of responsibility with the sight of workers appearing on zoom calls from their homes wrapped in blankets and wearing hats and scarves, too fearful to put the heating on.

Some of the arguments about the ways that working from home have saved workers money, for example, on childcare costs or the cost of commuting, arguably, describe more benefits to the Government and employers who end up no longer responsible for solving these problems. Often what is described as a “flexible working model” does not actually contain much choice for workers. Remote working is not going away but, as a union, we can lobby to have use of your own home and energy as regarded as using your own car for work and appropriately compensated. Congress, support the motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Perfect timing, Hayley. Well done. Can I have the mover of Motion 167, please.

TAX THRESHOLD (REMOVAL)

MOTION 167

167. TAX THRESHOLD (REMOVAL)

This Congress recognises the unfairness of this Government aim of imposing a freeze on the tax threshold again which will impact on the lowest paid workers in this country.

We call on Congress to campaign to get the removal of any freezes of the tax threshold and to work with the Labour Party to lobby Government to get the law changed so that this cannot happen again.

C11 CAMBRIDGE 2 BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

STUART WOOLF (London): Good morning, President and Congress as well as to all the staff working here today doing a wonderful job. I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Thank you. I am moving Motion 167.

Around 35 million people work in the UK today, several millions working on low-paid jobs, part-time, zero-hour contracts. They are all doing the jobs to keep the country going, especially after Covid. Under this Government millions of low-paid workers have less in their pockets. The tax-free threshold of £12,570, having been frozen for five years, is completely unfair, as I am sure you will agree.

As a union, we must help the lowest paid get every penny they should have. The last 18 months have been terrible, a real struggle for a lot of families. How many people do you know who would benefit from having a few extra pounds per month in their pockets to help with bills, childcare and putting food on the table. Because of this Government we have higher bills, rent, mortgages, energy and double-digit inflation, but even with a small pay rise in real terms we actually earn less. How can this be in the 21st century? If this Government had left the tax-free allowance alone and not frozen it until 2026 we would all be a lot better off.

This motion is for Congress to lobby the Labour Party to make it their policy when in government to always raise the tax-free allowance. It should never be frozen. It should always go up. We must help the working class in this cost-of-living crisis if no one else will. Please vote for Motion 167. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Stuart. Thank you. A seconder for Motion 167, please?

JIMMY GOLDING (London): This motion will help the lower-paid workers and their families. With the current cost of living everything is going up and every single penny counts. The tax-free threshold should never, ever, be frozen, and it should always rise. This motion, first and foremost, stands up for our low-paid workers and their families. Please support Motion 167. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to speak against any of these motions? *(No response)* No. In that case, can I ask Kevan Hensby from the CEC to respond, please?

KEVAN HENSBY (CEC): President and Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC, responding to Motions 166 and 167, which we are supporting with qualifications.

Moving, first, to Motion 166 – Cost of Living Crisis and Hybrid Working – since the pandemic, we have developed a Congress policy on hybrid home working and making sure that we strike a balance between those working from home and those who must attend their workplace. We must support efforts in reducing the cost of energy for households and our priority is campaigning for better pay for our members.

Our small qualification is that, while the motion says we should campaign for tax relief in line with the cost of living, more will be need to be researched and considered in order to put forward a coherent demand to the Government on this matter.

On Motion 167 – Tax Threshold (Removal) – we appreciate the further information the branch offered on the background to this motion. The motion is in relation to the tax-free allowance on earnings, currently at £12,750. We have suggested that this threshold should rise by at least £250 a year so that low earners stay below the tax-free allowance threshold. The CEC supports the notion that the threshold should be reviewed which, in the current economic climate, the freeze will be felt acutely alongside other costs. Our qualification is that we would not want to be tied to a fixed amount, such as the suggested £250 .

Congress, please support both of these motions with the small qualifications that I have explained. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Does GMB Scotland accept the qualification on their motion? (*Agreed*) Yes. Thank you. Does London accept the qualification on their motion? (*Agreed*) Yes. In that case, I will put both of those motions to the vote. All those in favour of Motion 166, please show? Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 167, please show? Thank you. Anyone against? That is also carried.

Motion 166 was CARRIED.

Motion 167 was CARRIED.

STANDING ORDERS REPORT NO. 3

SOC REPORT NO 3

PRESIDENT, CONGRESS

KAREN DUDLEY, STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE CHAIR, MOVING SOC REPORT NO 3.

EMERGENCY MOTIONS

THE SOC HAS ACCEPTED 4 EMERGENCY MOTIONS AS BEING IN ORDER FOR DEBATE. THEY ARE AS FOLLOWS:

EMERGENCY MOTION ONE MISMANAGEMENT OF OUR WATER INDUSTRY, STANDING IN THE NAME OF MIDLANDS REGION.

EMERGENCY MOTION TWO GROSS MISMANAGEMENT OF OUR WATER INDUSTRY: GMB FIGHT FOR CLEAN WATER, STANDING IN THE NAME OF LONDON REGION.

EMERGENCY MOTION THREE EQUALITY ACT AMENDMENT, STANDING IN THE NAME OF SOUTHERN REGION.

EMERGENCY MOTION FOUR REFORMING OFSTED INSPECTIONS: RAISING STANDARDS AND SUPPORTING SCHOOLS, STANDING IN THE NAME OF LONDON REGION.

THE MOTIONS WILL BE HEARD LATER IN THE WEEK AT TIMES AND DAYS TO BE ADVISED.

BUCKET COLLECTIONS

THE AMOUNT COLLECTED BY LONDON REGION FOR CARE 4 CALAIS AT THE PRESIDENT'S NIGHT WAS £538 AND 5 EUROS.

PRESIDENT, CONGRESS, I FORMALLY MOVE ADOPTION OF SOC REPORT NO 3.

THE PRESIDENT: I call on Karen Dudley to give SOC Report No. 3.

KAREN DUDLEY (Chair of the SOC): President and Congress, I move SOC report No. 3.

Emergency Motions. The SOC has accepted four emergency motions as being in order for debate. They are as follows: Emergency Motion 1 – Mismanagement of

our Water Industry, standing in the name of Midlands Region. Emergency Motion 2 – Gross Mismanagement of our Water Industry. GMB Fight for Clean Water, standing in the name of London Region. Emergency Motion 3 – Equality Act Amendment, standing in the name of Southern Region. Emergency Motion 4 – Reforming OFSTED inspections: Raising Standards and Supporting Schools, standing in the name of London Region. The motions will be heard later in the week at times and days to be advised.

Bucket collections. The amount collected by London Region for Care for Calais at the President’s Night was £580 and 5 euros. (*Laughter and Applause*)

President and Congress, I formally move adoption of SOC Report No. 3.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen. Does anyone want to speak in opposition to the SOC report? (*No response*) In that case, can I put that to the Congress to adopt. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against? That is adopted. Just to add, after Congress finishes, regions will be written to so for all the bucket collections regions can top them up if their regional committees choose to do so. So the money will be more than £580 if the regions choose to add.

CEC SPECIAL REPORT ON SOCIAL CARE

CEC Special Report Social Care

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Note on the report:

This report contains testimony taken from a survey of GMB members in social care. Quotes from members are included in the below format, unless otherwise stated.

‘I struggle to pay rent & bills & feed us let alone have any money left to pay for extras or to enjoy life.’
Care Team Shift Leader

For this report, social care is discussed in the context of adult social care. We recognise the importance of the childhood care sector, including the importance of the cross-over between the two.

It was not possible to do justice to childhood care in a single report but we may return to this important issue in the future.

List of acronyms

ADASS	Association of Directors of Adult Social Services
CHPI	Centre for Health and the Public Interest
CICTAR	Centre for International Corporate Tax Accountability and Research
CQC	Care Quality Commission
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
RIDDOR	Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations
SSP	Statutory Sick Pay
TNA	The National Archives

1. Summary of policy positions

1.1 This report calls for:

- **Local authorities should be supported to rebuild their directly operated care provision and workforces.**
- **A new funding settlement in social care that retains more money within the system and addresses chronic underfunding.**
- **The National Minimum Wage Regulations to be amended to include care workers' travel time and sleep-in shifts.**
- **Statutory Sick Pay to be raised and reformed so that nobody is forced to go into work when they are ill.**
- **An extension to the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act so that it also covers care workers.**
- **A public inquiry into the financial engineering of the care sector.**
- **Strengthen regulation in the sector and learn from the Biden administration's plans to regulate private equity in care.**
- **A real living wage – £15 an hour for care workers.**
- **Labour to enact as an urgent priority in Government its pledges to reform social care, build a National Care Service (while learning from the mistakes made by the Scottish National Party), and establish a Fair Pay Agreement for care workers.**

2. Introduction

- 2.1 GMB is proud to be the lead campaigning union in social care. Care is part of our society's foundations. Social care is a national asset, it is part of the fabric of our communities, and ensuring its sustainability is one of the greatest challenges that we face.
- 2.2 Seven years have passed since Congress warned that 'the adult social care sector is under unprecedented strain.'¹ Our predictions that an unsustainable system was headed into imminent crisis have been vindicated – but the sector has also changed in ways that could not have been foreseen.
- 2.3 The pandemic proved that there is a groundswell of public support for our care workers. But the system is failing to value them. Our members provided comfort to care users and their families as disease took hold. They risked their own lives to protect others. And yet care workers employed by private providers continue to be paid just pennies above the national minimum wage.
- 2.4 The crisis in care must be a spur to action. We refuse to accept that exploitation is inevitable. We recognise that care is underpaid because, for too long, work performed disproportionately by women and migrant workers has not been valued. We reject any suggestion that care work is somehow an occupation of lesser skill or worth.
- 2.5 That is why GMB is leading the campaign for real living wage for care workers of no less than £15 an hour. We demand that care workers be given the status and respect that their professionalism deserves.

- 2.6 People are living to a greater age. Modern medicine is enabling more people with complex health problems to live longer. These facts should be celebrated. But the UK's capacity to meet the demand at its door is already threadbare. We cannot face the 2030s with a care service on its knees.
- 2.7 This report argues that care needs fundamental change. We are calling for a revolution in funding, in pay and progression, and in the structure of the sector. These are our demands to make work better in care. 3.

Background

- 3.1 The path that led to the current crisis needs to be described if we are to understand the problems facing the care sector. This is about both values as well as solutions. Modern old age and adult disability care was once part of the same programme that created the NHS and the vision of a safety net from cradle to grave. Social care and NHS workers once had parity in pay and terms and conditions. GMB believes that care should be restored to its place as an integral and valued part of the welfare state.
- 3.2 Both the creation of the modern care sector and the swift disaster of outsourcing and fragmentation in the early 1990s proved that the Government the status quo is not inevitable – the Government can change the care sector both for worse, and for better.
- 3.3 Social care was not meant to become the fragmented and low-paid sector that it has become. Care, alongside the NHS, was a part of the Attlee Government's vision of a new world that would end the iniquities of the old. The modern social care system was created by 1948 National Assistance Act which swept away the last remnants of the hated Poor Law. Instead, the law required local authorities to provide funded placements and care packages for those who required assistance.
- 3.4 As Nye Bevan said, the law was a rejection of 'that very evil institution' – the workhouse and the cheap lodging houses where the elderly often died alone, which blighted working class communities before the war. One of the MPs present, Bessie Braddock, spoke movingly about her experiences in Liverpool in the time before social care:
- 'I am very bitter about what has happened in the past to those people who found themselves in need of assistance. ... I have been in a [Poor Law] committee where the chairman, who was not of my party, persisted—and I protested—in seeing the underclothing of old people before the committee was prepared to give an order that new underclothing should be supplied. These things remain with us. We remember them.'*²
- 3.5 Residential were supposed to accommodate no more than 25 to 30 residents. Fees were supposed to be around 80 per cent of the old age pension, in order to provide for individual independence. The post-war Labour Government also insisted that domiciliary care charges must not exceed the cost of delivery. Services were mostly delivered by local authorities and care workers were paid under local authority terms and conditions.
- 3.6 Local authorities then had much more direct role in the planning of both health and care services. It followed that there was much closer integration between the NHS and social care. As late as the end of the 1970s, pay negotiations took place in tandem – and the NHS employers' pay offers were made after those in local government, in recognition of the fact that differences in pay structures inevitably led to recruitment and retention pressures.³ The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services recently called for pay parity between care and the NHS to be restored.⁴ While we recognise that pay in the NHS is also too low, GMB believes that much closer integration between NHS and care services is an essential requirement for social care reform.
- 3.7 The current care system was not inevitable. The fragmented, privatised market model for care is relatively new: the public sector directly met provided between eight and nine out of ten beds until the early 1990s. But, in one Margaret Thatcher's last acts as Prime Minister, local authorities were forced to

promote 'competition.' Under John Major, 80 per cent of state subsidies were required to be spent on private providers.⁵ One of the most dramatic privatisations of a public service followed.

[INSERT GRAPH]

3.8 In England, 93 per cent of publicly-funded residential placements were in local authority run homes the start of the 1990s. The figure had fallen to just 21 per cent ten years later. Today, 95 per cent of residents are cared for in private or voluntary sector homes.⁶ It has been said that the fragmentation of care was 'arguably the most extensive outsourcing of a public service yet undertaken in the UK.'⁷

3.9 As a report for private investors commented years later:

*'The transformation of publicly funded social care service delivery which has taken place in Britain, from predominantly in-house to an outsourcing model ... would have been unthinkable in the NHS. The fundamental difference is that social care is largely staffed by low paid workers.'*⁸

[INSERT GRAPH]

3.1 By 1999, the Royal Commission on old age care warned that:

*'The current system is failing ... There is a sense of bewilderment, a strong sense of loss of control, a sense of actually losing the beloved individual to a system which is beyond understanding and which makes individuals feel beyond help.'*⁹

3.2 Many of the new private providers were backed by private equity firms. The 'dominant feature' of these early deals was to 'get the labour costs down by 30 per cent,' in large part by reducing staffing levels and wages, according to a former private equity partner.¹⁰

3.3 When the private equity-backed Southern Cross collapsed in 2011 under a weight of repayments due to its disastrous sale and leaseback model, GMB responded by organising and winning recognition among almost all its successor companies. But the company's staff and residents should never have been placed in that position. The collapse of Four Seasons in 2019 was a reminder that this essential public service remains at risk due to the gambles of owners and risky financial engineering.

3.4 The consequences of this fragmentation for care workers have been severe. Most care workers are no longer covered by adequate, nationally bargained pay rates and terms and conditions. The failure to preserve parity with the NHS has led to severe shortages in 10 comparable roles, such as registered nurses. Pay is too low in all parts of the care sector, but average care worker pay is still 12 per cent lower in private providers than it is direct local authority provision.¹¹ We do not hesitate to criticise public sector employers, but on average the remaining local authority-operated homes have better retention on average, and much lower levels of employment on zero hours contracts.

3.5 It is longstanding GMB policy to support the return of services that were previously provided by the public sector to direct operation, and that includes care.¹² Care is also something of a special case. There was always a mix of public and private providers (particularly for some very specialised forms of care and those with the means to fund their own placements). But politicians do have the power to reshape the care market.

3.6 As this report sets out, the overriding priorities for current and future governments must be the securing of the sector's finances and a reversal of the fragmentation of care service and employment standards. The Conservative Party came to office with a now seemingly forgotten pledge to enact reforms that 'stands the test of time.'¹³ The Labour Party is committed to building a National Care Service. **Part of**

those reforms should include backing for local authorities to rebuild their direct provision as part of a wider policy to stabilise the sector and drive up employment standards.

4. Care workers in crisis

- 4.1 Our members came to care work from different walks of life, but one message stood out from GMB's 2023 survey of care members. The most commonly quoted reason for working in the sector is 'to make a difference.' Many of our members say that they enjoy knowing that they have provided contact and help for people who might otherwise be isolated, or who just need some support to be independent.

"[I went into care] to make a difference to people's lives and to help support vulnerable adults lead a life as independently as they are able to."

Personal Support Worker

- 4.2 Care workers are motivated to work in the sector. But the cost of living crisis has pushed an already under-paid and under-funded workforce to breaking point. Critical recruitment and retention pressures are rising. Higher pay for comparable or less demanding roles is often available. The long-term absence of clear routes for training linked career progression has left the care sector with unsustainable turnover rates.

Care and the cost of living crisis

"I am using savings to make ends meet but this will not see me through the coming year and as I am not in line for a pay increase I do not know what I am going to do."

Administrator

- 4.3 Chronically low pay has left many care workers unable to afford basic necessities. Charities report a significant increase in the number of care workers who are seeking support to afford grocery and energy bills.¹⁴ Several GMB members told us that they were using food banks to get by.

"At home it is always cold because I have to turn the boiler off. We eat one meal a day, I hardly see my kids because, I work shifts, waking nights, sleep ins etc for overtime. I have no life, I just work and come home."

Manager

"Regularly eat one simply meal a day due to the rising costs - have been referred to food bank by my GP."

Healthcare / Support Assistant

- 4.4 The crisis in wages long preceded the crisis in prices. According to the Health Foundation, even before the cost of living crisis hit, more than a quarter of residential care workers lived 'in or on the brink of poverty.'¹⁵ A later section of this report describes GMB's campaigning response and our demand for £15 an hour in care. The pay and prices crisis is contributing directly to severe recruitment and retention challenges in care. Recruitment and retention
- 4.5 There are a record 165,000 vacancies in adult social care in England alone. The number of people employed in the sector actually fell by 50,000 last year, despite an increase in demand. Some 400,000 people – close to a third of all those employed in care – leave their job every year. Vacancies are elevated across all job roles, including catering, cleaning, administrative and management posts.
- 4.6 The sector's vacancy rate of 10.4 per cent is more than three times higher than the average for the whole economy (at 3.5 per cent). The vacancy rate rises to 13.8 per cent for domiciliary workers, and 14.6 per cent for registered nurses – where there is direct wage competition from the NHS.¹⁶ As the LGA has warned, 'the NHS ... [makes] offers to our healthcare experienced staff that they can't refuse.'¹⁷ Nine out of ten local authority Directors of Adult Social Services say that 'increasing recurrent adult

social care funding sufficiently to enable pay parity with NHS roles and other labour market competition' would be an effective way of mitigating labour shortages – this was by far the most supported option.¹⁸

“If the job ... had decent pay and respect then vacancies would be filled and there would be enough carers to look after people in their own homes, enabling them to be out of hospital and free up beds in the NHS.”

Support worker

- 4.7 In 2012–13, sales and retail assistants earned 13p less per hour than care workers, but in 2020–21, they earned 21p more.¹⁹ Care managers have reportedly said that: ‘I dread hearing Aldi is opening up nearby, as I know I will lose staff.’²⁰

Terms and conditions

- 4.8 The relentless drive to reduce costs, due to a combination of profit maximisation and low local authority fees, has led to a race to the bottom on non-pay terms and conditions. A third of direct care workers are employed on zero hours in England, rising to 46 per cent of domiciliary care workers and more than half of all direct care workers in London.²¹

- 4.9 Care workers are typically not paid for travel time or sleeping time when on duty. The Supreme Court ruled in 2021 that staff who are required to sleep at work are not entitled to the National Minimum Wage for that time. This is in spite of the disruption to regular sleeping patterns that our members report in unfamiliar beds or buildings, or as a result of always being on-call. The Supreme Court’s judgement rested on an early Low Pay Commission report, and the Low Pay Commission must now urgently revisit the issue. **The sleep-in shifts judgement has exposed a fundamental weakness in the National Minimum Wage Regulations which must be addressed.**

“I do overnight shifts. I have sleeping problems. I never leave work on time. It’s affecting my emotional sense. I feel exhausted and very low.”

Homecare Worker

- 4.10 Most care workers are entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) only – or no sick pay at all. Workers in care are more likely to be reliant on SSP than in any other sector.²² One 2020 study found that 77 per cent of care homes offered SSP only.²³ The UK has one of the lowest rates for sick pay entitlement in Europe at less than a fifth of average wage, and many workers are excluded from it. Even Matt Hancock as Health Secretary admitted that he could not live on SSP.

- 4.11 There is a statistically significant link between inadequate sick pay rates and COVID-19 transmission in care homes.²⁴ Worrying, eight out of ten care workers who responded to a 2020 GMB survey said that they might be forced return to work before they are ready if they were on SSP. While some temporary funding was made available to fund sickness absence and the Welsh Government established a Statutory Sick Pay Enhancement scheme between 2020 and 2022, no long-term reforms to the entitlement have been made.

“With me being on a zero hours contract, I don’t always get work. If I become ill I don’t get paid. If I get a cold or flu related illness I’m expected to stay at home without pay because I may pass the illness to our service users ... It is a very very stressful life.”

Carer

- 4.12 The shocking inadequacies of Statutory Sick Pay go beyond its very low headline rate (currently £109.40 per week), which has been cut in real-terms during the pandemic. Workers who are not classed as employees, and those who do not meet the Lower Earnings Limit of £123 a week, are excluded from minimum sick pay protection. This effectively excludes most workers on zero hours contracts. **It is essential that Statutory Sick Pay is raised and reformed so that no-one is forced to attend work when they are ill.**

Care and COVID-19

“Totally devastating. Losing residents because they couldn't be admitted to hospital but would've been treated before covid. GPs that wouldn't come to see residents, senior staff basically certifying death. It was a horrible job to be in at the time then going home and crying in the shower. “Two colleagues died as a result and I lost count of the number of residents who also died. Worst experience in 41 years of working in health and social care. I'll never forget or forgive.”

Care Assistant

- 4.13 The care sector, and many care workers, has not recovered from the ongoing trauma of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our members have shared horrific testimony of the realities of working in care since March 2020. Shockingly, a quarter of our members in care say that they have experienced Long Covid, and half our members contracted the virus at work. At least 469 care workers died in 2020 alone after testing positive for Covid-19, and the true death toll will never be known.²⁵
- 4.14 While our members risked everything, they were being failed by policy decisions that ‘turned care homes into morgues.’²⁶ The Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Dr Jenny Harries, claimed in March 2020 that supply problems had been ‘completely resolved’ and that ‘the country has a perfectly adequate supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) at the moment’²⁷ – at a time when our members were forced to fashion their own PPE out of binbags and tape. For a time, the official guidance even said that workers staff did not need to wear masks and that it ‘was very unlikely that anyone receiving care in a care home or the community will become infected.’²⁸
- 4.15 Boris Johnson claimed that ‘every discharge from the NHS into care homes was made by clinicians, and in no case was that done when people were suspected of being coronavirus victims.’²⁹ But this was untrue. Derbyshire County Council published guidance that care homes ‘should be prepared to receive back care home residents who are Covid positive’ in order ‘to ensure capacity for new Covid cases in acute hospitals.’ Bradford Council told care homes that ‘if a positive result is received ... then we are looking to discharge into (firstly) in-house services, or the independent sector.’ The council event said it wanted to discharge dying patients from hospitals into care homes for ‘end of life support.’³⁰ Care residents were refused access to most forms NHS in-patient treatment in many areas, leading to thousands of avoidable deaths to causes other than COVID-19.
- 4.16 Our members’ testimony confirms research that identified a clear link between sick pay coverage and infection rates.

GMB care members who report contracting COVID-19 from work, by sick pay provision

<u>What are your sick pay arrangements?</u>	<u>Percentage answering yes</u>
No sick pay entitlement	54.4
Statutory Sick Pay (£99.35 a week)	50.1
Employer sick pay scheme (less than £99.35 a week based on contracted hours)	49.2
Employer sick pay scheme (more than £99.35 a week)	47.5
I don't know	40.5

“No remuneration is available for covid positive staff. Staff are aware of this. This increases the risk of staff working with covid covertly.”

Clinical Nurse Assistant

- 4.17 At the height of the pandemic, 75 of GMB members in care said that their work has had a serious negative impact on their mental health. On a standardised score, our members reported anxiety levels that were 44 per cent higher than the average for all workers. Women care workers, disabled care workers, and care workers in receipt of Statutory Sick Pay were at greater risk of experiencing poor mental health.³¹

“It is a difficult time but as carers we have not received appropriate support on our mental health, we have not got any pay increase during this time and we are working around the clock everyday.”

Domiciliary care member, winter 2020/21

- 4.18 The nation clapped our carers – but claps do not pay the bills or put food on the table. Three years have passed since the start of the pandemic, and care workers still do not have the pay or recognition that they deserve. We cannot change the past but we are committed to fighting for a better future.

Violence

“I am attacked on a fairly regular basis. The worst being an injury to my forehead that required 18 stitches.”

Team Leader

- 4.19 No-one should go to work in fear of being assaulted. But care workers are too often told to treat violence as ‘part of the job.’ Research suggests that most care workers will experience violence at work, with the frequency of assaults varying by type of setting. Care workers from a Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority background are believed to be at higher risk of violence. Recent research has emphasised that residential and domiciliary workers are all at risk of assault.³²
- 4.20 GMB has obtained shocking statistics from the Health and Safety Executive under the Freedom of Information Act. The figures reveal that serious injuries to care workers are much more likely to be as a result of violence than they are for workers in the wider economy. Nearly four in ten (39 per cent) of reports for serious injuries in residential care settings were caused by violence in 2021/22 – compared to 9 per cent for all workers. The rate rose to half or more in some regions.
- 4.21 One in six reports are for ‘specified injuries.’ This category can include injuries that lead to: fractured bones, loss of sight, brain injury and other organ damage, and loss of consciousness caused by a head injury.³³

RIDDOR reports for injuries caused by acts of violence, residential care – 2021/22³⁴

[INSERT TABLE]

“[I’m] threatened by service users and their families. Panic button on work phone that doesn’t actually work. Staff supplied with personal alarm and torch. Slapped and kicked by service users with mental health needs.”

Home Care Supervisor

- 4.22 Our members tell us that assaults often take place in mental health, dementia, and other, specialist settings where safe staffing ratios are not necessarily in place and proper risk

assessments may not have been carried out. But in many cases, assailants have decisionmaking capacity, but effective action is not being taken.

- 4.23 The 2018 Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act allows longer sentences to be passed against those who assault NHS workers. But there is a gap in the law – an NHS healthcare assistant would be covered by it, but workers employed by a care provider would not be. GMB supports an extension to the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act so that it also covers care workers. Training
- 4.24 Care workers are expected to perform skilled and safety-critical tasks, from the administration of medicine and restraints to managing difficult situations. But even when training is available, it is difficult for many care workers to access it due to a lack of flexibility within contracted time. There is also an absence of a clear link between career progression and training. Even when care workers undertake similar roles to NHS workers, there is not a parity of esteem and access to the training and qualifications that can be attained in the NHS.
- 4.25 As the House of Commons Select Committee on Health and Social Care said in 2021, 'better training and career development pathways in social care will be an essential part of driving recruitment and retention in the sector.' However, the Committee's recommendation that 'the Government must commit to restoring social care staff free access to the same NHS training as community health colleagues by July 2023' was rejected by Ministers.³⁵
- 4.26 Apprenticeships represent a potentially valuable route for people entering into the care sector. However, all too often, apprenticeships have been used as a forced of cheap labour and job substitution – at the current apprenticeship National Minimum Wage of just £5.28 an hour. As the 2017 CEC Charter for the Care Sector rightly noted, there should be quality apprenticeships for those wanting to have a career in the care sector, and apprentices should not to be exploited as cheap labour.³⁶
- 4.27 It is essential that reforms to the care sector include access to nationally recognised qualifications that are linked to pay and progression. The implications of this demand for the Labour Party's policies are discussed later in this document.

5. The UK's broken care model

- 5.1 For as long as we have had members in the social care sector, GMB has made it clear that the ownership model is broken. When we assess the annual accounts of employers, we are met often with a labyrinth of group structures, with no clear operational purposes, and can see money being filtered up and on occasion out of the UK to tax havens.
- 5.2 The Centre for Health and the Public Interest (CHPI) refers to money leaving the sector not through tax, wages, or actual running costs, as 'leakage'.³⁷ Its research estimated in 2019 that £1.5 billion a year is taken out of the care system in profits disguised as rent payments and management fees. This equates to 10 per cent of the total money which goes into the sector annually,³⁸ which when used as an alternative measure of profitability shows that the care sector returned nearly the same rate of profits as did all UK companies in 2019, which was 10.7 per cent according to ONS figures.³⁹
- 5.3 This 'leakage' is so out of control that even Jeremy Hunt suggested that the finances of private ownership needed to be investigated:

*'It's the Wild West out there. We need the Competition and Market authority to make sure that market is operating in the interest of consumers, particularly the very vulnerable people who need that sector.'*⁴⁰

- 5.4 Owners of failing care homes have paid themselves enormous salaries and dividends, to the cost of the taxpayer, fee-paying residents and their families, and at the expense of the workforce's pay packet. As reported in the Guardian, one care home operator owner paid himself over £20 million despite multiple breaches of health and safety standards.⁴¹
- 5.5 There has been a mass transfer of care assets from the public to the private sectors. Research by Centre for International Corporate Tax Accountability and Research (CICTAR) estimates that the value of privately owned care home assets is now £245 billion. A considerable portion of the assets are the hands of landlords – homes transferred through 'sale and lease back' arrangements.
- 5.6 This is infrastructure that is vital to the health and wellbeing of our communities. The maintenance of this infrastructure is currently left to the decision-making of property developers, rather than strategic planning of local authorities or national government. As the demand for residential care grows, more of this wealth could continue to be concentrated in the hands of very few.⁴²
- 5.7 Care is judged on its quality of service – how well people are cared for should be the fundamental marker of success. The myth that the transfer of services to the private sector will lead to superior quality is undermined by the finding that 84 per cent of care homes run by local authorities were rated good or outstanding, compared with 77 per cent of for-profit homes, according to analysis of regulatory reporting.⁴³
- 5.8 Seven out of the ten largest providers in the residential care market – who account for a fifth of the overall market – are run on a for-profit basis:

Residential care providers by size, 2023 estimates⁴⁴

[INSERT TABLE]

- 5.9 Private equity has a large stake in our social care system, which can be described as 'capitalism in high gear'. As we have seen, private equity models have been responsible for much of the running-down of pay and terms and conditions in the sector. Classic private equity models do not seek to build and maintain essential services in our society – instead, they extract as much wealth as possible in as short of time as possible.
- 5.10 These types of ownership are the antithesis to what society would consider 'caring'; while there has been little political will to challenge this type of exploitation directly, we must at least have greater transparency on the financial strategies of companies within the care sector.⁴⁵

Accounting and company structures

- 5.11 Companies such as HC-One have been analysed by GMB, and other research groups as an example of how Care companies organise their businesses. As part of our pay negotiations with HC-One, GMB has worked to understand its group structure in order to put forward claims on behalf of our members. We have been met with is complex hierarchies of company ownership.
- 5.12 The company website for HC-One lists the following companies: HC-One No.1 Limited; HC-One No.2 Limited; HC-One No.3 Limited; HCOne No.4 Limited; HC-One No.5 Limited; HC-One No.6 Limited; HCOne Management Limited; HC-One Limited
- 5.13 When looking through the accounts through Companies House filings, the ownership of each entity breaks down as the following:

[INSERT TABLE]

- 5.14 As can be seen from this table, the significant controlling companies within the whole group are registered in the Cayman Islands, with the largest single company owned by a company based in Jersey.
- 5.15 There are different registered companies who the operations of care homes. While we might negotiate across all these entities on behalf of our bargaining groups, the assets are split, and under this model there is the potential to spread money across lots of different legal entities.
- 5.16 While this report is not going to go into forensic detail into the accounts of every single entity, explaining every last exchange of money within the group, it will draw upon some examples of where money can flow up and out.
- 5.17 HC-One Limited ran at a loss as of 30 September 2022 of £25.5 million (2021 profit of £14.1m), despite raising weekly fees that year from £793 to £839.⁴⁶
- 5.18 The accounts also state that that: *'the Group's principal [financial] facility is a loan of £570.0m, which consisted of £540.0m towards repayment of existing Group indebtedness and a further facility of £30.0m available for draw down to fund working capital expenditure.'*⁴⁷
- 5.19 HC-One Limited also paid out £2 million in dividends to its parent companies, which as outlined in the structure, are based in tax havens. In comparison, HC-One No.1 Limited paid out a dividend of £13,000 as a *'non-cash item which resulted from the corporate restructuring steps undertaken by the group as part of the refinancing arrangement completed in December 2021'*.
- 5.20 HC-One Limited benefited from an interest payment of £12,288,000 from an intercompany loan arrangement. When arranging intercompany loans, the group can set the interest rates to what they like. These types of loan arrangements can help funnel money up and out of these company structures.
- 5.21 HC-One Intermediate Holdco 4 was owed £18,350,817 by HC-One Holdings Limited as of the 30 September 2022. According to its accounts, the loan notes are due on demand, with no fixed repayment date and have an interest rate of 12 per cent per annum. This particular company within the structure does not employ anyone, but it can call up funds within the structure. In this instance it can be through a loan note, which is essentially an IOU agreement between companies. HC-One Holdings, which owes this sum, is the immediate parent company of HC-One Management Limited.⁴⁸
- 5.22 These extremely complicated structures obscure the flows of money – much of it derived from taxpayers' fees. Every employee of a care provider should be able to readily understand where the money is going. It is clear that current UK company law is failing to ensure that public money is being spent in a transparent way. **GMB calls for new transparency standards and a public inquiry into the financial engineering of the care sector.**

Private equity and financing

- 5.23 There has been an increase in private equity takeovers across the economy in recent years. Across the economy, GMB is often confronted by cutthroat business management approaches following these takeovers.
- 5.24 Private equity is difficult to fully define, but one of the most important concerns with its involvement in the sector is that debt is normally laden on the businesses that are taken over. This makes the focus of the financial structuring and management of care companies entirely about realising returns on the investment and managing the debt.

- 5.25 These firms often have short term approach to their investments. Typically, a private equity fund will tell investors that they will have a full return within a defined period – such as 5 or 7 years – which sets the clock ticking for short term cuts within the business, and it raises the chance of future TUPE transfers.
- 5.26 This is not a problem unique to the UK either. According to research in the USA, ‘the estimates show that private equity ownership increases short-term mortality by 10%, which implies about 21,000 lives lost due to private equity ownership over our sample period. Private equity ownership also increases spending by 19%, the vast majority of which is billed to taxpayers.’⁴⁹
- 5.27 President Biden also referred to the social care market in his 2022 State of the Union address, where he expressed concern for the heavy influence Wall Street has in elderly care. His administration has acknowledged that the presence of private equity has driven quality of care down and increased the Medicare costs. The Biden administration has looked to regulate the sector more, and enforce greater transparency on the accounts of private nursing homes and their ownership.⁵⁰

Landlords

- 5.28 Care homes are now often sold and leased back. This has meant that assets have been transferred into the hands of landlords and care home companies are then required to pay rent on the properties they might have once owned.
- 5.29 This has proved to be a highly lucrative business for landlords. CICTAR research estimates that the care home property portfolio in the UK is worth £245bn. Annually, they assert that £1.5bn is paid in rent to landlords from care home companies.
- 5.30 Care UK has its own property development company called Care UK Property Holdings Limited which also leases properties to the 28 residential care delivery side of the wider Care UK group. The latest accounts for Care UK Property Holdings Limited made up to September 2021 show the company making a turnover of £5,513,000 from property rental and service fees.⁵¹
- 5.31 Landlords are able to calculate profits bed by bed, and this is a standard industry measurement. CICTAR research found that ‘£3,181 was the profit per bed per year (£61 per week) made by landlords from the rent paid by all for-profit homes (at 85% occupancy)’ and that £1.3bn was paid as rent to landlords by all for-profit homes garnering them an estimated £515m profit.⁵²
- 5.32 Landlords are able to raise rents when they like. The burden is felt throughout the care home operators. Wages are suppressed, resources are cut down on, and the cost to the service users goes up.
- 5.33 In contrast GMB members have told us that successive years of under inflation pay rises have left them struggling.

“I struggle to pay my priority bills due to being on a low income but working full time, I am finding that I am having to borrow money and take out loans to be able to afford food, gas and electricity. I live alone and walk too and from work yet still can’t afford to live comfortably for the month.”

Senior Carer

- 5.34 In 2021 it emerged that a care home company in Northern Ireland was effectively selling individual rooms within their care homes to investors.⁵³

- 5.35 This approach is not unique to Court Care homes. Companies such as 'One Touch Investment' advertise that 'typical leases are up to 25 years with 10% net income.' They also state that their 'chosen developers work closely with the NHS trusts and local authorities to identify areas of significant demand and buy care homes in most under-supplied parts of the country – ensuring a buoyant market.'⁵⁴
- 5.36 While this model might furnish the care home with some up front capital to spend on the running of services, it further increases the debts from that home to yet another entity that will play no active role in the service of care.

Domiciliary care

- 5.37 While much of our membership lies in residential elderly care, we have an increasing number of members who work in domiciliary care. It is a hugely self-funded part of the sector. According to LaingBuisson the value of the homecare and supported living market in England is now £11.5 billion.⁵⁵
- 5.38 The government does not hold data on the full scale of cost for those who self-fund home care but reporting from Home Care Association in England it makes up 30%; Scotland 25%; Wales 21%; and Northern Ireland 7% of the market.⁵⁶
- 5.39 This part of the sector is highly franchised. Home Instead is one of the largest franchises in the country, which supports over 100,000 service users. Branches will pay fees to the corporate head but ultimately, they will be responsible for the day to day running of their services and the workforce they employ.⁵⁷
- 5.40 A 'gig economy'-style approach is also increasingly common, under which companies act as third parties that provide 'introductions' between care workers and directly-funding service users for a fee. While average hourly wages are often superficially higher in this part of the sector, this apparent advantage is misleading: workers must self-fund holiday pay and sickness cover. The firms that provide these 'introductions' are not regulated.

State funding

- 5.41 The Health and Social Care levy, announced in 2021, was due to raise £5.4 billion for adult social care between 2022 and 2025. The purpose of the funding was to reduce the cost burden on those paying for care (£3.6bn), reducing the cap on personal spending on care to £86,000 over their lifetime. Only £500m was due to be invested into the workforce out of the remaining £1.7bn. The means of raising this funding was deeply unpopular (through raising National Insurance Contributions) and ultimately scrapped before implementation.
- 5.42 This policy completely absolved the profit-making parts of the sector of responsibility for investing back into the system. Since then, the Government has furthered rolled back on the £500m investment in staff, incrementally lowering it to £250m, and then to nothing.
- 5.43 There is no credible strategy coming out of this current government for addressing the issues within the social care system. If the financing of the sector is allowed to continue in this way, we will see more cycles of care home operator collapses, higher and higher costs to service users and their families, further stagnation and suppression of wages and terms and conditions for the workforce. How do we keep money in the system?
- 5.44 As outlined, there are plenty of ways in which money can leave the sector. It has been an easy target for 'investors' to extract wealth from, which has left the service users and workforce with very little. While public investment helps, there are too many avenues and accounting tricks

which allow the significant 'leakage' of money which could be stopped or significantly discouraged. Taxpayer money should not end up being funnelled into tax havens.

- 5.45 We should regard the Care Sector as an essential service. It is part of our national infrastructure, critical to the health and well being of our society.
- 5.46 The finances of the companies which take on this responsibility of care should be highly regulated. We agree that at the very least there should be greater transparency in the way that care companies produce their accounts. There should be clearer markers of where money is being transferred between companies within their group structure and reporting ahead of money being transferred out to tax havens.
- 5.47 If we were to tax certain intercompany transactions, wealth collected could be placed into a National Solidarity Fund for the care sector. Training and professional development could be administered through the fund addressing the skills gap.

GMB commits to promoting the following policies:

- **Look to the Biden administration and policy from Secretary Xavier Becerra on greater public disclosure of ownership of care homes.**
- **Further explore how an additional levy or tax on profits on rent made through care home properties could work, especially for those in Operational Company and Property Management Company relationships.**
- **Whole group liability for care standards, not just operator care company entities – property management companies within the group can be liable for quality of care, and therefore fined.**
- **Ensure that capital returned from the care sector ownership is placed in a National Solidarity Fund, ringfenced for the workforce.**
- **Care home property development should be under greater local authority planning, addressing the needs of the local community rather than the asset portfolio of property developers and land speculators.**

6. GMB – the fight for £15

- 6.1 For too long care work has been undervalued and therefore underpaid. While a fragmented sector may create different starting points for our members across the UK, the undervaluing of their care work is universal.
- 6.2 The average hourly pay for care workers and home carers across the UK is still a few pence above the new National Minimum Wage rate which applies from April 2023.⁵⁸ Low pay is common across all roles where GMB has members.
- 6.3 This crisis in care will continue as long as decisions about the sector are made in the interests of those who profit from care rather than those who deliver it. A model where dedicated workers are paid too little to make ends meet while care providers disguise their profits in secretive tax havens is as blatant as it is unsustainable.
- 6.5 The fight for £15 an hour is GMB's campaign to reclaim who and what is valued in the delivery of care. It is a demand first raised by our members working on the frontline in the sector, after extensive research by GMB Scotland's Show You Care report in 2020. As that report made clear: the "Fight for Fifteen" is a realistic objective which recognises the status quo in care is no

longer acceptable and that change is both possible and necessary. A rise to £15 would bring care workers' pay in line with the average hourly wage for all UK workers, currently £14.72.⁵⁹

- 6.6 The Fight for 15 is also a campaign to save the future of care in the UK. A sector both undervalued by government and increasingly refocused towards profit over care is unsustainable. The barriers holding back the sector from delivering a high-quality service also hold back workers who can deliver it. Only by properly valuing and rewarding frontline workers through pay justice will the sector meet the challenges it faces in the next decade.

“Up until two weeks ago I worked 12-hour nights for minimum wage we have just had a 60p pay rise which is better than nothing but the job we do and the care we provide it's not enough on top of caring for the 27 residents for 12 hours with 3 care staff and one nurse.”

Care Assistant

- 6.7 The undervaluing of predominately women and migrant workers in care is not inevitable. GMB members are standing up and reclaiming their worth through organising and campaigning. This is where changing the status quo in social care begins.

8) Recovering from a 'lost decade' for care

- 6.8 The fight for £15 an hour seeks to restore the real-terms lost earnings for our members working on the frontline of care.
- 6.9 The problem is structural. Wage restraint for care workers has become the bedrock on which care is delivered in the UK, especially as so much of care provision faces both local-authority funding constraints under austerity and the profit-motive of many private providers who deliver care services.
- 6.10 The result has been a 'lost decade' of pay for frontline care workers. Between 2012 and 2022 the average care worker and home carer in England only saw their pay increase by 47 pence an hour in real terms. For workers in Scotland this increase amounts to only 21 pence an hour, and in Wales 36 pence an hour. Only in Northern Ireland has the average care worker's hourly pay increased by more than a matter of pence in real terms, by £1.15 an hour.⁶⁰
- 6.11 Those who our members care for have also lost out as the average weekly cost of care home and nursing beds in the UK rose by 29 per cent and 32 per cent respectively between 2012 and 2020.⁶¹
- 6.12 Campaigning to restore lost earnings for care workers will require sufficient funding of the social care sector from central government to achieve it, with funding being required to reach the frontline staff doing the work.
- 6.13 Complex financial structures and lack of government regulation mean there is a lack of transparency on how the money that goes into care from government and fee payers is spent by private care companies who deliver it.
- 6.14 This extraction of value by care profiteering continues as lost value for the workforce creates an uncertain future for the sector. While modelling from Skills for Care project that the number of filled posts has kept up with rising demand in England,⁶² this modelling does not account for the 52 per cent increase in vacancies in 2021/22 in the independent sector in England, which Skills for Care notes “point towards supply not keeping up with demand.”⁶³
- 6.15 To ensure the social care sector meets increasing demand and provides better care there needs to be a refocus of who and what decision-makers value when it comes to care towards the frontline workers who deliver it.

ii) A fight for the future of social care

- 6.16 The fight for £15 an hour is a fight for the future of the care sector, for those who care and those who need it.
- 6.17 More than nine in ten of members responding to GMB's Care Survey believe that low wages put people off working in care (93.8 per cent). Without proper recognition and reward the sector will not be able to attract new starters.
- 6.18 The clock is ticking. GMB's own analysis of ONS UK population estimates predict that there will be another roughly 20 percent increase in the number of those aged 65 and over between 2020 and 2030, with the number of those aged 80 and over increasing by over 33 percent in that time.⁶⁴
- 6.19 The Health Foundation has estimated that in England alone up to 627,000 extra social care staff would be needed to improve services and meet demand by 2030, an increase of 55 per cent.⁶⁵
- 6.20 GMB has long made clear that the capacity shortfall in care cannot be met without resolving the understaffing crisis, which in turn means resolving recruitment and retention.
- 6.21 Properly recognising and rewarding the social care workforce will benefit both carers and those being cared for. Making this the bedrock of how future care is delivered in the UK will help ensure safe staffing levels through attracting new starters and retaining experienced colleagues. This will allow staff to provide the good quality of care that they wish to and those in care deserve.
- 6.22 This is a claim informed by our members experiences everyday and one indicated through wider studies of the social care sector. One study of over 2,500 care homes in England over three years found that better wages and training for care workers, more personcentred care and proper staffing levels in homes were linked to higher CQC ratings.
- 6.23 In turn, these better CQC ratings were found to be linked with the higher quality of life among the residents who needed most help. On staff wages alone, a 10 per cent rise in care worker average hourly wage was found to increase the likelihood of a care home being rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by 7 per cent.⁶⁶

iii) Campaigning for £15 an hour in social care

- 6.24 The submission of individual pay claims will always be in the hands of our branches and committees, but Congress 2022 supported the campaigning demand £15 an hour minimum wage in care, as called for by the CEC Special Report on the Women's Campaign Unit. GMB will support Regions' efforts to coordinate lobbying of national, devolved and local governments to recognise £15 per hour as the minimum for the sector.
- 6.25 GMB has long called for the care sector to be brought in house under local government control.⁶⁷ Raising minimum hourly pay for frontline care workers to £15 would align our members with the current industry-wide average hourly rate in local authority care, which is £15.13 an hour.⁶⁸
- 6.26 The Labour Party – through its New Deal for Working People – has committed to establishing a Fair Pay Agreement, starting in social care. This agreement would establish minimum terms and conditions that would be binding on all employers in social care, forming an effective 'wage floor' and giving workers a real voice.⁶⁹ It would also cover training and careers structures. This Fair Pay Agreement could build on and strengthen the approach already being taken by

the Labour Government in Wales to establish a Real Living Wage for care workers, with additional funding.⁷⁰

- 6.27 GMB welcomes the Fair Pay Agreement commitment and we will campaign as part of its support for Fair Pay Agreements to ensure that this ‘wage floor’ is at least £15 an hour.

7. The future structure of the care sector A National Care Service

- 7.1 The Labour Party is committed to establishing a National Care Service, which would be a fulfilment of long-standing GMB policy. We believe that a National Care Service will only be meaningful if it establishes national employment standards, and gives a clear voice to representatives of care workers so that they can shape the future of their industry.
- 7.2 There should be a clear role for local authorities within the National Care Service, so that local authorities can once again meaningfully plan provision in line to meet rising demand and ensure that all care workers – including in domiciliary care – are covered by decent pay and terms and conditions.
- 7.3 It is important that the Labour Party learns from the mistakes made in the design of the Scottish National Care Service, which is due to be implemented from 2026. The legislation that underpins the plans excludes workers’ voices and provides no route for raising pay, terms and conditions.⁷¹ An alternative Labour National Care Service cannot replicate this top-down, bureaucratic approach.

Regulation and registration

- 7.4 The regulation of social care varies by nation and setting. In England, the main regulator is the Care Quality Commission (CQC), which is responsible for monitoring patient standards. The CQC has been criticised for failing to predict or prevent the failure of major providers, such as Southern Cross and Four Seasons. As one industry expert put it, regulation has been reduced to ‘a spectator at the accident rather than a preventative measure.’⁷² Our members are twice as likely to say that the CQC is not improving care standards as those who say that it is.
- 7.5 As discussed above, there are also serious gaps in the coverage of regulation – domiciliary care firms that provide ‘introductions’ are currently unregulated. **We call for the strengthening of regulation** in order to close these loopholes and establish a regulatory function that can proactively investigate the finances of overly indebted providers. Registration
- 7.6 There have been calls for the registration of care workers, on a similar basis to nurses. The Welsh Government has provided a route for the registration of care home workers. GMB recognises the potential advantages of registration as part of a wider recognition of the professionalism of care workers.
- 7.7 If compulsory registration was put on the agenda then our members would have to be consulted carefully on fee levels and striking-off procedures. The Welsh fee of £30 a year is significantly lower than the charge for nursing registration, but it still represents a difficult expense for many to meet – especially under current circumstances. Registration must be linked to wider reform of pay and progression routes so that no care worker is left out of pocket due to registration.

Funding

- 7.8 There is no shortage of estimates of the ‘funding gap’ in social care. The House of Commons Health and Care Select Committee estimated in 2021 that the gap this year may be £7 billion – and this would be just to cover the costs of demographic changes, the National Minimum

Wage increases, and emergency support for those most in need. The finances of the sector and people's entitlement to care are due to change again significantly in October 2025, when the local authority entitlement support 'ceiling' in England is due to be raised from £23,500 to £100,000.

- 7.9 As GMB argued at TUC Congress 2021 when we brought an emergency motion against Boris Johnson's Health and Care Levy plan, the financial burden of rebuilding the economy, and addressing the underfunding crisis in health and care that predated the pandemic, should not be borne by working people who are being hit by a double whammy of tax rises and real-terms pay cuts.
- 7.10 There is an urgent need for a new funding settlement in social care that retains more money within the system and addresses chronic underfunding. Significant sums could be saved within the existing system – including the £1.5 billion that is extracted from the sector each year through disguised profits. But additional money needs to be raised too. All efforts should be made to find a funding model that raises revenue fairly, which precludes regressive taxation measures that hit the poorest the hardest.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 Care is an essential part of a modern society. But the UK's care model is broken. Care users and care workers are being failed.
- 8.2 There can be no solution to the challenges facing care without workforce reform. The care sector is facing unsuitable vacancy rates which are caused by unacceptable working conditions and chronically low pay. This represents a form of structural discrimination against the women who predominantly work in care roles.
- 8.3 The care sector is a stark warning against the fragmentation of public services. Even while underfunding is a real and growing problem, money continues to flow out of the system through open and disguised profits.
- 8.4 The status quo is not sustainable. Reform is urgently needed. This reports sets out GMB demands to make work better in care.

Appendix – GMB care survey results

This appendix contains selected responses to a survey of GMB care members, which achieved 1,800 responses. The survey was run between February and May 2023. Answers were weighted to account for different devolved nation response rates. For a fuller breakdown of results, please go to: <https://www.gmb.org.uk/publications>

Employment

[INSERT TABLE]

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(Carried)

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, the CEC will now be moving their Special Report on Social Care. I hope you have had a chance to read it. I would like to welcome our CEC colleagues, Amanda Burley and Tracey Ashton to move and second this report. Once the report has been moved, I will call each region to speak, and this is the chance to speak for or against the report on behalf of the delegation. I will then take the vote on the report. Any motions which stand in opposition or has content already included in the report will fall and will not be debated. Thank you. Amanda, please move the Special Report.

AMANDA BURLEY (CEC): President and Congress, I am from the North East, Yorkshire and Humber Region, proudly moving the CEC Special Report on Social Care.

Congress, I doubt there is a single person here who has not had some sort of interaction with a care worker. If not now, you likely will in the future. You might well know a care worker or someone who is looking after a loved one. In fact, you are listening to a care worker of 25 years' experience right now. If I can give a big shout out to our amazing teams of carers in Skills Reablement in Leeds.

This report is a serious account of the issues that our members face. We have spoken to thousands of care workers over the last year, either in their workplaces or through our survey. They have told us that things are at breaking point. We have known this reality for a long time. Congress has exposed the state of social care before. We called for action through the Special Report and the Social Care Charter in 2017.

For those who have felt like they can't carry on working in the sector, we do understand, but there are many care workers who desperately want to make it a safe and sustainable place to work. Our members love the work they do. They want to be able to care, whether it is having enough staff to look after our loved ones in care homes or being able to spend proper time with clients in their own homes, allowing people to live their lives properly and in dignity. Care workers want to spend time with the people they care for and they must be paid properly for it. Our members have told us how difficult life has become on the poverty wages in the sector. One member told us, "At home it is always cold because I have to turn the boiler off. We eat one meal a day and I hardly see my kids because I work shifts, working nights and sleeping for overtime. I have no life. I just work and come home". That is why GMB continues to argue for care workers to be paid at least £15 an hour. Congress, there is money in the care sector, but it has

been concentrated in the hands of a very few. The sector has been ripe for the taking by some of the worst operators, looking to squeeze every last penny into shareholder hands and into tax havens. They even take taxpayer money to do so.

Care home landlords make a fortune. Billions of pounds a year is stolen out of the pockets of our members, service users and their families, and debts continue to be laden into care homes, which tells us that very little has been learnt since the collapse of the Southern Cross. This is why it is essential that the sector be recognised as a national asset, as it is. The sector is part of the fabric of our society, which is why the report makes the case greater for local authority control and regulation, to take back some of this control we have lost over the last decades. Stricter controls on the finances of care companies must be put in place. It cannot be shoved off as "That's just capitalism!" Our loved ones are not a profit margin, nor are our members. The sector must be recognised as a national asset, as part of the fabric of our society.

Our recommendations are clear. Our members have told us exactly the state of the sector. Congress, we urge you to support this report. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Amanda. Tracey.

TRACEY ASHTON (CEC): President, I am from the Midlands Region and the CEC, seconding the Special Report on Social Care.

Congress, when I read the accounts of our members in this report, I was devastated. What was expected of care workers were exposed to and expected during the pandemic can never, never be repeated. We have members who will be forever affected by the devastation of not only this terrible disease but the total negligence of the Government. One member told us, "Two colleagues died as a result and I lost count of the number of residents who also died. It was my worst experience in 41 years of working in health and social care. I'll never forget and I'll never forgive".

I, personally, have reached out to members in the care sector. One member told me that they were physically assaulted by a service user and found they had no support, not even after reporting it to the CQC. They now suffer from depression and anxiety because of the injuries they received. As you will see from the results of our survey, attacks and abuse, both physical and verbal, are just accepted as part of the job. Care workers are expected just to get on with it. This has got to stop and things must change! That is why we are calling for an extension to the Assaults on Emergency Workers' Act to include care workers. When it comes to sickness, the report calls for statutory sickness pay to be reformed so that the

care workers don't have to choose between making ends meet and taking time off to get better. We cannot let it be said that those who care are not treated with dignity and respect (*Applause*).

As my colleague before me made clear, this report is comprehensive. It sets out clear policy and tells the real story of what working in care is like. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tracey. Can I have the first speaker from London Region, please?

MARY GOODSON (London): President, I am speaking on behalf of the London Region in support of this report. We welcome GMB updating our policy on social care as we looked at it in 2016 with special reports and in 2017 with the Care Charter. Back then the sector was on its knees, with the collapse of one of the largest operators, Southern Cross. We hoped that things would have improved since then but, sadly, the female sector is still low paid, and our care-worker members are not valued or recognised for the invaluable and vital role they perform. Years of under-funding and the results of recruitment and retention crises have already led to already difficult work becoming harder.

According to the data published by Skills for Care, there are 165,000 care vacancies across the country, and London has the highest vacancy rate in the country with 28,000 posts not filled. These vacancies mean that most of those in need are being let down by inadequate care services, and our members are facing worsening conditions and even more pressure at work. Our care system is failing, and that means that vulnerable people are being failed. Our NHS hospitals have been put under more pressure because of the lack of social care at home, and our members are leaving the profession they care about because the pay is too low and the conditions are bad.

How can it be right that the median wage of a care worker is now £9.50 an hour? Is it any surprise that thousands and thousands of care workers have left the job for retail and hospitality, where the pay is better? Invaluable care is being carried out by invaluable care-worker members, and this needs to be properly recognised and rewarded through the investment, training and professional qualifications and decent wages. These changes need to happen and that is why we are committed to fighting and making things better. Please support. (*Applause*)

EVYONNE THOMAS (Midlands): Congress, I am speaking against the CEC's Special Report on Social Care. As with most of us, we welcome the CEC's Special Report.

However, we feel that the points we make in our motion are not covered in this report. Social care workers have been at the forefront of caring for people for a long time, before and during the pandemic. We forwarded our motion to help support the carers who care for our loved ones. The CEC wants to withdraw our motion in favour of the Special Report, but we feel that our motion needs to be debated on this floor, and that is why I am speaking against this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Evyonne. I call North East, Yorkshire and Humber Region.

MICHELLE HUNT (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): I am from the A61 branch, speaking on behalf of North East, Yorkshire and Humber, supporting the Special Report on Social Care.

Good morning, Congress. I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Congress, I am speaking about this Special Report because social care is extremely close to my heart. Not only am I a working mum with an autistic son, but I have two parents who are currently going through major illness which leaves them at the mercy of the social care system. That means I see the crisis in our social care system every single day. This is an issue that we all have to care about because one day every single one of us will need social care in one way or another. The reality is that the NHS and our social care services are absolutely linked. We have to work together and not let anyone divide us in our campaign work.

What Maggie Thatcher did in forcing care providers to compete against each other was truly shocking, and it has left us where we are today with care workers incredibly underpaid, experiencing record levels of violence and with really poor training and support. I know that care workers are amazing people but they are being pushed to breaking point. No one should be expected to go to work and experience violence. No one should go to work full-time and still have to access food banks, and no one should have to make the choice between feeding their children or paying the gas bill. We urgently need a National Care Service that addresses these challenges, a care service that helps local authorities run provision directly and invest in training. We need employment standards for the whole workforce. This is already a crisis in social-care recruitment. Urgent action must be taken. So let's use all of our strength, all of our skills and all of our knowledge to make the politicians sit up and listen.

Again, we will all rely on social care at some point in our lives. Let's make it a service that invests in its workers and delivers for the people that it serves.

Speaking in support of the Special Report. Thank you very much. (*Applause and cheers*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Michelle. North West & Irish Region.

RUTH PITCHFORD (North West & Irish): President, I am speaking on behalf of North West & Irish Region, in support of the Social Care Report. Congress, social care is important to all of us. Some of us work within the sector, some of us have relatives being cared for and some of us will end up requiring social care when we get to a point in our life. As we have heard from the media and within the report, the current system is broken beyond repair and we need a new National Care Service that works for everyone.

The report not only highlights the issues that have become apparent during Covid, but they have persisted for far longer. The CQC, which is an independent regulator of health and adult social care in England, as reported on the website, makes sure that health and social care services provide people with safe, effective, compassionate, high-quality care and they encourage care services to improve. However, the statistic at the end of the report, and especially on page 44 of the report, highlights the fact that 45.8% of people who took the survey didn't believe that the CQC are completing one of their aims of improving care. Another 31.3% did not know how to answer this question.

Having worked within private care, and more recently moving into a unionised public service workplace, I have seen first-hand the difference between "for profit" and "for people care". It is important that these conversations are being had with care workers and we welcome this report. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ruth. GMB Scotland.

LIZ MARTIN (GMB Scotland): Supporting. As I was reading through this Special Report a few points jumped out at me. Private equity, landlords, sale and leaseback, tax havens and the Caymen Islands. Then I had a flashback to that failure on 6th July 2011. We had an emergency motion brought to Congress alongside the report called *Southern Cross*, the cross we have to bear, the greedy and the gullible. Contained within that report were the words "Private equity, landlords, sale and leaseback, tax havens and the Caymen Islands. Moving to July 2011 at 7 a.m. Southern Cross ceased trading, plunging residents, their families and staff into uncertainty, fear and disgrace. Politicians, unions and the general public said that they would never allow that to happen again. The media attention eventually died down, social care workers were put back in the box and

the lid was closed. They were forgotten about until 2020 when the pandemic comes along and for the wrong reasons social care was back in the spotlight.

The pandemic highlighted the dedication and professionalism of the workforce, a workforce that is underpaid, undervalued, understaffed and under a great deal of stress. That now brings us back to the Special Report. I think we all agree that it is disturbing that 12 years later the same words are cropping up. We can't allow another Southern Cross disaster.

The current social care system is broken. It's beyond crisis and it's a disaster. We have a social care Armageddon on the horizon. We can't allow this to happen. Our elderly deserve better. I think the words "social" and "front of care" can be misleading. This is not about workers sitting about in a social care setting having wee chats and cups of tea with residents. Many of the elderly living in care homes have multiple complex medical needs involving large amounts of skilled input from staff. Wages are abysmal. So instead of funnelling money off to the Caymen Islands, companies could acknowledge the workforce with decent pay. There is a major staffing crisis in the social care sector, and many staff are leaving for better-paid jobs and better terms and conditions and less stress. People don't want to work in care. It's an unattractive job.

Politicians and companies need to start listening to the workforce because we are not going back in the box. We will fight for £15 an hour, we will fight for better terms and conditions, we will fight to be valued, we will fight for respect and for a better social care system. We will not be put back in the box and forgotten about. The workforce is at breaking point but we will make our voices heard.

Delegates, we need your support and we need the support of your branches. We also need the support of your members and we need the support of the public. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Liz. Southern Region.

LARA JOHNSON (Southern): President and Congress, I am a first-time speaker and a first-time delegate. (*Applause and cheers*) I am speaking for the report. There is a crisis in care, and this report rightly calls on us as a union to spur into action against a system that is failing to value the workers needed to provide the support and care for the most vulnerable in our society. The exploitation we see of UK workers is not inevitable and we cannot allow it to be. We are seeing extensive recruitment of skilled overseas workers to backfill the huge workforce gaps. The way some of those workers are treated by employers, even those provisioning NHS services, falls far short of the Code of Practice for International Recruitment.

During the past few weeks, our branch has been supporting international workers who arrived in the UK into a child and adolescent mental health hospital, after the Care Quality Committee rated it inadequate, again! This provision requires workers to be prepared to restrain children, to naso-gastric tube-feed children, to deal with significant mental health conditions, some requiring rapid tranquilisation. The CQC, having found that service inadequate in a damning report, said in their very first “However” that vacancy rates are reducing and the provider was actively recruiting international staff.

Due to the provider collaborative stopping new admissions to service, the support workers – all of them – including those international workers, were placed into a 90 day “At risk consultation”. Some international workers were relocated 150 miles away within a few days of that consultation starting to another CAMs provision that the CQC have rated inadequate. Those workers have been placed again in temporary accommodation, with no laundry or cooking facilities, no on-site restaurant. Being in temporary accommodation means that they can’t progress applications to bring their dependants here, the main reason that most agree to come.

GMB in this Report is rightly calling for a public inquiry into the financial engineering of the care sector. That inquiry must also look at how the NHS’s international recruitment strategy is offering these care corporations and private equity backers the opportunity to exploit the labour of international workers while some fail even to meet their most basic needs or give them their employment rights. Workers in temporary accommodation can’t register with dentists, wash their clothes or prepare a meal. They can’t properly make local connections and bring their children here. Whilst the pay they are offered is at the lowest end, there will be no appetite for these care corporations to increase to a real living wage the £15 an hour as this report calls for. We cannot allow chronically low pay to be shored up by international recruitment when it is clear that the word “ethical” does not translate into reality.

Delegates, please take the time to review this report and fight for a real living wage for all care-sector workers of £15 an hour. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Lara. Lastly, Wales & South West.

YVONNE HEALY (Wales & South West): Congress, it’s time for us to talk about a national scandal; a story of betrayal, a story of heroism against the odds and a story of failing people with love the most. This is a story of the social care sector. We all remember the heroism of our members during the pandemic going above

and beyond the odds in care homes with highly vulnerable people lying sick. Congress, this even answers the call to care for Covid patients when the Government couldn't find anywhere else to put them after being discharged from hospital without the correct PPE. On working extra hours, our members went above and beyond. Congress, this heroism is the same kind of bravery that we've seen from our blue-light service and our armed forces. It is the kind of contribution to be celebrated and rewarded.

And how does the Government and employers repay the care workers? They repay them by making employees work long hours, bad pay and no time to care for patients. Congress, this UK Government's betrayal of care workers is a national scandal. If our members would rather work in Amazon, where employees leave in ambulances, there is something really wrong with our country. Our social care system is likely to break. Staff numbers are falling, care companies are going bust and the truth is that our care service no longer works for the people it serves or the people who deliver. It serves only a few private individuals and the hedge funds which are stripping all the values from it. It is time to change.

Congress, GMB has long believed that we need local authorities to rebuild local government capacity. We need a Care Service that is properly funded and one fit for purposes. This report outlines the need to ensure that there is funding to rebuild capacity and that there is funding available for local governments to rebuild this care system and capacity. We have to take money away from the spivs and speculators. Congress, never again can we see our members leaving the sector for insecure work. The National Minimum Wage regulations must be amended to include care workers' travel time, sleeping shifts and proper sick pay must be paid to stop our members from eating or heating. What is needed is a £15 per hour minimum wage – no ifs and no buts. Congress, this is valued work so it must be paid properly. We must protect, with an extension, our workers by the Emergency Workers' Offences Act.

Congress, this report is an excellent report and we are pleased to say that in Wales, the Welsh Government are developing a National Care Service, a service we can gladly say is based on these principles. We know that Scotland is also developing their own system, but without these changes being immediately implemented by the UK Government it won't have the impact that is needed. It must be properly funded with national pay agreements as standard, and that must be from day one. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: As there has been an opposition, Amanda, you have the right of reply.

AMANDA BURLEY (CEC): President and Congress, I am exercising the right of reply on behalf of the CEC. Congress, I am responding to the points made by the Midlands region. The points raised in Motion 150 are covered on pages 37 and 38 of the Special Report. On that basis, Congress, we ask you, please, to support this report. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Amanda. I will now put the Special Report to the vote. All those in favour, please show? All those against? That report is carried, which means that Motion 150 falls.

*The CEC Special Report was CARRIED.
Motion 150 FELL.*

THE PRESIDENT: At the end of this session, there is to be a panel of social care workers, so that is going to be another opportunity to listen to the powerful stories that are already in that Special Report.

SOCIAL POLICY: SOCIAL CARE

THE PRESIDENT: I now move on to section 5, which is Social Policy: Social Care. Could the more mover and seconder for Motion 226 come down to the front.

COST OF PRIVATE SECTOR CARE FOR CHILDREN AND PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH DISABILITIES MOTION 226

226. COST OF PRIVATE SECTOR CARE FOR CHILDREN AND PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH DISABILITIES

Congress calls on local authorities to forensically examine the charges being levied by private sector care providers to provide care services and accommodation for children and people with mental disabilities in care provided by councils.

There are widespread reports of exorbitant charges for these services by private sector care providers. This is an entirely separate issue to the costs for providing care for the elderly in private sector care homes. Union members employed by councils in departments dealing with private sector care providers are aware of exorbitant charges by some private sector operators. Charges of up to £4,000 per week per child are totally unjustified.

There is evidence that private sector care providers are making unnecessarily high rates of return on capital in the sector. A lack of priority for securing value for public money by Directors of Social Services and a failure of elected councillors to insist on regular forensic examination of charges by officers to ensure reasonable charges are ultimately responsible for scarce public money being wasted. This cannot be allowed to continue.

Congress calls on all GMB elected councillors and shop stewards in local councils to ensure that forensic examination of charges are a regular feature in all councils when decisions are made on these care placement with private sector providers.

There are tools available to officers and councillors to enable them to assess reasonable levels of charges and these should be used in all councils as a matter of policy. Reasonable levels of charges allow care providers to pay decent levels of pay and conditions. Using these tools has the potential to save millions of pounds on the costs of these services.

If the market in any area is delivering only very high unjustified charges councillors should instead consider reverting to the council providing the care services itself to bring down prices to reasonable levels.

B10 BARKING BRANCH

London Region

(Carried)

HEATHER POPE (London): Good morning, Congress. I am moving Motion 226. This is my first time at Congress and I am a first-time speaker. *(Applause)*

Congress, we are familiar with the problems of elderly care homes with their precarious business models and under-paid staff, but there are other vulnerable people, such as those with learning disabilities and severe mental illness, who also need professional care and support. Around 190,000 people in England have a learning disability and need daily support to live safely. At least 70,000 will live with their family and the rest would need care and support. Also 340,000 live with an autistic-spectrum disorder and some may need daily support also. These are our most vulnerable citizens, yet the Government of both colours see fit to leave it to the market to make sure that they are properly and safely cared for as required by law.

We know from the infamous Winterborne Review, Edenfield and other subsequent abuse scandals that care home residents are not always well cared for. Far from it! These scandals illustrate the failure to enforce safeguarding standards but they also overlie the hidden profiteering of corporate providers and exploitation of a sometimes desperate workforce. The registered care and supported living sector for disabled people is, essentially, a massive buy-to-let racket that has been running for 30 years. When property was cheaper anyone who could raise a bit of capital could hire a registered manager, populate a large property and make more than 200% profit! Virtually no council procurement officers or planning social workers have the skills to analyse these costs.

One provider with a Thames Bed Home was charging around £3,000 per week. When his costs were eventually analysed, his costs with 20% profit, would be nearer £1,200 per week. This case was the tip of the iceberg.

Behind all of this are stressed care staff, paid the minimum wage with limited training, with sometimes physically dangerous jobs to do. One parent passed away and left his seriously disabled son, who they had looked after unpaid for 40 years, to be professionally cared for. A provider offered to do this for £4,500 per week, making an estimated profit rate of 220% before tax. Many diligent local government/social service placement officers do set about negotiating a fair rate.

We are calling for GMB elected councillors to be encouraged to use a cost-calculator tool that has been available for more than 15 years called CareCubed. This helps local authorities and the NHS to fairly negotiate rates but is sadly under-used. The tool is underpinned by regular market cost updates from the University of the West of England and does provide the benchmark information being asked for by the CEC qualification. This tool would save serious money for care budgets. Any suggestion that councils don't have the resources to use this tool is, frankly, rubbish. It is a scandal that there is not a system to plan national provision. The need is well documented but there is an absence of planning. In the meantime, GMB should push councils and NHS trusts to make mandatory the use of the CareCube tool. Thank you. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Heather. Secunder?

BRENDAN DUFFIELD (London): Congress, I am seconding Motion 226. This week a study has been produced by Oxford University which says that the private sector has almost completely taken over children's resident care during the past three decades as local authorities have been encouraged by successive governments to outsource services. More than 80% of homes in England are now run to make a profit, owned by private equity investors, who are increasingly gobbling up smaller firms. This has led to children taken into care ending up hundreds of miles from their communities and families.

Congress, private involvement in care provision has led to more children being placed out of areas and placement instability. The system is failing children and also those with mental health disabilities, and they need our urgent attention. Please support our call to look at the extortionate charges. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Brendan. Does anybody want to speak in opposition to that motion? (*No response*) No. In that case I call on Carol Clarkson from the CEC to respond, please.

CAROL CLARKSON (CEC): President and Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC, responding to Motion 226, which we are supporting with a qualification.

The CEC recognises that changes for specialised children and young adults' services can vary hugely between area and provider and that some charges are unjustified, especially at a time of stretched public sector budgets. We are seeking to support the motion with a qualification that GMB has members who are directors of adult social services, and that the internal capacity for security has been cut in many councils, which is part of a vicious cycle which must be redressed. More could be done by central Government to provide clear benchmark information about what the going rate for particular interventions should be. Please support with this qualification. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Carol. Does London Region accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) Thank you. I can put that to the vote. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against? That is carried.

Motion 226 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: We move on to section 6. Let me remind the Asda delegates, would you, in a couple of minutes, make your way to reception for the photo outside. Thank you.

SOCIAL POLICY: NHS & HEALTH ISSUES

THE PRESIDENT: I call the mover of Composite 14, please.

NHS DOCTORS' SURGERIES

COMPOSITE 14

Covering Motions 206 and 209.

(*Motion 206. NHS – London Region*)

(*Motion 209. Doctors Surgeries – London Region*)

NHS DOCTORS SURGERIES

This Congress is alarmed at the number of GP Surgeries still not being fully manned or fully operating since the return to work from the lifting of Covid 19 restrictions. Telephone or online calls aren't appropriate for everyone and aren't always the best way of diagnosing patients.

This Congress calls upon the Health Secretary to totally reform all local Medical Health Practices. This is the only way to protect Hospitals and A&E from being overrun.

Many people in A&E are there through sheer frustration at not being able to get a GP appointment. In many cases no-one even answers the initial phone call at the G P surgeries.

This is creating a lot of the NHS Hospitals being bed blocked as patients are still being sent to A & E Departments or calling a Paramedic.

At the moment, people have a very small time slot if they get to see their GP. Their time is up before they can explain their problems to the GP. This is why some people just go straight to A&E. There may be a wait but they can explain their medical problems and worries in full. Patients know they will not only get medical help, but also peace of mind.

We must have a robust system in place countrywide. Therefore, we need GMB to campaign relevant government bodies, to make Surgery Practices become Super Medical Hubs.

These Hubs would provide experts in medical care, be available to all and so open longer hours to help shift-workers for example. Congress calls on GMB to lobby the Health Secretary to take immediate action.

MOVING REGION: LONDON
SECONDING REGION: LONDON

(Carried)

ALAN LAW (London): President and delegates, I move Composite 14. For many years there has been an explosion of new house building followed by very few doctors' surgeries being built. This leads to waiting lists longer than ever.

Back in the 1970s the doctor in my local town would visit my village on a Thursday morning. Yes, I'm that old! The surgeries were for those who found it hard or hadn't got the time to get into the local town. Only two doctors served the town and the surrounding villages. Obviously, things moved on a lot towards the end of the century. Surgeries got bigger, more doctors came into the practices, and surgeries did minor operators and other medical procedures. All this happened with a 24-hour call-out system in place. Not long into the 21st century officials took over the running of surgeries. Yes, they brought in non-medical people to run and organise doctors, nurses and patients. Suddenly, patients were not a priority. Changes had been made cruelly and swiftly and budgets became the priority of every surgery. Virtually all the good practices stopped. There were very few house calls and all minor procedures were stopped. You only got the very basics from your local surgery.

The new system to make an appointment is that you only phone on the day it is needed within a 30 minute slot, along with hundreds of others doing the same. Getting an appointment is almost impossible. After a while, people by-passed their doctors and went straight to A&E. It is the quickest way to see a doctor. As we all know, it is never out of the media that hospitals are inundated with patients waiting to be seen in A & E departments that are constantly overrun. This will not stop until good working practices return. We know how the bigger surgeries

worked well in the past. Lots of medical procedures were done which, locally speaking, took the pressure off the hospitals.

Now is the time for this Government to create medical hubs, more so in the bigger communities. This would leave small towns with their surgeries to help and treat patients as they would have more time. A medical hub would never be far away, it would be more accessible and able to do a multitude of medical procedures. These hubs would provide worker-friendly hours but for longer times run on a walk-in basis system. If managed correctly, these super hubs would take away enormous pressures from hospitals and A&E departments. This is the only way to support good working practices within the A&E departments throughout the UK. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Alan. Secunder?

TOM REDNALL (London): Congress, I am a first-time delegate, speaking on NHS doctors surgeries. *(Applause)* Congress, prioritising the wellbeing of patients and ensuring timely access to healthcare should be the top priority for the Health Secretary, yet many surgeries remain closed and we still have the same difficulties. We all know about the 8 am dash in trying to get an appointment. The Health Secretary can take action to increase capacity at GP surgeries and open new ones to end this absurd situation that we have ended up in. Actions such as recruiting doctors and other healthcare professionals must be seen to be happening.

Time and time again, Congress, we are let down by this Government. The Secretary of State for Health, as we have seen, has changed hands four times in just over a year. The Government need to start making healthcare the priority that it is. The number of GP surgeries has fallen by one-fifth since 2013. Unless we show them how important our GP surgeries are to us, we could well lose more.

Congress, let me just outline a few ways in which taking action on GP surgeries will help our communities. The first has to be better patient wellbeing with people enjoying shorter waiting times. They provide preventative care, getting diagnoses before a patient's concern becomes a bigger problem, and staff wellbeing. We all know that our GPs are under a lot of pressure at the moment and being overworked.

Together, let's call on the Health Secretary to take action and get our GP surgeries open and operational again. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Tom. Thank you. I call the mover of Motion 208.

NHS CRISIS MOTION 208

208. NHS CRISIS

This Congress takes seriously the current crisis in the NHS.

The NHS has been underfunded for many years under this Conservative Government.

Both services and staffing cut to the bone. However, this is now beginning to tell with the pandemic, waiting lists getting longer and staff leaving, often this is experienced staff who leave to find better paid work, or staff are off ill due to burn out and stress. With thousands of vacancies across our NHS, this is a crisis that grows year on year.

The crisis is about not being able to attract and retain staff due to pay, patient staffing levels and patient safety.

The government promised more nurses and more hospitals but has fallen short of the mark.

Waiting times in A&E no longer meet the 4 hour target, often it is 12 hours or longer, be it caused by patient flow or staffing both in nurses and doctors causing the longer wait.

There are ambulances queuing for hours to handover patients and often it is over an hour to wait for an emergency ambulance for a category 2 patient, heart attack or stroke patients.

On the wards there is often not a day goes by that full staffing is observed and wards that are short staffed have to borrow staff from other wards or go out for agency nurses, this leaves wards with diluted experience to look after patients.

Often there are patients who are stuck in hospital as there is no social care provision organised for them, which in turn leads to a shortage of beds. This all impacts on patient safety and safe staffing.

Congress asks the GMB to campaign and call for safe staffing levels at our NHS Trusts at all times, not just a minimum staffing level that Trusts have to attempt at present in order to keep staff and patients safe within the NHS.

S30 SHEFFIELD HEALTH BRANCH

North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region

(Carried)

SARAH YOUNG (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): President and Congress, I am a proud NHS worker from North East, Yorkshire and Humber Region moving Motion 208 – NHS Crisis.

Personally and professionally I see what is happening to our NHS every day because of chronic underfunding by this Tory Government. Earlier this year my 95-year-old neighbour, already suffering from cancer, had a stroke. His 94-year-old wife called an ambulance and, sadly, it was decided that he needed to go to hospital to begin end-of-life care. She had been secretly caring for him for weeks alone with no help. However, the hospital needed the bed and they wanted to

discharge him with regular care visits but those were also impossible. He was trapped, she felt awful and became more distressed and he died a few days later. The situation was made so much worse for both him and his wife by under investment in the NHS. I am currently helping her where I can to get through her sad loss.

Last year I spoke on the NHS recovery from Covid and the appalling state of PPE provided in the pandemic and what we were expected to do going forward. I hoped it would get better, yet the NHS crisis grows year on year. It is not just about pay. It's about safe staffing, patient safety and patient care. The Government have continually failed. They continue to cut your NHS to the bone. Staffing levels are no longer safe. Staff are being asked to cover areas they have no experience in just to get through a shift.

It was great when we were on strike as they made us derogate. The derogations gave us the best staffing levels in years. It's marvellous! You withdraw your labour and the Government are so out of touch that they give you the full staffing you should have had every day. Shame we couldn't keep it! (*Applause*) Staff are leaving due to pay, stress and burn out. Sadly, we are losing some of our most experienced people. Recruitment is increasingly difficult. In December there were over 43,000 nursing vacancies. The Government are good at making false promises on building and staffing new hospitals and ambulances, but let's look at reality. An ambulance is called to a poorly person. The ambulance takes more than an hour to arrive because the service is so stretched. The crew assess the patient and take them to A&E to find a queue of ambulances waiting as A&E is full. The crew wait with the patient, and after a few hours they are taken into A&E. A&E is still full and understaffed, resus is full, the patient waits for five or six hours to be seen. Another patient nearby has just died, a nurse is comforting that family, the patient waits and eventually they are seen. Another patient is drunk and shouting aggressively because they have to wait. The patient needs admitting. There are no beds. The wards are full or have had to close beds due to the staffing levels. They stay in holding areas for a day or so to hide the breaches in A&E waiting times. These are often patients with really serious conditions, including heart attacks and strokes. Often elderly and vulnerable patients are stuck in hospital as there is no care provision outside the hospital. This Government calls it "bed blocking", and it's got to stop! This is my 30th year in the NHS trust that I work in, and my 25th year on the ward now work. I started in 1993 at the end of the Thatcher/Major Government where we had very little. I went through Blair's Government where it got better to now where we have nothing left at all under this Tory Government. We are drained, smashed and on our knees. But those of us who are dedicated will keep fighting and will never give up on our NHS or fighting its stealth privatisation because we love the NHS. One day we will make it great

again, but until then, Congress, we must campaign for safe staffing across our NHS. We must fight to get the resources needed to care for everyone from the cradle to the grave. We must save our NHS and this Tory Government must hang their head in shame. Thank you. *(A standing ovation)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Sarah. That was the speech of the Congress, I think. *(Applause)*

JAMES COFFIELD (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): I think we can all agree that everyone here has been affected in some way by the crisis within the NHS, whether it be ourselves, injured or ill relatives, and sometimes waiting beyond the ridiculous six hours for any treatment or service. We rely on skilled and dedicated nurses who care for us and our families, but how can we ensure that they are adequately trained? This Government promised 50,000 new nurses requiring three years training to reach the level and ability to provide essential care, but they have failed. There has been under recruiting and massive failings in staff retention, as well as reducing training times to two years. Is this enough to provide the essential care that this nation needs?

This Government also promised 40 new hospitals to care for our nation properly. Again, they have failed. Instead, they decide to renovate decrepit hospital buildings, some with collapsing ceilings held together by scaffolding and wooden frames, leading to ward closures and cancellations of vital operations. We, as a union, need to campaign to put this situation to an end. Our nurses deserve better pay, better training and they deserve better treatment, but most of all they deserve our endless support. We as a union will not fail them. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Dave. Thank you. I call the mover of Motion 211.

NHS DOCTORS & APPOINTMENT CHARGING/STANDARDS CHARTER MOTION 211

211. NHS DOCTORS & APPOINTMENT CHARGING/ STANDARDS CHARTER

This Congress registers deep concern at the discussions taking place within Government circles to potentially consider charging for GPs and hospital appointments. This is another attack on the NHS being free at the point of need. Gordon Brown has rightly spoken out against this move and its impact on ordinary working people and the poor across the UK.

The inability to get an NHS appointment face to face with a doctor within a reasonable time, is now a scandal, placing undue additional pressure on the A&E hospital units across the country. Members have also shared their frustrations at trying to find an NHS dentist in many areas of the country and the high charges made by private dentists.

Congress, we urge the GMB to work vigorously with our sponsored MPs and partners to oppose the idea of any charges for Hospital or Doctors' appointments and to protect a free National Health Service. Congress, it is time for a Standards Charter that sets out clearly the entitlement and rights for people to be able to access a doctor or NHS dentist in their area within a reasonable time scale. This Standards Charter would form a new covenant with the people and their NHS as well as the obligations expected of those funded by the Government in the provision of NHS services to the public.

We ask for the GMB to have ongoing dialogue with the Department of Health, Medical Professionals, health services unions and service users to highlight the key concerns in relation to the current crisis with a view to having a clear action plan to address these concerns and failings in the way the systems are set up and currently managed within the NHS.

Q22 MANCHESTER CENTRAL BRANCH

North West & Irish Region

(Carried)

KEVIN FLANAGHAN (North West & Irish): Sarah, our hearts are with you and the Health Service workers. Well done, sister. *(Applause)* I'm Kevin Flanagan. Old-time campaigner and old-time speaker. It gives me great pleasure to move this important motion – 211 – as my members have real concerns about the waiting times with GP appointments and also to try and find an NHS dental practice.

In 2022 there were 328 million doctors' appointments booked, of which 300 million took place in this country. The overall performance rates have dropped quite markedly in the last few years. The good news is that about 48% of appointments are seen within a week, but 31% will take a bit longer, but sadly anything up to 7% to 8% will take two weeks or more just to get the appointment. Congress, is that good enough? Is it good enough to wait two weeks? It isn't, because when you look at the statistics, you are looking at 21 million appointments waiting over two weeks. That's 21 million all across this country!

Yet if we look at dental practices, I can tell you this. You'd find a pot of gold under a rainbow quicker than you would find a new NHS appointment. Let me give you an example. I was lucky recently in the north-west where I live for a dental practice. Some people need their mouths sewing up. That's why. But if you look on the NHS website, it says that they are now accepting adults 18 and over!

Fantastic, sister. Really good. But then they say they are not accepting any adults entitled to free NHS dental care and they are not accepted aged children or under. Look at the website. Have a look through the things. I looked at a radius of nine miles of where I live. There were 71 practices. This is interesting. It is very hard to find one that will accept anybody. They are saying, "I know where the decay is". The decay is at No. 10. The decay is the root-canal treatment that is needed at No. 10 and the House of Commons to get rid of that shower who have caused this problem. That's where the decay is. *(Applause)*

Colleagues, it just isn't good enough. Nye Bevan will be turning in his grave for those battles he fought in the '30s and the '40s to get a health service which was free at the point of need. Yet it is now cost that is preventing many people -- many ordinary working people, the disabled, the poor and the elderly -- with the surveys that have been done, we are finding that more than 20% young people aged between 18 to 25 are avoiding hospital appointments and other appointments because of the cost. This is not the Health Service that we fought for, that the Movement fought for or that the NHS fought for. You don't stick a blue label on it and pretend it is NHS when behind the scenes you are giving the money to the private sector. That is not the NHS we fought for. *(Applause)* That is not the true NHS. The true NHS is the people who are in this hall who work and deliver those services. It is not good enough. Yet we are seeing a massive increase in health inequality and injustice taking place. Congress, don't just support it. Fight for your Health Service. After 50 years of campaigning, I never thought we would be seeing fighting for the NHS. Thank you. *(Applause and cheers)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kevin. Secunder?

ANDREW TRICKETT (North West & Irish): Congress and President, I'm a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)*

Congress, in January 2023 Sajed Javid proposed that a new way to pay for part of the NHS was to charge patients for appointments and to see doctors. This is completely unacceptable. The current Government don't want a free NHS. Instead, they want to charge patients as the only model they see fit, unless you can afford the premiums for private healthcare. Let's be clear. Who started this was the current Prime Minister in his campaign to become leader and proposed charges for anyone who missed appointments in the NHS. But this clearly tells us the mind and aims of this Government. Congress, the current Government and its policies are the architect of the crisis. Already the poor, the elderly and the marginalised cannot afford the medicines, the cost of a bus to an appointment, the cost of parking in hospitals and the cost of seeing sick relatives.

The Chair of the Royal College of GPs made it clear, and I quote: "It would act as a deterrent to people seeking care, risking later diagnosis, poorer health outcomes and public health. The cost-of-living crisis shows us that not only those on the lowest incomes who are having to prioritise between heating and eating but it would be dangerous to add healthcare into this mix". Congress, this motion seeks to reaffirm the core historic principles of the NHS as a free service. It seeks to re-establish a bond of service and a new charter committed to a high-quality,

properly-funded NHS. I second this motion and ask for your support in taking action now to save the NHS. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Andrew. Does anybody want to oppose those motions? (*No response*) In that case, I call Robbie Scott to respond on behalf of the CEC.

ROBBIE SCOTT (CEC): Congress and President, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC on Composite 14, NHS Doctors Surgeries. We are supporting the motion with three qualifications. The first is to note that the branch is seeking this policy in densely populated areas with high numbers of people who are not registered for a GP. It is not calling for the closure of small practices in more isolated rural areas. The second qualification is to call for all workers who are employed at these sites to be covered by *Agenda for Change* terms and conditions. The final qualification is that while the motion highlights an important issue, further work needs to be done to identify the action that we would be asking the Health Secretary to take. Please support Composite 14 with the qualifications that I have laid out. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Robbie. Does London Region accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) Thank you. The CEC is supporting the other two motions. Composite 14, all those in favour please show? Anyone against? That is carried. Motion 208, all those in favour please show? Anyone against? That is also carried. Motion 211, all those in favour please show? Anyone against? That is also carried.

Composite 14 was CARRIED.

Motion 208 was CARRIED.

Motion 211 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to section 7, which is Social Policy: NHS & Health Issues.

SOCIAL POLICY: NHS & HEALTH ISSUES

PAYMENTS FOR PRESCRIBING PARTICULAR DRUGS

MOTION 212

212. PAYMENTS FOR PRESCRIBING PARTICULAR DRUGS

This Congress calls upon the NHS England to ensure that auditing and transparency is carried out on all GP's commissioning groups with regards to payments received for prescribing particular drugs.

This process will ensure that price is not being put before patient interests. Drugs should not be prescribed purely because they are being recommended by drug sales groups.

The drug prescribed should always be of the most benefit to the patient and not because it is the cheapest option or will make a profit.

The focus must remain patient and not profit. If GP's commissioning groups do receive payments for prescribing a particular drug, then they should be compelled to openly publish details of these payments to the general public. The public are then aware and can decide if what is being done services their best interests with regards to their health.

C15 GENERAL BRANCH

Midlands Region

(Carried)

KEVIN BAKER (Midlands): President and Congress, I move Motion 212: Payments for Prescribing Particular Drugs. This Congress calls upon the NHS England to ensure that auditing is carried out on all GPs' commissioning groups with regards to payments received for prescribing particular drugs. This process will ensure that price is not being put before patient interests. Drugs should be prescribed purely because they are being recommended by drug sales groups. The drug prescribed should always be of the most benefit to the patient and not because it is the cheapest option or will make a profit.

The focus must remain patient welfare and not profit. If GP's commissioning groups do receive payments for prescribing particular drugs, then they should be compelled to openly publish details of these payments to the general public. The public then are aware and can decide what is being done services their best interests with regards to their health.

Did you know that up to one-fifth of an average GP's salary is effectively made up of commissions paid on drugs? Reasons given to this will decrease the burden on the NHS and essentially save the NHS money. However, the preferable brown smelly stuff was hitting the fan because a 10-year study has revealed that this vast increase in drug spend has done nothing at all to decrease NHS costs. In fact, £30 billion has been spent in rewarding GPs for prescribing drugs that have been proven to be little more than useless. To add insult to injury, this money has been taken from your taxes.

If GPs don't know the best way to keep us healthy and would need extra incentives to do this, then, surely, it means a radical restructuring is needed and fast! We urge GMB to continue to campaign for transparency for more GPs and their commissioning groups. They must be made openly published to particular drugs that they are being paid commission on. This information is then available to the public so that they will be able to take back control of their home, health and welfare. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Kevin. Thank you. Secunder?

BRIAN JONES (Midlands): President and Congress, I am seconding Motion 212. This is another scandal in the NHS of wasting money for the profit of drug companies and doctors. Drug company payments to these GP commissioning groups can create conflicts of interest by biasing best clinical practice. Greater policy attention is required to the risk of financial dependency by these GPs making the wrong decisions for our health and wellbeing.

GP commissioning groups and drug companies must demonstrate transparency and accept the quality of payment data needed to massively approve and be available us, the public, so that us, the public, can decide if what has been done serves our best interests with regards to our own health and welfare and not for the companies' and the GPs' profits.

We must ensure in this process that the decisions are the correct clinical decisions and made for us, not just for their profit. Because of this, we urge the GMB to continue to campaign for greater transparency and accountability from all of these GP commissioning groups and drug companies. We urge Congress to support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Brian. Thank you. I call the mover of Motion 213.

PAYING TO BREATHE MOTION 213

213. PAYING TO BREATHE

This Congress calls on GMB to protect our vulnerable people and to make asthma medication charges exempt or affordable for them to live.

Asthma is considered as a disability under EA10.

Regular medication is required by the afflicted person to control and relieve their condition, and any asthma attacks. Without this medication, the afflicted person might die.

People with severe asthma are considered to be vulnerable as they are more susceptible to airborne viruses and infections such as flu and Covid19.

Sudden changes in temperature and pollutants in the air can exacerbate an asthma sufferers breathing, which can lead to an attack and the need for urgent medical attention.

Why do asthma sufferers have to pay for medication that they rely on to breathe?

Is breathing not an entitlement for all the living?

It is wrong that asthma sufferers who are not in receipt of benefits have to pay for their asthma medications.

Many Asthma sufferers have to pay for their monthly medication totals £38 per month (£456 annually) as standard, and more if I require steroids or antibiotics.

Why are sufferers forced to purchase a pre-payment prescription certificate to ensure they can pay for their monthly Asthma medication, which they depend on daily?

L26 RICHMOND & WANDSWORTH BRANCH

Southern Region

(Carried)

CHRIS HIBBERD (Southern): President and Congress, I move Motion 213 – Paying to Breathe.

This Congress calls on GMB to protect our vulnerable people and to make asthma medication charges exempt or affordable for them to live.

The human condition asthma is common and treatable. Untreated the condition can cause distress and, in severe cases, death. It is considered a disability under the Equalities Act 2010, Article 10, which means that you have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.

Regular medication prescribed by a GP is required by the afflicted person to control and relieve their condition and sudden asthma attacks. Generally, this is by steroid inhaler for a long-term control, and short-term inhalers for immediate relief. Without this medication the afflicted person might die. People with severe asthma are considered to be vulnerable as they are more susceptible to air-borne viruses and infections, such as flu and Covid-19. Often asthma sufferers also suffer from the effects of allergies or hay fever, for which medicines are also available, some by prescription.

Sudden changes in temperature and pollutants in the air can exacerbate an asthma sufferer's breathing which can lead to an attack and the need for urgent medical attention and hospitalisation. It is wrong that asthma sufferers who are not in receipt of benefits have to pay for their asthma medications. Many asthma sufferers have to pay for their monthly medication totalling at least £38 per month or £456 annually as standard, and more if requiring supplemental steroids and antibiotics.

The NHS lists 10 conditions which are exempt from prescription charges by a medic's certification, and not one of them is asthma, a potential killer. Why are sufferers forced to purchase a pre-payment prescription certificate to ensure that they can pay for their monthly asthma medication, which they depend on daily? Why do asthma sufferers have to pay for medication that they rely on to breath? Is breathing not an entitlement for all those living? Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Chris. Thank you. The seconder for 213?

MARIA CHARLES (Southern): Good morning, Congress and President. Comrades, I am a second-time delegate, a second-time speaker, moving Motion 213. This motion calls on GMB to assist in the protection of the right to breath to vulnerable people by fighting for the prescription costs of asthma sufferers to be affordable or exempt from charge. Asthma is a physical impairment which can have a long-term adverse effect rendering it difficult to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Whilst symptoms can be managed, there are some factors which will exacerbate the symptoms that are beyond the sufferer's control, such as weather and pollution. Asthma sufferers are also more at risk of serious complications with everyday viruses and infections, for example, Covid-19 and flu. The symptoms can be managed with medication. However, many find that the cost of prescriptions will impact their choices of taking them correctly. That then impacts on the severity of the condition. Up to three people die each day of a severe asthma attack, and Asthma UK argues that many of these deaths are preventable with the correct use of medication and regular reviews with medical professionals. But many who struggle to afford their medications take this risk. It is because of this that I second the motion and encourage support for Motion 213. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Maria. I call the mover of Motion 215.

THE PAIN OF ENDOMETRIOSIS MOTION 215

215. THE PAIN OF ENDOMETRIOSIS

This Congress notes that period pain for some women can be so painful that time is taken away from work as they cannot cope, very strong painkillers are needed which can then leave you feeling drowsy and dizzy.

This menstrual pain is called endometriosis, not an easy word to pronounce and defiantly not an easy pain to cope with.

It can take years for women to get the correct diagnoses, and to get the help that is needed to help them with this unbearable pain.

This illness is much more painful than period pain which is in its self is very painful.

This illness needs ultrasound and most women need surgery to help them.

This can also take its toll on their mental health.

We ask congress:

- To work with NHS and all Trusts to be made more aware of this condition.
- To work towards a policy for Endometriosis.
- To help all women to be taken seriously.

G89 GLASGOW NE AND SW HEALTH SERVICE BRANCH

GMB Scotland

(Referred)

MARGARET BOYD (GMB Scotland): Congress and President, endometriosis is the second-most common gynaecological condition for women in the UK. It affects between two and 10 women out of a hundred, usually during the reproductive years to menopause. It can also affect fertility.

Endometriosis UK and even the World Health Organisation are calling it a debilitating chronic disease. The disease has also been deliberated in Parliament in Health Committees. Endometriosis can be difficult to diagnose because every woman experiences the disease differently, and because symptoms can be similar to other illnesses, such as irritable bowel syndrome or pelvic inflammatory disease. On average it takes seven years to diagnose for a woman with the disease. More must be done to recognise and understand the symptoms of the disease and to encourage women to voice concerns about their health. No woman should suffer in silence. This disease can have a significant impact on a person's life in a number of ways, such as chronic pain fatigue, lack of energy, depression, problems with relationships, an inability to conceive and difficulty in fulfilling work and commitments.

Endometriosis UK is calling for shorter diagnosis time to ensure better health and life outcomes for women affected. When endometriosis is debilitating due to the symptoms experienced and/or the long-term impact of surgery with no real cure, it meets the Act's definition of "disability" as with other chronic conditions.

So what does this mean for working women? On average a woman with the disease can be off work at most one week in six weeks. Some women either lose their job or have to leave. A 2021 Covid-Impact survey found that 69% of those

working entirely from home found it positive, and 51% partially from home, too. But not every worker can work from home, like those in industry, NHS, the public services, rail and transport workers and cleaners. We ask Congress to apply endometriosis to policy in the workplace and to work with relevant parties to include endometriosis in the Disability Act so that employers can provide reasonable adjustments for sufferers of endometriosis. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Margaret. The seconder?

LINDA WALKER (GMB Scotland): President and Congress, I second Motion 215. Endometriosis is not an easy condition to live with. As my colleague said, the average time for diagnosis is seven years; that is seven years of suffering pain, being told you have heavy periods or that it is IBS or maybe even ovarian cysts. For the fatigue you are told to improve your diet, get more sleep, improve your fitness, try cutting out certain foods, and all to no avail. With that dreaded time of the month approaching, the pain cycle begins days or sometimes a week before a period arrives. Dreading going to the toilet because it is painful, having to avoid wearing colours, any colours other than black or navy, having to carry an emergency bag of clothes, underwear, sanitary protection and pain killers. Often even the heaviest-flow sanitary wear only lasts an hour, if you are lucky. The dreaded feeling when at work that you have had a leak but you could not leave what you were doing to go to the bathroom, and when you did it was not just for a five-minute break. It was not just a five-minute break that you needed to sort yourself out. Relationship challenges, the pain means that sex is off the table, going through surgical procedures, finding your organs were stuck together and trying to seek answers as to what is wrong.

I was an endometriosis sufferer and my diagnosis came at 29, following 11 years of pain. By 42 the end result was a hysterectomy. The pain is ongoing, there is no cure, just treatments and medications to try. But I was one of the luck ones, you see. Whilst my journey consisted of all the things mentioned and more, I was lucky to have three children, so I had three respites from my condition. Many women suffer infertility due to endometriosis and don't have any respect from the symptoms. Work life was incredibly challenging, especially for a condition not spoken about and still not spoken about. We now hear about menopause in the workplace but we need to do more. We need a menstrual element to add to the policy that truly supports women in the workplace during their working lives. We don't ask for periods but we get them. For some, there are few issues. For others, every day is a challenge. It is time to recognise this, so I ask you to support this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Linda. Just before I take the mover of Motion 216, just to let you know that Motions 103 and 105 will be deferred to this afternoon. So I'm sorry if those movers and seconders were all poised and ready to come up at the end of this morning, I am afraid you will have to wait until after lunch. Can I have the mover of Motion 216, please.

UMBILICAL CORD SCIENCE MOTION 216

216. UMBILICAL CORD SCIENCE

This Congress urges the CEC to lobby the relevant medical bodies to utilise discarded umbilical cords for stem cell science. A new-born cord, blood can be used for treating many different kinds of cells for children, family members and adults alike. I urge this Congress to find a way to allow this procedure to enhance medical science.

R36 ROCESTER/JCB GENERAL BRANCH Midlands Region

(Carried)

ROB BROWN (Midlands): I am from the A36/JCB Branch. This is my first time at Congress and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Thanks very much. Congress and guests, I feel that all of us are encouraged by the advancements that medical science has and is giving us the opportunity to live a longer quality life. Ailments, injuries, viruses and diseases that were once untreatable and potentially fatal can now be either easily cured or kept at bay. Medical science is evolving and learning most rapidly in the new age of technology.

Collecting blood samples from the umbilical cord from newborns is one of these amazing, relatively unheard of methods, especially in this country and keeping a pure database of stem cells which can be frozen and used in the same way as bone marrow, for example. These cells are pristine, and in most cases excellent for numerous usage. They are harvested from where the placenta and cord join, which presents no danger to parent and child but, in most cases, are currently discarded. Amazingly, they can be used to tackle many forms of leukaemia and many red blood disorders, as well as platelet problems. Scientists are hoping they will play a huge role in combating dementia, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, as well as having the ability to develop into whole organs and skin. They have a 100% match to themselves, and a massive percentage match to parents and siblings, which is amazing for vulnerable family members where genetic disorders follow their lineage.

Although the science behind stem cell cord harvest is extremely complex, the actual collection process is simple, but it is a one-time opportunity available only

at a few hospitals at the moment. There they are checked, stored, double-checked and counted. This unbelievable richest available source of stem cells can be used to replenish and renew damaged cells from not only the donor and family but also to other matching recipients. Since the 1980s there have been more than one million cell transplants worldwide. However, it is more or less anonymous in Britain compared to Spain, most European nations and parts of the USA.

Doctors now believe that this mode of medicine will be the cornerstone of regeneration science for future patients. Our children could easily have their own toolkit for blood and body repair. It is safe and unique to see how these super cells will be able to transform into almost all our body cells and, if required, organs. Currently, they are able to treat around 80 conditions, and already the subject of more than 7,000 medical trials.

We are asking for this Congress to endorse and publicise to our membership, who already have a big contribution in child production, the phrase "bank not bin" adopted in maternity wards and also in pre-natal discussions. Ideally, an opt-in, not an opt-out, procedure for the harvest of these cells. It is a harmless, free, painless production of super cells rather than a heartless, frustrating search for donors and the chance of rejection. Congress, thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Robert. Secunder?

RAY MILLER (Midlands): As my colleague has just said, the blood from a baby's umbilical cord is one of the richest and most powerful sources of stem cells available. In all births, some blood is left behind in the cord and placenta after the baby's delivery and the cord is cut. Collection is quick and simple, safe and non-invasive but not all hospitals carry out this service as it may cost money to collect and store the cells, which we are against. We are asking for this service to be free and available at more hospitals than it is currently. At the moment high-risk families are the only ones being informed of this service but we think it should be available to all in the NHS, not a private out-sourced storage system. This is medical science not in its infancy but very close to being ground breaking and revolutionary. Congress, please adopt this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ray. Does anybody want to speak in opposition to any of those motions? (*No response*) No. In that case, can I ask Anne Dean from the CEC to respond.

ANNE DEAN (CEC): Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC on Motions 215 and 216. In relation to Motion 215, the subject is endometriosis. The CEC is asking

for the motion to be referred. Further explanation from the branch went into more detail about sick-leave policies being adapted for menstrual pain and leave. As the detail does substantially add to the submitted motion, we are asking that it be referred back to the CEC. The CEC will allocate this work to the appropriate department to look into potential benefits and implications of developing workplace menstrual-leave policies.

Secondly, on Motion 216 – umbilical cord science – the CEC is asking Congress to support with a qualification. We note that respected medical bodies, including the NHS Blood Transport Service, has spoken in favour of using stem cells contained in umbilical cord blood in medical research. We support this motion with the qualification that while we can support more voluntary donations of umbilical blood, this motion should not be taken as support for a compulsory programme, and also that this will not be an industrial priority for the union and our ability to affect policy in this area will be limited. Thank you, Congress.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Anne. Does GMB Scotland agree to refer Motion 215? *(Agreed)* Thank you. That means there will be no vote on that motion. Does Midlands accept the qualification on Motion 216? *(Agreed)* Thank you. As to Motion 212, the CEC is supporting. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against? That is carried. Motion 213, the CEC is supporting. All those in favour, please show? Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried. As to Motion 216, Midlands is supporting the qualification. All those in favour, please show? Thank you. Anyone against, that is also carried.

Motion 212 was CARRIED.

Motion 213 was CARRIED.

Motion 215 was REFERRED.

Motion 216 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: That takes us on to section 8: Social Policy: Welfare Rights. I call the mover of Motion 256.

SOCIAL POLICY: WELFARE RIGHTS & SERVICES

MOTION 256

FREE CHILDCARE FOR ALL

256. FREE CHILDCARE FOR ALL

This Congress calls upon GMB to support free Childcare from the age of 1 as we have childcare costs for working parents at around £50 per day for childcare 50 weeks of the year.

GMB calls on the Government to reform the way childcare works and create free quality childcare for all parents to ensure work is affordable for parents and by doing so this will create more jobs and will help support the economic growth of the UK.

I36 ISLINGTON APEX BRANCH

London Region

(Carried)

LUCK SIMCOCK (London): President and Congress, I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker, moving Motion 256. *(Applause)* I urge your support on this motion because it will make a huge difference to millions of hardworking parents and children. I am referring to the call for free childcare for all. As it stands, the cost of childcare in the UK is a staggering burden on working parents. With fees of around £50 a day and childcare for 50 weeks a year, this is a substantial proportion of the monthly income that affects working families today. This, in turn, affects their ability to work within and support the economy, but it is not just a matter of economics. Access to quality childcare is essential for early development and the education of young children. Studies have shown that children who receive quality early education are more likely to succeed in school and have better long-term outcomes in life.

This is why I am calling for the GMB to call on the Government to reform the way childcare works and to create a fully-funded, free, quality childcare system for the children of all parents from the age of one. This will ensure that work is affordable for parents and create more jobs supporting the economy and growth of the UK. The benefits of free childcare are clear. Firstly, we ensure that no family is left behind. Every child will access to free quality childcare, regardless of their parent's income or background. This is a matter of fairness. Don't all of our children deserve a fair playing field? My son deserves a fair playing field. *(Applause)*

Secondly, free childcare will help reduce the gender pay gap. Currently, many women choose to give up work and reduce their hours because of high childcare costs. This has a significant impact on their earning potential and career progressions. Providing free childcare will enable women to have the choice of going to work and progressing their careers, helping to close the gender pay gap.

Thirdly, free childcare will create more jobs and support the economy. By removing the cost burden of childcare, parents will be able to work, increasing the availability of the workforce and boosting economic growth. Liz Truss didn't do that. Some may argue that the cost of free childcare is too high but, in truth, the

benefits of this policy far outweigh the cost. The cost of not doing this policy is too high.

Studies have shown that investing in early childcare and education will lead to significant long-term savings in society, improved education outcomes, reduced crime rates and better outcomes in life. So I ask you, please, support the motion for free childcare. It is not only the right thing to do for our families but it is also the right thing to do for the economy and prosperity of our nation. Let us ensure that every child has access to free childcare, that no family is left behind, and this is a step towards the meritocracy that the unions were created to fight for. Please, support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Luke. Secunder.

CHRISTINE HUSTON (London): Congress, I am seconding Motion 256 on Free Childcare for All. Since we submitted our motion the Government announced staged changes to childcare in their March Spring Budget. Before this announcement, eligible parents of three and four-year-olds get 30 hours of free childcare a week for 38 weeks a year. These arrangements won't change but from April 2024 the new scheme will also cover two-year-olds, who get 15 hours a week of childcare. From September 2024 that 15 hours will extend to babies over nine months. Finally, by September 2025, all eligible families with children aged nine months to four years old will get 30 hours of free childcare a week for 38 weeks a year. Although this is expected to save parents money at a cost of more than £4 million to the Government, most families will have to wait two-and-a-half years until September 2025 before they can access the promised 30 hours of free care for all children under five.

This is a promise for all children not born yet but will do little for current struggling parents. Also these reforms for one and two-year-olds are ill planned as we also need to increase the supply of nursery places, as currently many nurseries are struggling to stay afloat. This is like the Help-to-Buy property scheme. It looks good for the media and pushes up demand, but it does not do enough for supply. Just two weeks ago, a freedom of information request shows that, currently, local authorities in England are not passing on Government funding for free childcare places to nurseries, so are holding back millions of pounds to offset deficits or to add to reserves. What we see is more nurseries closing because there is a huge gap between the funding they receive from the Government and the costs to the nurseries for running this provision. So although it looks as if the Government are giving us what we want, it is way too late. The scheme needs to be properly funded and the Government need to address the increase in nurseries closing.

Otherwise, this is just a paper exercise. Congress, please support our motion and make the Government fully fund all our childcare sector. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I call the mover of Motion 257.

CAPITA AND PIP MOTION 257

257. CAPITA AND PIP

This Congress calls upon the GMB to lobby union backed MP's for the removal and banning of Capita from public service contracts relating to the assessment and implementing of PIP (personal independence payment) and also lobby for a full review and scrutinise all public contracts held by Capita.

With the seemingly endless media reports of bad assessments, people are suffering after being denied the help and support they need and unable to pay for care resulting in catastrophic results. Unless people are prepared to go to court to appeal the decision and get it overturned they remain suffering and in some cases die before the decision is reviewed.

Capita have to be convicted in a court of law for mal administration, this is another case of profit over life, profit over dignity and profit over people.

W60 WELLINGTON BRANCH Midlands Region

(Carried)

IAN PREECE (Midlands): President and Congress, I am from W60 Branch. I am here to talk about Motion 257 – Capita and PIP. Congress, I want to ask you to do me a favour. Can you touch your right ear? Now can you touch your right shoe? Congratulations, you're fit to work. *(Laughter)* Those are just some of the techniques that Capita are using. I am a fitness professional and it is a joke. It's an absolute joke. With the endless reports of bad assessments and mal-administration, I call upon the GMB to lobby union-backed MPs to remove and ban Capita from public service contracts. *(Applause)*

Capita is putting profit before people. Their remit is to deny PIP to the people who need it. It causes more suffering to the most vulnerable people in our society, sending them to ask for legal advice and going to court to appeal. In some cases, it leads to people dying before they get the financial support and the care they deserve.

It came to our branch's attention that a long-serving member of the GMB, a chap called John Mann, who fought Capita in court for two years. He brought them to account on 11 counts and he won them all. After a two-year hard slog of a battle he has got his benefit. John was lucky. Some don't get the chance. John deserves

better. We deserve better. PIP is not just a benefit. It is a lifeline. It is there to help level the playing field, offering support to the most vulnerable. This motion is asking Capita to be removed from the assessment process and asking it to be back under public control, where people are put first and not profit. Thank you.
(Applause)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ian. Secunder?

SANDI VENNELL (Midlands): Congress and President, I am a first-time delegate.
(Applause) I am also a first-time speaker. I am seconding this motion because I have a strong belief that everybody deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. On witnessing first hand the treatment of my brother through an assessment, I was horrified at the lack of interest and compassion shown throughout his assessment. When I did challenge some of the questions, I was told that I need to be quiet as I was there are morale support and they wouldn't take any notice of me. Obviously, as a GMB branch member and secretary, I wouldn't allow that treatment to go unchallenged. The PIP process is stressful enough. Compassion and supporting people while they undergo this process is a vocation. It's a passion to help them, not judge or belittle them, not to put profit over people.

Here's a thought for you. I wonder how much money we would save by bringing assessments back under public control? We can only do this by supporting this motion to take the next step. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sandi. I call the mover of Motion 258.

REOPEN PUBLIC TOILETS MOTION 258

258. REOPEN PUBLIC TOILETS

This Congress demands that Local Authorities reopen the hundreds of public toilets, that have closed over the last few years.

Taxi and Private Hire drivers across the country, are being persecuted by their licensing authorities, for peeing in the street, as they have no access to public toilets.

G56 PROFESSIONAL DRIVERS BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

MIKE TINNION (London): Good morning, Congress. I move Motion 258 on Reopening Public Toilets. The Covid pandemic brought to light the importance of public hygiene, but Covid also brought a shortfall in local authority funding, which has resulted in the closure of many public toilets right across the country. I am a London black cab driver, and I can only think of two pay-to-pee toilets in central London, and that is if you can find a parking space or running the gauntlet of parking attendants. Thankfully, they are on strike at the moment. *(Laughter)*

This issue is particularly challenging for the disabled and for professional drivers who spend long hours on their own. Both of these groups require access to clean and safe facilities. The lack of public toilets has resulted in the most desperate having to use unsanitary facilities or go for long periods without a bathroom break. Local authorities need to prioritise the reopening of those toilets that have been closed and install new ones in areas where they are needed the most.

Congress, local authorities cannot use Covid as an excuse for ever. They must prioritise the reopening of public toilets and ensure that they are clean and well maintained. So we call on all of our GMB-backed councillors and MPs across the country to help elevate the problems that our members are having across the country. We must stop local authorities from taking the 'P'. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mike. Secunder?

ANN WEEKES (London): President and Congress, I am the vice-chair of London Ability, and I'm a first-time delegate and first-time speaker seconding Motion 258. *(Applause)*

"Loo, Loo, skip to the loo, skip to the loo, my darling". Well, that's easier said than done if you live in this country. Regardless of status, we all need to use the toilet. So let's cut the shyness and show empathy to outdoor workers. Have you ever been caught short when out and about, desperate for a pee or, worse, clenching your buttock cheeks as the sweat beads glisten from your forehead? Ever had a dodgy stomach or lived with a chronic condition, such as IBS or Crone's Disease. Well, cross your legs and hope to die and pray that there's a public toilet nearby.

All jokes aside and excuse the pun, but the local authorities are taking the "P....."; oh, sorry, President. The public toilets are not out of order. Local authorities are. The loss of public toilets affects a host of our much-needed outdoor workers, including our drivers, who may be disabled or female, and whose conditions, medicines or circumstances require frequent toilet use in the community. Eating and drinking avoidance causes dehydration and constipation. Holding it in

causes cystitis and urine infections. It also causes dizziness and poor concentration which endangers drivers and outdoor machinery users. Private local authority interests surpass workers' comfort, whilst the effects of the pandemic lockdown continues to see many remaining public toilets out of bounds. Our workers continue to experience health and safe inequalities that we cannot afford to shy away from. "Tinkle, tinkle, near or far, how I wonder where the public toilets are". Congress, please support this motion because our outdoor workers need to be able to have regular public motions. *(Cheers and applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ann. I now call on Sarah Hurley to respond on behalf of the CEC.

SARAH HURLEY (CEC): Vice President and Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC on Motions 256, 257, which we are supporting with the following qualifications.

Firstly, on Motion 256 – Free Childcare For All – the CEC supports the principle of free childcare for all that this motion sets out, and recognises the benefits it would bring to children's development, parents' wellbeing and the wider economy in the creation of jobs in early years education and supporting parents return to work.

However, the CEC wishes to qualify that GMB also organises early year workers and, therefore, would not wish to call for the Government to reform the childcare provisions without first having our own clear policies on how such reform would also protect and further our members' terms and conditions.

Secondly, on Motion 257 – Capita and PIP – this motion is generally in line with GMB policy, acknowledging Capita's mishandling of the personal independence payment assessments. However, this motion calls for new, specific action to lobby GMB-sponsored MPs to remove and ban Capita from public contracts relating to PIP assessments and to scrutinise other public contracts they hold. The CEC supports this with the following qualification: that this is carried out while respecting the wider GMB policy which calls for reform of all flawed PIP-assessment processes itself, and that ultimately these services, formerly provided through the public sector, should be brought back in-house. Congress, please support these motions with the qualifications I have laid out. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sarah. Does London Region accept the qualification? *(Agreed)* All those in favour, please show? Anyone against? That is carried.

Does the Midlands Region accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Will all those in favour, please show? Anyone against? That is carried.

Motion 258 is being supported. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against? That is carried.

Motion 256 was CARRIED.

Motion 257 was CARRIED.

Motion 258 was CARRIED.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Congress, it is, once again, a pleasure to invite to the stage a group of members who work within the care sector. They will be speaking about their experiences and also be answering questions that have been submitted by regions. The panel will also be chaired by our newly appointed National Officer for Care, Natalie Grayson.

SOCIAL CARE WORKERS PANEL

NATALIE GRAYSON (National Officer for Care): Congress, it is an absolute pleasure for us to sit here today in front of you all. It is the first time upon this stage. I am Natalie Grayson, and I am the new National Care Organiser. (*Applause*) That is very nice. Applause is lovely. However, it is *these* guys who we need to be applauding. As Amanda said earlier, every person in this room has got a stake in social care. It is part of our society's foundation to ensure good care for those who are in need, but it is often those who work in care who are taken for granted in a system that is built upon greed.

This care conversation stems from the 2023 Special Report, which is in front of you, and, sadly, I don't think that much of what is in that report will come as a surprise to you. Care is made up by a majority of women and many migrant workers in the sector, who are already underpaid and undervalued. Care is now facing a crisis of staffing. There is a projected gap of 250,000 workers between now and 2030. This is a crisis that we are running into very quickly. We need to be able, as a union, to start tackling that. However, what we face is that care is so enormous, and everything that we see is so drastic and so urgent, the question is how do we tackle this as a whole? We tackle it by systematically putting our resources into campaigns where we know we are going to be able to make a difference. The people who we have back *here* I would like to introduce. Give it up for Liz from Scotland. (*Applause*) Louise, who is a first-time delegate here today as well from Northern Ireland. Give it up for Louise. (*Applause*) And Harry from Scotland, again. (*Applause*) I am your designated English speaker. Unfortunately, we did have a delegate from the Midlands Region who sadly broke her ankle and was not

able to make it today. Liz, we are going to start having a chat about Scotland. You are a private-care branch in Scotland so you cover care all over the place.

Coming from a Scotland angle, many colleagues in this room, and me certainly living in England, we don't hear a lot about what is going on within care and within the Government, and the impact that that has on care. When Covid came about, which is when me and you first met, the GMB campaigned for sick pay as an infection-control measure, and we won that argument in the short term. Scotland, like England, set up a social care sick fund. How do you think that that impacted members at that time?

LIZ (Scotland): Initially, it helped greatly from the financial point of view. There were a few hiccups. It was not smooth sailing, as you can imagine. A lot of the companies were very slow in paying out. What we saw as a challenge became a blame game. The companies were blaming local authorities, local authorities were blaming the Government and it just went round and round. In the meantime, people were left financially strapped.

NATALIE GRAYSON: Absolutely. It is really important to note as well the difference between the Scotland Social Care Fund and that in England because yours covered every single worker in a care home, whereas it was carers only within England, from my understanding. So all the domestic staff, the catering staff, ultimately, everybody was going into that building and was at risk at that point. So it was a really excellent campaign that was run that managed to include everybody within that.

LIZ: It was a battle, though.

NATALIE GRAYSON: I am sure. Unfortunately, it was pulled in England and it was pulled by the Scottish Government on 31st March. 54% of our members working in care told us in a recent survey for this report that they don't receive anything more than statutory sick pay. Pulling the rug and pulling the Scottish Sick Care Fund, what reaction have to see to that from members in the past eight weeks? What's in the feedback?

LIZ: It is pretty disappointing because Covid is still out there. The guidelines are still saying stay off work. With the financial crisis things are bad enough. We have had that wee bit of extra support pulled away and we are back to statutory sick pay.

NATALIE GRAYSON: It is important to remember as well that the amount of pressure that people were put under during that crisis, I think we are starting to see the impacts of that now; right?

LIZ: Yes.

NATALIE GRAYSON: When I have been to Scotland and had these conversations, we are seeing examples of post traumatic stress disorder come through with our care workers now. There is such a significant mental health crisis. We are really having to deal with that on the ground, aren't we?

LIZ: We are. During Covid staff continued to work and they did not really acknowledge the effects it was having on them. Now things are starting to ease off, we are starting to feel the effects of what carers witnessed.

NATALIE GRAYSON: Your branch is a private care branch. As part of that, we know that there are differentials between pay and terms and conditions between that and local authorities. The report says that in England 93% of publicly funded residential places were in local authority homes in 1990, but today 95% of residents are now under private care provision. It was a very dominant feature through the private equity firms to say "Look, this is about getting labour costs down by 30% and for us to be able to maximise the level of our profit". In this environment there has to be a political tactic to try and improve those recurring. Within Scotland, of course, we did start having those sorts of conversations, didn't we, with the SNP putting forward about the National Care Service. How do you feel that that has gone, Liz, in your experience?

LIZ: It is too late. Initially, when they spoke from a private care point of view, it was thought to be a good idea, but circumstances have changed as to whether that might be the way to go. It has not really panned out that way. It is the usual political stuff, with obstacles.

NATALIE GRAYSON: We have to say that they have, probably, got distracted in the last few months, haven't they?

LIZ: Well, yes. In Scotland, it was put on the back burner until the elections were over for a new First Minister and now it has been pushed back again. There's been a bit of push back because of the finances to set it all up. In the meantime, that is not helping the care staff because we need help now. that is not helping the care staff because we need help now.

NATALIE GRAYSON: Absolutely. We have a bit of a stalemate situation here, but we do have an incredibly strong and resolute membership in Scotland, don't we? (*Applause and cheers*) I visited Scotland recently and we had a care-campaign strategy day, which I thought was really, really great. What sort of things came up in that? Can you recall?

LIZ: One of the interesting things that came up was the idea of "A day in our shoes", where we have our civil servants and MSPs to volunteer to work a full shift – not observe – and home care.

NATALIE GRAYSON: And everything that comes in with that.

LIZ: I did have a few volunteers who were quite keen. The stumbling block is the local authorities. They are not playing the game.

NATALIE GRAYSON: I wonder why.

LIZ: We are stuck at the moment but we will keep trying.

NATALIE GRAYSON: I am quite inspired by the amount and level of particular energy that you are putting into things. You have got a plan that every single month you are thinking of putting in at least three media stories out there which are our members, so we are keeping the pressure on through the press. Of course, there is the fight for £15, which is taking place in workplaces as well. We will be coming on to Harry in a moment. The impact of what Harry's branch has done in South Lanarkshire is going to have an enormous ripple effect. It will be so positive during the next year. As to you and the reps in Scotland, and collectively, what are your goals for improving care in Scotland?

LIZ: That is a challenge to start with. We need more recognition. That is a bit starting point. If smaller companies can't get recognition, they can't get reps. That is quite a stumbling block. That is something to be looked at for the future. Also recruitment, motivation and getting information out. Because we don't have recognition in many care homes, it is getting information out to these people.

NATALIE GRAYSON: Absolutely. Thank you, Liz. Cheers. We now come to Louise. This is Louise. She is a first-time delegate. Louise works in the voluntary sector. You also work within mental health.

LOUISE: And those with learning disabilities.

NATALIE GRAYSON: Thank you very much for the prompt, darling. Much appreciated. Where we start from is that you used to be a union rep 10 years ago or thereabouts, didn't you?

LOUISE: Yes. I stepped away from it because my job role was really, really busy. I just couldn't fit the two in. I can back into being a rep again three years ago, and it was all to do with Covid. My service was shut down and I was redeployed without any consultation or negotiation whatsoever. That made me very cross, and it also made a lot of people who were redeployed very cross. When I came back under my own terms, I waited one month to see if management would come and talk to me about what had taken place and nobody did. So I decided that's it. I contacted my union officer and got a grievance going. So I challenged the redeployment policy. I came back on as a rep and then I got involved and they put a redeployment policy in place.

NATALIE GRAYSON: So you saw that there was a need there.

LOUISE: Yes.

NATALIE GRAYSON: You knew that you could have a positive impact. Thank you for coming back on board because I know what a difference you have made to your members, because from that redeployment policy that then started to build up industrial relations with the employer that wasn't there previously. In your company you did not have any recognition, did you?

LOUISE: No; but we got a recognition facilities agreement which is now in place.
(Applause)

NATALIE GRAYSON: It is really difficult to get a recognition agreement in private care.

LOUISE: I insisted that the facilities agreement was for a secondee for whenever the time comes, because if we didn't get that at the start it was going to be very difficult to get it in place further down the line. So it needed to be there. We haven't actually got a secondee you but we are working towards that.

NATALIE GRAYSON: It is very difficult – this is why you stepped away in the first place – because as women we have got our work time and then we have everything that we do outside, at home, childcare and so on. In that recognition agreement, fitting that space in so, you know what, we are going to have a secondment position, that we are going to have a full-time rep in there, you managed to get that into your recognition agreement. I don't know whether the

company realised what it was that they were agreeing to or not. Who knows? They will do. We have got somebody lined up who we are hoping is going to take that position on.

LOUISE: We are hoping to get that secondee very soon. In my organisation, we only have two trained reps. Recently, we have recruited four more reps, which is great. So at the minute we are waiting on the training for the reps, but they can sit in on the joint negotiating forum and the pay talks that are going on at the minute. Once we get them trained it will take a bit of pressure off

NATALIE GRAYSON: So within three years we've gone for a new redeployment policy, we've got recognition and we've got four new reps in your workplace.

LOUISE: Yes. (*Applause*)

NATALIE GRAYSON: This is a serious matter that we are going to come on to now, so I am going to do a trigger warning just for anybody who feels they want to leave the room, because now is the time. We have heard quite a lot from ambulance workers over the last few days about the violence that you are subjected to in the workplace and that is exactly the same within care, and particularly in the services that Louise works in with special needs. We all know, Congress, that nobody ever should be subjected to violence or abuse within the workplace. However, it is something that we continue to see, and we do need to come up with a tactic and a strategy as to how it is that we deal with that. As to the impact on your members within your workplace, could you explain a couple of incidents or what it is that your members have been subjected to?

LOUISE: Hair pulling, biting, slapping, kicking, T-shirts ripped off, completely ripped off, flying objects. The other thing about it is that some of these people are telling you, "I'm going to do this". Our staff are MBA trained, which is for different needs of service users, so you can have a three-day training or a five-day training, depending on the needs of the individual. The problem then is that whenever there are staff shortages, the staff are at higher risk of further injury.

We have a special paid leave policy within our organisation and it is a one-page policy, and it really grinds my gears. We have raised this matter because there are only two criteria on the policy. One is the incident report and the other is a doctor's note. After that it is down to the discretion of management. It is really not good enough.

NATALIE GRAYSON: No, absolutely not.

LOUISE: So we are challenging that policy at present.

NATALIE GRAYSON: When you started having these conversations to say "This is what our members are being subjected to", what was the response from your employer?

LOUISE: We were right in the middle of having our pay negotiations. At present our staff members are paid on two different levels. We have non-challenging services and challenging services. The difference is 30 pence an hour. For the top end of the non-challenging services, it is £10.40. The minimum wage is £10.42. So the minimum wage blew our pay proposal completely out of the water. There is a whole restructure being looked at now, at the minute, so we are putting everything on the table now when we are doing the restructuring because it has never been done in my organisation. I said, "We need to put violence in the workplace as an assault". Management was not happy. They said, "This is the only way these people have of expressing themselves". My response to that is, "So, if I'm angry and aggressive and I can't find words, it's okay for me to get up and slap somebody, is it? So we are all happy with that". It's not good enough. It's absolutely not good enough, so we need to do something about that.
(Applause)

NATALIE GRAYSON: Thank you. As you said, staffing levels have a massive impact. From the members who I have gone and spoken to, you can see if somebody is scheduled to work with somebody one-on-one for 12 hours day – those are long shifts – and then you are scheduled to work with that same person the next day, and that same person the next, because of those shortages, that individual probably isn't getting the level of care that they deserve. Also, you have to consider the monotony. "I can't stand seeing the same person for 12 hours a day, every day". What are you going to talk about? How are you going to engage? So staffing shortages is a massive problem. I totally agree. Of course, the report calls for care workers to come under assaults under the Emergency Workers' Act as well, the same as our ambulance services.

I would like to give a shout-out to the Midlands Region. One of the ambulance branches came over today and said, "We would like to have a conversation about offering support to care workers in that campaign", so thank you very much for that. (Applause)

There is the risk assessments as well, and ensuring that they are properly done in consultation with staff members, which they so often aren't.

LOUISE: Absolutely. There needs to be more revision on risk assessments, on the needs of the individuals. A risk assessment does not cover the fact that you have staff shortages. A risk assessment does not cover that. The other thing about it is that you could have a staff member who is a trigger, who the staff members continually put back in, regardless of whether they are a trigger or not. Is that in the risk assessment? These are all things that really need to be looked at in great detail.

NATALIE GRAYSON: Thank you, Louise. Can we have a round of applause of Louise, please, for that excellent contribution as a first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Okay, Harry, you are our good-news story. Two-and-half or three weeks ago, your branch, Harry, organised and supported the members and you won a historic and life-changing pay award for the domiciliary workers and homecare workers within South Lanarkshire Council, did you not?

HARRY: Yes.

NATALIE GRAYSON: Some of you may have heard about it, but I am going to give the big crescendo at the end and get him to get the big round of applause, so you will have to hold on until we get to that point to hear what this award actually was. Harry, what was your starting point with your campaign? Where did it come from?

HARRY: When I first became a convenor I knew nothing. I first became a deputy convenor and I got sent to meet this wee woman, who I was told was taking on social care. Liz is a typical Glaswegian, and she would fight herself for so long. She was in social care. She was a rep. Liz was telling us about all the on-going issues. My first meeting with the manager was where she was banging and shouting. I had never been to a meeting like that in my life. After the meeting, she started telling us about all these different issues that were on-going, but some of our members were working nights and they were getting solicited when they were on the streets. What we did was to have meetings. At the first meeting only 10 came. So we gathered up as much information and concerns about them and we presented a charter to the council about things that had to change in social care. It needed modernisation. So we did that. Then they wanted a re-evaluation because we could prove that the job had evolved, but when Covid came the council said to us, "We canna do the re-evaluation just now", which was fair because all the resources were getting put towards that, but they promised us that after that they would do the re-evaluation. That gave us two-and-a-half years, but in that period of time we started winning things. When Covid struck, an example is that we never had anything such as partnership with NHS cards. There was a video on social media of a carer having to wait at the end of a queue

because the big supermarkets wouldn't let her in because she didn't have a badge that said she was in partnership with the NHS. So we fought that and we won that battle, which meant that carers got the discounts the same as the NHS workers.

At another meeting we had we found that the carers were having to do checks in their own time, while men were getting 15 minutes overtime for it. So they lodged a grievance for that and they won that. It cost the council's full-time carers £850 each.

The biggest win we had at these meetings was where we were getting carers coming up and saying "My hands are all cracked for using the sanitation material". Their skin came out in a rash. We had to go home and get a shower. Predominantly low-paid women were being asked to pay the price for infection control for Covid. We approached the council. It took about three months to win that, so the council agreed to give them £2 a shift, which was 50 pence an hour extra. That was another victory. So every victory we won, the membership started to grow. Carers started finally to believe that somebody was fighting for them. So it just grew and grew.

NATALIE GRAYSON: Yes. Everything that we do grows out of engagement, and we hope that every action we take pushes that extra step and gets more people involved. I am going to skip a question. How did the members get and stay involved? How did you keep that momentum up throughout?

HARRY: During Covid it was hard because we couldn't meet, but sometimes we would meet in the car park and be socially distanced. We would talk then. We had WhatsApp, Facebook. There was always contact. To be fair, in South Lanarkshire we had, maybe, three meetings a day just to talk about Covid. The home carers would be there. There was constant information. So any concerns they had, they were bringing it directly to me and I was raising it. So it was a continual wheel. Those members would ask me questions, I was putting it to the council and they were getting answers back, so they started to realise that the scheme was working. I was getting information back so somebody was listening. "So somebody is fighting for me". I think that carers can be quite passive. I think a lot of employers play on that. I think they use reverse psychology with carers. They use empathetic ideas against them. It is about getting them to realise that there is so much more than just a carer. A carer is an important role within society. They are as important within the NHS as a doctor and/or as a district nurse. *(Applause)*

NATALIE GRAYSON: But the energy you managed to get out of your campaigning at the end resulted in these women became fierce when they needed to; right?

HARRY: Yes. If my reps can see that I am fighting, I need them to fight and then I need the home carers to show, "Wait a minute, my rep is fighting for me",. I meet these women, maybe, four times a year. I constantly get feedback. As long as I get feedback from my reps, then I can raise it the JCCs. I will print it out, I will give it to them and they will take it out. It is just a constant flow of information. Information is key to anything.

NATALIE GRAYSON: Congress, we have been calling for the £15 as the minimum rate of pay for care workers. Your historic win has not only taken the fight for £15 but it has smashed it. Right?

HARRY: Yes.

NATALIE GRAYSON: Do you want to say the figures

HARRY: We did a re-evaluation to start with and it was about agreeing an implementation date. This is the fight just now, which we are 99% certain of winning. The implementation date was October 2020. That was agreed and signed off by all parties. If there was a rise, it would be backdated to that amount. So we won. We went for £13.26 an hour to start with and then to £16.26 and up to £16.69. *(Applause)*

NATALIE GRAYSON: Say that again? It is too good. Say that again?

HARRY: It went from £16.26 to £16.69.

NATALIE GRAYSON: That is a ridiculously good win.

HARRY: Then the council came back and said that they were not agreeing the back-dating to April 2023. So, again, there were more demonstrations. In 95% of those demonstrations GMB stood alone. So we had another meeting with them. We had the ballots. We had one ballot for industrial action. We could not take industrial action until an appeal was heard. I was speaking to Udi, and Udi said to me, "You need to make sure. I think it's about 70%". I said, "No. I think it is 90%". Actually, it is 100%. Everyone of my members will vote in favour. Udi said to me, "I'll buy you a fine bottle of whisky". So the result came back of 100% in favour of strike action. *(Applause)*

NATALIE GRAYSON: Yes. That show of industrial strength has led on to the next part; right?

HARRY: Yes. I was making everyone aware that as soon as we heard the result of the appeal, we will move on. The consultative ballot was 100% in favour of strike action. We will be balloting our members. We had a meeting last Thursday and negotiations couldn't have gone any better. We are nearly there. So if we are successful, which I am 99% certain we will be, your average home carer will get at least £17,000 back in back-dated pay. Plus you add overtime onto that, so we are talking about huge sums of money. *(Cheers and applause)* I can remember the first demonstration we ever had, Carol organised it and five carers came. I said, "I cannae believe this". I said that we should regroup and rally them. The next meeting we had about 120 members. It was on the television and it was on the press. Then it gradually fell away, but we still had between 30 and 60 or 70 at every demonstration. The last demonstration was absolutely amazing. What a sight! There were GMB flags everywhere. I remember walking proud with this. I said, "This is unbelievable". Just to see the orange and black was amazing. It was good. *(Applause)*

NATALIE GRAYSON: Thank you. Thank you very much, Harry.

THE PRESIDENT: We are always pressed for time in Congress. I do apologise. We have five minutes so we can take some questions. I am very sorry everybody, but we are not going to be able to come round to you all. I have got Charlie Kay from Southern Region.

CHARLES KAY (Southern): Thank you, Panel. It was great. Thank you for all the work you do for us. In Southern Region our biggest challenge around organising in care is how much outsourcing has happened and how segregated the sector is. Do you have any suggestions for how we can put pressure on the councils to require private contractors to recognise and give access to GMB, and also to bring these contracts back in house?

NATALIE GRAYSON: I went to Wigan a couple of weeks ago. In that region there three HEI care homes that have recently been put up for sale. It is when we have to look at these things on a case-by-case basis, when me, the officer involved and the branch, we discovered that one of those local authorities have, in the past, about five years ago, taken that step forward and actually bought back in. I think it is about making that case. Within local authorities it is all about money. So it is about targeting the right people and doing your research. Within local authorities there are care commissions, basically, that sit within them. We go and target them politically but we also need to be present in those workplaces and let

those members know what the difference is between private and public. So they actually see it and imagine it. Then we organise off the back of that. I don't know if anybody has anything to add to that. No. If you want to have a chat about it afterwards, I am more than willing to hear any ideas that you have.

CHARLES KAY (Southern): That is very kind. Thank you.

ANN WEEKES (London): Thank you panel members. It was really interesting what you shared. It is often very difficult to find workplace organisers in care homes. Job insecurity and competing demands on their time often deters members from taking the next step to become a workplace organiser. Do you have any suggestions as to how we can more successfully encourage these members to become more involved in not only their workplace but also the democracy of GMB.

HARRY: Involve them. Involve them in every single decision. They are in the workplace. Every single thing that was suggested I did it at one of my rallies. It was my members who suggested it. Put it to them, talk to them. Get their ideas presented to them. Take it back. Anything they want you go and find, present it back to them, and if you starting doing that a few times they will start getting interested and talking amongst themselves. It is just about making people inquisitive. Do you know what I mean? When they start to see results, you just build on them. Then you start building your branch and your branch gets bigger – let's be honest – numbers are power. People start believing in you. It is just making people believe.

NATALIE GRAYSON: Thank you for your questions. It is appreciated. I am very sorry. I am being pulled by Malcolm. We have time for only one more question. I am very sorry.

SHIRLEY FURIE (GMB Scotland): Thank you, Panel, that was really good, and well done to Harry on your success. It is good to hear successful stories. Social care is notoriously difficult to organise in, especially it being a female-dominated sector and the extra responsibilities that are placed on women. Due to the anti-union tactics of private-sector employers, what are the biggest barriers you face in organising social care and how do you overcome those barriers?

LIZ: I'll answer that. The biggest problem in private care, as was mentioned earlier, is the lack of recognition. Many companies don't have recognition. As we have seen from Harry's success, if you are recognised you will be able to get more staff. The biggest problem we have is they are scattered across huge areas and

the members we cannot get access to because we don't have recognition agreements. It then becomes very very difficult but we will get there, won't we?

NATALIE GRAYSON: This is work that we are going to be doing moving forward. Absolutely. It is a challenge and it is a challenge everywhere on resources, where we can be and what we can hit. Systematically and through working with care branches, our care members and our care activists, we will be able to figure this out between us. This is not impossible, Congress. We can do this. We can start making the case to change social care and set the agenda for our members to get better terms and conditions and better pay in work. Thank you very much for your time, Congress. Please give it up for your Panel. They have been absolutely fantastic.

(Applause)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Natalie, and your guests for their discussion.

Colleagues, that concludes this morning's business. Please make sure you give generously to the bucket collection for the Guide Dogs. Please be back at 2 o'clock.

(End of morning session)

AFTERNOON SESSION

Congress assembled at 2.00 p.m.

THE PRESIDENT: Can I call Congress to order, please. Thank you. I hope you enjoyed all the fringe events that were on at lunchtime. I have one announcement before we start the business of this afternoon. If anyone picked up a blue carrier bag with a black coat in it let us know, please. It was left under a table at the back of the room yesterday and it is from Donna of Southern Region. If anybody did find that and hand it in somewhere could they just let us know. Thank you.

I now call on Gary Smith to move the General Secretary Report to Congress.

GENERAL SECRETARY REPORT

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Congress, Gary Smith, General Secretary, your General Secretary and Treasurer, moving the General Secretary's Report. Congress, it is wonderful to be back together again. Looking around the hall I see so many people who have done incredible things. so many familiar faces, friends,

comrades, and colleagues, people who every day work together to make work better. People who fight for justice, people who change lives, Congress, that is who you are and that is who we are. The hunger for better is woven into the fabric of our union. It is in our DNA. Brighton, this city, this is where I cut my teeth as a young GMB organiser. I have so many memories, most of them of happy times here, and one of them was a memorable week that I spent in the refuse depot where our GMB members chained to refuse trucks because the council contractor had tried to sack them. Congress, together we fought and together we won. (*Applause*) Our victory was a huge transfer of essential services back in-house and, friends, I am pleased to report that the Brighton refuse and street cleaning service is still in-house today. (*Applause*)

I fought that dispute like so many others in my time here with Mark Turner. Mark is the Sussex Branch Secretary. Mark has not been well. I do not know if he is quite near to the hall, he is coming, he has been in hospital overnight. I just want to say how grateful I am to Mark and I hope you will show your appreciation, comrades, for a great comrade who has done so much to support GMB members and this union in Brighton. I look forward to seeing Mark. (*Applause*)

I also want to pay tribute to two of our incredible people who are joining us in the hall today. Congress, I think I have seen Pat Kenny, and I am hoping Paul is going to be here with us as well. Both Paul and Pat have given so much to our union and to our whole labour movement and we are absolutely honoured to have them joining with us in Brighton. Thank you both. (*Applause*)

Congress, our fight for better never stops. It can be seen in the way we have faced them today, tough choices we have had to fix our union. We had lost our way but we came together and reclaimed our free spirit. We are now delivering transformative change that is giving our members the union that they deserve. Last year we were forced to move to seven GMB regions. It was the biggest change to our regional structure in 100 years and that decisive move has produced such positive results. We are running countless campaigns, people are joining us in record numbers and membership is growing across the union and just yesterday we agreed to revitalise parts of our rulebook with aims and values that capture the essence of our cause. Our actions speak for themselves and there is no better as a symbol of the change that we are delivering than the shift at the top in the senior leadership of the union. Congress, I am proud to stand in front of you and report for the first time in GMB's history the majority of our regional secretaries are women. (*Applause*) We promised that and we are delivering.

We are back where we are at our best, the workplace. It has been such an inspirational time over the last year. I have travelled all corners of our union and seen some incredible activity. In London Region I joined members on picket lines at the City of London Corporation the other week, at Pilgrim Foods I saw firsthand there were incredible shop stewards winning against the threat to jobs from fire and rehire. Warren and Penny, and the whole team in London, you are doing such great things, and, Congress, please do take time to look at the work the region has done on violence in schools and health and safety in Asda. These are groundbreaking campaigns that are building the membership and I absolutely commend the inspirational work done in GMB in London with the Jewish faith membership. (*Applause*)

We are proud, very proud, of our Jewish heritage and in this union there will be zero tolerance for all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism. (*Applause*) As a union we know that on issues of race there is still much to do but I hope and believe that we are making progress. On Wednesday our National Race Officer, Tye, will present to Congress about our new GMB race achievement scholarship programme, which is open to activists from racially marginalised and under-represented ethnic groups.

Martin and Phil – Phil, if you are still speaking to me – and the whole team in GMB Midlands you have been super busy as well. They have been undertaking a huge amount of organisational and industrial work and facing a lot of the challenges that come from merging two regions and they are growing the financial membership.

In Birmingham City Council where we are leading the fight on equal pay we are very clear that whatever the colour of the political rosette, we will take you on. (*Applause*) Birmingham City Council will be held to account for the money they have stolen from our members.

In Amazon, what can I say, we are building the union and making history, what a team. There have been setbacks but we have persevered and we will absolutely prevail. The ongoing work at JCB is just incredible, but look at what we have done in that company, building the membership, securing good deals on pay as well as getting permanent jobs for the workers there. Jim will join us tomorrow, Gordon is in the delegation and very much at the fore in all the work that we do at JCB, and please pass on our best wishes to the whole team at JCB from us at Congress. (*Applause*)

At GMB North East, Yorkshire & Humber, we are forging a new region. Hazel, Cath, and all the team, I hope that you have taken time out to reflect on all that you

have achieved over the past year, not too much time, mind, because I am quite impatient; you still have work to do. I can see you laughing, Dave. Think about this for a minute, there had been intergenerational decline across the regions and you have reversed that. You have come into Congress with your financial membership growing and it is on the back of listening to our members and campaigning. A 13.5% pay increase for members at Suez, and a 450% increase in the membership at the company on the back of it.

My old industry, Northern Gas Network, there is 18% on the pay rates for the lowest paid, and the work that you are going to undertake on energy jobs, including hydrogen and renewables on Teesside and the Humber, it is truly groundbreaking stuff. There has been a non stop stream of industrial activity in the region and today our members at Sellafield and North Yorkshire are taking strike action, and let's give them our support for their struggle. (*Applause*) Cath, you know this is true, the region get the award for the coldest picket line of the year on Consett, County Durham, where we were on strike at Thomas Swan.

Now, there is a lot of great work, a lot of great campaigning going on in the North West & Irish Region. Our people in Cumbria want, and they are hard words, landmark action on equal pay, and still in Cumbria we have brought the Barrow refuse service back in-house and congratulations to all of you for that great job. (*Applause*)

To GMB members at Sellafield nuclear site, and the submarine yard in Barrow, I want you to know this, while others, other unions might wobble your union is unwavering in its commitment to you, to your communities, and a fight for jobs and a future, In Northern Ireland, I have been over there a couple of times, there is real teamwork and some great results, with Arriva, and the dispute at ABC Council last year, and I do want to say to Mick Brady - Eamonn is not here, the convenor from Translink - but I do want to say thank you for the work that you are doing and send a very clear message to Translink and all the employers over Northern Ireland, we will never, ever, tolerate discrimination in the workplace and neither will we be party to cosy deals, cosy sweetheart deals with other unions. (*Applause*) Of course, I am delighted that Denise Walker joins us at her first Congress as Regional Secretary. (*Applause*)

As we welcome Denise, I want to pay tribute to Graham McDermott. Graham, who over a period was Acting Regional Secretary, he is a tremendous servant for our union and we thank Graham for all his work. (*Applause*)

And, of course, a dear comrade and friend of so many of us, Paul McCarthy. (*Applause*) I have to be honest, that is the first time I have ever heard the

delegation at Congress cheer Paul McCarthy; you are usually moaning about him but that was nice of you. Paul has served this union and the region with great distinction for so long and he does keep trying to retire and I keep finding things for him to do. Paul, I salute your integrity and your decency, and thank you for all that you do for this organisation. (*Applause*) As regional president, you are doing a fantastic job. I hope you are proud of everybody. I know you have a really tough job keeping them in line as well.

As for GMB Scotland, what can I say, I am – (*cheers*) – I will get to that! I am so proud of you, Louise, although Jim is not here -- Jim Lennox -- but what you have achieved is simply incredible. I thought looking back at my time in Scotland I did okay, I thought we did some great things, but since I have left things have got better. Obviously, you lot were on a go-slow when I was in the chair. I am not stupid! We have been campaigning across Scotland and we even had our first picket line on Orkney, we won recognition on the Apple store in Glasgow, we have secured a tremendous outcome in the Scottish NHS and ambulance service, and I want to say this to Shona, Shona Thomson in Glasgow, I hear you and I know it has been torturous but you have kept going and in the next few weeks the women of Glasgow are going to get £262m in back money and money that was stolen from them; that is in large part from you and all the other shop stewards. (*Applause*)

I want to give a special mention to the women's campaign unit in Scotland and their campaign for carers in South Lanarkshire, you heard about that earlier. We listened to our members and did not just fight for £15, we smashed it winning £16.24 as a minimum for the care workers in South Lanarkshire and, Congress, this is very, very important, if we can win in South Lanarkshire we should be winning in councils across the length and breadth of Britain and Ireland.

In Southern Region (*Cheers*) there is an organising campaign growing, the work on the workers' street cleaning dispute across the South Coast, again it is something we will have to emulate across the whole of the country, driving up pay and conditions of workers who for too long were exploited by private contractors. I know that I speak for the whole union when I say in solidarity greetings to our people who were arrested on picket lines and were subsequently acquitted. (*Applause*)

In schools the Northern Region has been so active organising and campaigning, school support staff, the vast majority of them women, have seen their jobs change and the responsibilities increase but they do not get the pay or conditions to match and we have to say as a union that is going to end, no more. Congress, GMB is coming for local authorities and academy trusts that are failing these essential workers. (*Applause*)

It has been an enormous honour to stand on picket lines in the region over the past year and, Justin, the region secures the award for the wettest picket line at Fawley Refinery. *(Applause)* You will see that on the video at some point. It was a cracker.

Throughout Wales & South West we just have an incredible group of people led by Ruth and Kevin. *(Applause)* You are an example to all of us about working together and winning together. How you have embraced a team approach and the leadership that you have shown, Ruth, is an absolute breath of fresh air in the region. *(Applause)*

We recently met with the shop stewards on Hinckley Point and I am glad some of them are at Congress with us. It is the largest construction site in Europe and our members are building a nuclear power station that will play a huge part in empowering the national for decades to come. There are over 2,000 GMB members now on this site and the work they are doing, including on equality and inclusion, is really something to behold. Women in construction, mental health, health and safety, even campaigning over the food on the site, a large diverse workforce being organised in the GMB family and it is truly an incredible thing to see. *(Applause)*

In so many more workplaces we have been on picket lines and Congress will remember the win we had over equal pay in Blaenau Gwent. Well done to you, Kevin, and the whole team.

We have had some extraordinary moments with the national and international impact. This year, as we heard yesterday, our NHS and ambulance members took on the Government, they took them on and won. The amazing women and men who care for the people of our country had simply had enough, enough of being clapped by employers when the cameras were on and condemned by the same people for asking for better pay, enough of being told they did not deserve more. Our demand was simple, talk – pay – now. The Government said no. Well, didn't they get that wrong. Public support for our members never wavered and what happened, the Tory Government backed down. Congress please join me in again showing our admiration for our fantastic NHS and ambulance service members. *(Applause)*

The key workers do not just appear on the NHS and ambulance service, they work in transport, retail, social care, logistics, education, local government, and so many more places besides. They, you, are the glue that holds our economy and society together and they, you, our members, deserve better and nowhere is that

clearer than at Amazon. That company unashamedly spending billions sending a rocket into space but they refuse to give their workers a decent pay rise. Last summer workers at Amazon across the country rose up and in Coventry they joined GMB in their hundreds; they have had 16 days of strike action and they are taking on this corporate giant for GMB recognition. This is a stunning show of strength and solidarity. Some of our reps are with us today and, Congress, let's show them how much we appreciate them and their struggle. (*Applause*)

The results of our campaigning across the union are not just being seen in improved pay and conditions important though that is, it is also delivering a growing GMB too. People are joining us in record numbers. We are a powerful attractive option for those seeking to make work better. Congress, I am delighted to report that following consistent month on month success our union has grown to nearly 580,000 members. (*Applause*)

But as important as that number is we must also remember that our membership in terms of our financial members, those paying grade 1 and 2, is growing too and that is absolutely vital to ensure that we have stability, and that we can build for our future. Our focus on listening to members and campaigning in workplaces is delivering. We are back where the action is, we are lighting fires, we are winning disputes, and the union is growing, and I think that is worth celebrating. Working people in this country need and are desperate for a union under which banner they can organise and through which they can make work better.

Congress, when I stood in the election as your General Secretary I was 100% clear that under my leadership GMB would never obsess about party politics but it is obvious that the Tories have failed our country, cuts to public services, raw sewerage in our rivers, a transport system that is creaking at the seams, they have been in charge for 13 years and it feels like nothing really works any more. Working people cannot afford another Tory government. It is time for them to go. (*Applause*)

For us we understand that politics is a vehicle for achieving the industrial goals of our members, just as it was for the union pioneers who formed the Labour Party. We want a Labour government and to me it is clear that under Keir Starmer Labour is getting ready for power. Our country needs a new approach because the world is changing. The neo-liberal economic policies have had their day. The march of manufacturing industry and decent unionised jobs for low wage economies in China and elsewhere has left our country dangerously exposed, and Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine and the sabre rattling from others shows that we have to bring these essential industries and jobs home. These should be our jobs, jobs for our communities here. (*Applause*)

However, they recognise the changes taking place on some areas and, candidly, we need more clarity. Energy is key. The energy we are going to need in the future is not guaranteed. We still import too much from the rest of the world. We have to fix and secure our energy supply if we are to face threats from authoritarian regimes in the world and, very importantly, find a workable way to net zero. Congress, we can meet these challenges but our future requires a mix of energy sources; nuclear, like that being built at Hinckley, renewables, hydrogen, and the truth is oil and gas is going to be with us for many years to come and it will be a huge mistake to put all the nation's eggs in one energy basket.

Earlier this year I met with trade union comrades from the USA and members of the Biden administration. I heard how they are transforming their economy and country. They are bringing manufacturing jobs home, securing their energy future through a balanced mix of resources, all as part of a journey to net zero. They believe in plans, not bans, plans built around unionised decent jobs and, Congress, I absolutely say this to you, I pledge with all my heart that I will fight every single day so that politicians respect our members in the energy sector and value the work they do for our country. (*Applause*)

Now, there are similar other areas that need fixing too. It is an utter disgrace that in 2023 low paid working women are still being paid less than men for doing the same value work. The fight for equal pay is a GMB fight and with the work of our groundbreaking women's campaign unit we will not rest until we get paid justice. The social care system, and I heard about it at Winstripe from our members and our reps, it is an utter disgrace, how can it be right that the elderly and the most vulnerable are treated like an afterthought by this Tory government. How can it be right that carers are leaving in droves because they cannot live on their wages.

Our Congress Special Report shows that carers are subject to awful attacks and violence and yet they only get paid pennies above the minimum wage. Social care needs fixing and GMB's message to the Government is very clear, pay the carers the money they deserve and be clear, we demand £15 an hour and we demand that £15 an hour now. (*Applause*)

The way some employers deny a collective union voice to their workers is disgraceful too. Amazon, one of the richest companies in the world and earns a fortune, let's not forget, from Government, from local authorities, and from across the public sector where they provide IT services. Yet when GMB members in Coventry ask for union recognition they are fought with all the might this global giant can muster. Congress, we are staying the course and we will not rest until GMB is recognised in Amazon. (*Applause*)

It is time to fix our economy, the world of work, and our country, too. It is clear that the model that has dominated our economy and working life for the past 40 years or so has failed and just as when we made great social and economic advances from the ruins of the Second World War now is the time for a new settlement where employers and government listen to working people and their union representatives, where working class communities get the investment and jobs they deserve, where we get a country where things work again. Congress, we have an historic opportunity to shape this future if we summon the same spirit that changed our union for the better, the spirit that is driving action in workplaces everywhere, the spirit that is breaking records and growing GMB.

Friends, colleagues, comrades, we are truly doing great things together and if we keep looking forward we will keep succeeding. Let's commit to each other this week to keep doing what we do best, to keep listening, organising, and campaigning. Congress, together – together – we make work better. Thank you. (*Standing ovation*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gary, for that really positive report on everything that is going on in the GMB. I now have to put the General Secretary's Report to the vote, all those in favour please show? Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried.

*The General Secretary's Report was **ADOPTED**.*

EMPLOYMENT POLICY: EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to section 3, Employment Policy, Equality, and Inclusion. Can I ask for the movers of Motions 77, 80, and 82 to come down the front and also those speaking on Motions 85, 87, 88, and 267 also to be ready, please.

RECRUITMENT BALANCE ON EACH ETHNICITY AND EACH CHARACTERISTIC IN WORKPLACES

MOTION 77

77. RECRUITMENT BALANCE ON EACH ETHNICITY AND EACH CHARACTERISTIC IN WORKPLACES

Discrimination and racism should not exist in any shape or form within the workplace. Whilst many challenges of discrimination persist within workplaces, they often start with poor recruitment processes that create inequity and overrepresentation of some groups over others.

National Statistics (ONS) state that Black, Asian, and minority ethnic unemployment (BAME) is at a record high, showing the need that companies need to recruit from under-represented ethnicity. Closing inequalities that exist

even within ethnic and minority groups. (For example, figures from 2021 annual population survey in employment were 76% White British, and the lowest groups in employment Pakistani and Bangladeshi at 58%)

We believe that the act of recording, reporting and monitoring this each ethnicity and each characteristic information will help recruiters to identify gaps in their recruitment which can be fixed to create a more diverse workplace.

We are concerned that companies who have specific recruitment gaps in ethnicity and protected characteristics are not considering applicants who meet most of the job criteria on the job description.

Therefore, where GMB are recognised, we call on Congress to:

- Hold these organisations to account when they do not recruit according to a percentage of the local population for each ethnicity without good reason.
- Call for and expect said organisations to provide explanations for a lack of recruitment from specific ethnicity, race and protected characteristics.
- Ensure all those medium to large companies recruit from each ethnicity, race, gender, according to the percentage of the population in between by seeking balance demographic area and who applied for jobs from LGBTQ+ and those with disabilities, ageism
- Ask that these companies conduct a yearly survey on their policy reporting which will show job seekers that the organisation they are applying to takes diversity seriously.

P17 PLAISTOW BRANCH

London Region

(Carried)

SHAH RAHMAN (London): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)*
Thank you. Congress, President, the motion is 77, discrimination and racism should not exist in any shape or form within the workplace. Whilst many challenges of discrimination persist within workplaces, they often start with poor recruitment processes that create inequality and over-representation of some groups over others. National statistics state that black, Asian, and minority ethnic employment is at a record high showing that companies need to recruit from under-represented ethnicity, including inequalities that exist even within ethnic and minority groups. For example, figures from the 2021 annual population survey employment was 76% white British and the lowest groups in employment were Pakistanis and Bangladeshis at 58%. We believe the act of recording, reporting, and monitoring this with each ethnicity and each characteristic information will help recruiters to identify gaps in their recruitment which can be fixed to create a more diverse workplace. We are concerned that companies who have specific recruitment gaps in ethnicity and protected characteristics are not considering applicants who meet most of the job criteria on the job description.

Let me give you a small example. London borough of Newham, who I work for, one of the most deprived boroughs in London and most diverse with over 105 different languages spoken, although the councillors and the mayors represent a diversity the council senior management team do not. There are senior management team members who represent the borough but do not live in the borough and do not understand the dynamics. There are no members of the senior management team that are from the ethnic minority groups. Neighbouring boroughs have a better representation, and there are staff within Newham who can be promoted within. However, it seems like this is being ignored. There are staff members that have been in post over 15 years and have not been afforded the chance of progression, especially with the ethnic minority dynamics.

Therefore, we call on Congress to hold these organisations to account when they do not recruit according to a percentage of the local population with age and ethnicity without good reason, call for and expect said organisations to provide explanations for lack of recruitment from specific ethnicity, race, and protected characteristics; in short, all those medium to large companies recruit from each ethnicity, race, and gender, according to percentage of the population by seeking ballots in demographic areas and applying for jobs from ethnic groups, and keep the LGBTQ communities, disabilities, and ageism, in mind as well. Ask that these companies conduct a yearly survey in their policy reporting which will show jobseekers that the organisation they are applying to takes diversity seriously; facilitate this diversity by ensuring needs are met, work with HR to ensure fair recruitment is taking place, and training is provided or adequate training for internal staff. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Can I have the seconder, please, for Motion 77?

SHARON WALDRON (London) President, Congress, proudly representing the London Region, and back off the Man U, and it feels so good to be back! Congress, the poet and civil rights activist Maya Angelou said: "We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry and we must all understand that all the threads of that tapestry are equal in value no matter what their colour." I wish that was a line that I made up but it is not, unfortunately.

We all know that discrimination and disproportionality exists in the workplace today, racism, sexism, ageism, all kinds of "isms", and I do not need to tell you how damaging that is for society. Recruitment balance refers to the practice of ensuring that the workforce of an organisation reflects the diversity of the community it serves. This includes balancing the representation of different ethnicities, genders, ages, abilities, and other characteristics. We all know inclusion is really important and so far as I am concerned there is only one basic

human race which we all belong to and we should all have equal opportunities and access to work and everything else in life. (*Applause*)

Apart from that why do we need a diverse workforce? I am not really asking that question; it is rhetorical. It has been proven that a diverse workforce is more successful with high levels of innovation and creativity and can bring a range of perspectives, experiences, and skills that can turbo-charge problem solving. Having a team made up of people with different backgrounds gives the business a wider perspective and shows the company is a good place to work.

Congress, this motion calls on the GMB to hold the employer to account where they do not collect democratic data to ensure that they are recruiting according to the demographics of the local area. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sharon. Now the mover of Motion 80, please?

PREGNANCY LOSS

MOTION 80

80. PREGNANCY LOSS

Congress notes that since April 2020 workers have the right to take time off for statutory parental bereavement leave on the death of a child under the age of 18.

This also includes stillbirths after 24 weeks of pregnancy where parents are entitled to the same statutory maternity and paternity leave and pay they would have been entitled to had the still birth not occurred.

Congress notes that this does not apply to any other forms of pregnancy loss.

Congress notes that there is no legal entitlement to any leave or pay in circumstances where pregnancy loss occurs before 24 weeks.

Employers have discretion to grant compassionate leave, annual leave or unpaid leave under these circumstances. Discretion can be used in a discriminatory and unfair manner by employers. Many workers maybe signed off as sick for medical reasons.

Congress notes that pregnancy loss before 24 weeks happens in circumstances through surrogacy and adoption.

Congress is asked to consider:

1. A campaign to raise awareness and impact on those who experience pregnancy loss before 24 weeks and workplaces adopting a Pregnancy Loss Policy.
2. Putting together resources, for example a briefing or toolkit, to help workers to campaign/ support those who experience pregnancy loss before 24 weeks, signposting to appropriate organisations, where possible.
3. Working alongside appropriate decision makers, stakeholders, etc, to include Pregnancy Loss under 24 weeks in legislation.

4. A Pregnancy Loss Charter as a means of encouraging and holding employers to account and including policy in the workplace as part of parental leave in a commitment to support all employees through the bereavement and grief of a pregnancy loss and to make reasonable adjustments where necessary.

E10 EALING BRANCH

London Region

(Carried)

TARANJIT CHANA (London): Congress, a trigger warning, you may hear some shared lived experiences which can bring up trauma emotions. Please take care of yourselves and take time out. Comrades, the loss of a baby at any stage of pregnancy can take an enormous physical and mental toll on anyone able to give birth, birthing people and their partners. One in four pregnancies are lost during pregnancy or birth, according to Tommy's, the UK largest charity on baby loss. Stigma around discussing baby loss has left people struggling alone at work. No one should have to worry for their job security and income on top of losing a baby. No one should have to hide their loss or pretend that they are experiencing another form of illness to be able to take time off after a loss. This can be hugely damaging in the long term for people who find themselves returning to work unable to speak honestly or seek help with grieving. Currently, many of us use our sick leave to take time off for losing their baby, either because they do not feel able to disclose the loss or may be refused leave through lack of understanding about entitlements.

Employers have no formal baby loss policies, which means that employees do not have a clear sense of their rights. Those in precarious employments may even be less likely to fight their entitlement to leave after baby loss. Employers must be flexible, compassionate, and understand that every person's circumstances and needs will be different. This motion adds to previous motions on stigma through a miscarriage and infant loss, parental leave and pay, and parental bereavement, calling for workplaces to adopt a baby loss policy and pregnancy loss charter ensuring that such policies are intersectional and baby loss before 24 weeks must be enshrined in law. Please support. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Taranjit. Secunder?

MARTIN DOLAN (London): First, a confession. These are not my words, they are the words of my daughter, 8 years old. That is how old she was, eight. Eight years of laughing, crying, growing, learning, and loving. I got 10 weeks and I know to most people at 10 weeks there is nothing there yet; it is not real. It was real for me. You were real to me. I can remember how scared and excited I was thinking about a

whole life we had ahead of us. I am happily eating a multipack of beefy crisps because that is all it tasted like. I remember being terrified to tell anyone because you definitely were not planned but also how excited everyone was when I did tell them. I remember the day it happened, having to go to hospital and being there for over 10 hours, being prodded and poked, and when the test came back positive and being hit by a bat of reality when the scan showed you were gone. I never got to see you or hear your heartbeat because you were only 10 weeks when I lost you. When I left the hospital I sat at home not really knowing what to do or how to feel. My partner, your Dad, was broken. I think we forget about them. Who do you feel it with? He already loved you, and you were gone, but he is a man and they have to be okay, right? They both had to be because you were not real. You did not count, according to others, stuck in your own ball of grief you are not ill, and you do not need to justify your sadness because by law it does not matter; you were not real. You were real to me. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, delegate. Thank you for sharing that with us. Mover of Motion 82, please?

SUPPORTING THOSE EXPERIENCING THE MENOPAUSE MOTION 82

82. SUPPORTING THOSE EXPERIENCING THE MENOPAUSE

This Congress notes that whilst there has been some progress after years of campaigning with GMB to bring this to the forefront there is still more to do.

The Women and Equalities Committee published their first Report in July 2022 on “Menopause and the Workplace” and made 13 recommendations which have been supported by the British Menopause Society (BMS).

Recommendation 4 aims to ensure lower cost HRT prescriptions are issued and dispensed have been partly accepted by the Government. A single cost annual charge could help Women living on a low income who might otherwise choose to prioritise other family members than themselves. Following the initiation of HRT in eligible persons requesting treatment an initial 3-month review is recommended.

Recommendation 5 commits to removing dual prescription charges for all women and the development of a National Formulary and this has been accepted in part. The BMS welcomed the appointment of the HRT Tsar and although it was clear the appointment was short term and has not been progressed further before Maddie McTernan returned to the Vaccine taskforce. Women using sequential HRT are financially disadvantaged at present and so a National Formulary would improve access to many more recently licensed products with unique potential benefits.

Recommendation 6 focuses on support in the Workplaces for those experiencing the Menopause which the Government accepts in principle. Much has been achieved already with more openness in communications, menopause forums, policies and staff clinics facilitated mostly by the NHS Employers.

Recommendation 7 the model Menopause Policy has not been accepted by the Government albeit much of this is already being achieved in recommendation 6. Since the inception of the Taskforce there have been many

changes made by a range of Employers to support experienced Women to remain a vital part of the workforce if they so wish.

Recommendation 8 suggests working with a large public sector employer with a public profile to develop a "Menopause Leave" policy" but this has not been agreed with the Government. Despite this many Employers are more flexible due to the current economic crisis making it less problematic for employees.

The Government has accepted recommendation 9 in support of flexible working and there are recommendations for Legal Reform.

Congress urges GMB to campaign to ensure:-

1. Recommendations 4 and 5 are implemented in their entirety.
2. The Model Menopause Policy is fully implemented by the current and any future Government
3. Recommendation 8 is campaigned and made a requirement in all workplaces
4. Recommendation 9 is implemented

E12 EAST DEREHAM BRANCH

London Region

(Carried)

MARY GOODSON (London): Congress, I am very pleased to be able to move this motion but it is a pity that in 2023 we have to be making the demands of this motion. Hopefully, a final stage in the chapter is taking women seriously. It has been a long struggle. We fought for the right to own our own property, votes for women, divorce law reform, abortion rights, rape in marriage is a crime, and equal pay. Yes, we can finally be able to talk about the "M" word and instead of the hushed tones about the time of the month we have now moved on to the proper support in schools and the removal of the tampon tax. We no longer think of a Les Dawson sketch about "the change". Yes, Congress, I am talking about the menopause. I know from my own experience how it affected and still is affecting me and my family. Much progress has been made on a cross-party basis in parliament but, as you see, there is still more to do.

Congress, our sister's self-organised group have produced a great model, Menopause and the Workplace. The recommendations listed in this motion from the report are a step forward and the region accepts the qualification but hopes that on recommendation the GMB presses the next Labour government to bring the campaign into the workplace. We need all these recommendations to be accepted and implemented without delay by government. This affects every woman at some stage. Congress, please support. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mary. A seconder?

CATHRINE JONES (London): In a woman's world it is like hell. It is just like hot flushes and swings. It can be totally -- I know what it is like working in a man's environment in distribution. It is bloody horrible. I know. We want to carry on campaigning in the workplace, highlighting the problems by the CEC and the women's equality report, and to start we need to look to the future. Forget the back. Let's move on. Campaigning includes pointing out, helping, and advising, and our members are all aware of these issues, and that females and males can have the menopause. I would just like to show you.

I have worked with our GMB sisters for 10 years, we did this, Menopause, and thanks to Lindsey it is in here about the menopause. I actually sat on all of this. Come on, as members let's make it help, make it a union to be recognised, and I would like to say I now work for John Lewis and I am so happy that they have a different way of working, and I actually from day one got my adjustments and did not have to wait eight years. I am severely dyslexic, I struggle, I have been totally -- it is a word I cannot get out, sorry, because of my dyslexia -- but like you said we hear stories, why do we have to keep hearing it, life should be better. Support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Cathy. Well done. Is there anyone that wishes to speak against any of those motions? No? In that case can I ask Elaine Daley from the CEC to respond, please.

ELAINE DALY (CEC): Responding to Motion 82, Supporting those Experiencing the Menopause on behalf of the CEC. Recommendations in the Women and Inequalities Report is a positive step forward for policy on the menopause. Work has been done recently on the Smash the Stigma, Menopause in the Workplace Campaign, but it is also recognised that there is still more to do.

On the report's recommendations four and five, whilst both recommendations do have merit and create importance to those experiencing the menopause they are outside of the scope of the workplace as it relates to GMB. The qualification is that we would require more time to investigate the model menopause policy and check its contents against GMB's current model policy, which can be found on the GMB website.

On recommendation eight, with the current Tory government in power we think it is very unlikely that they will move on this so suggest that we focus on bringing this campaign into the workplace. Current GMB training and model policy are in line with the notion that employers should be more flexible and their policy calls for any menopause leave to be excluded from any triggers.

On recommendation nine we will continue to hold the Government to account on the Flexible Working Bill. GMB is fully committed to improvements in access to flexible working and committed to holding employers to account and providing flexible working to all workers, including people going through the menopause. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Elaine. Does London Region accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Motion 77 the CEC is supporting. All those in favour please show? Thank you. Any against? That is carried.

Motion 77 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: Motion 80, the CEC is supporting. All those in favour please show? Thank you. Any against? That is carried.

Motion 80 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: Motion 82, London Region accepted the qualification. All those in favour please show? Thank you. Any against? That is also carried.

Motion 82 was CARRIED.

EMPLOYMENT POLICY: EQUALITY & INCLUSION

THE PRESIDENT: Can I ask the mover of Motion 85 to come to the rostrum, please, and then I think for the rest of it the speakers are already down there. That is great.

EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED EMPLOYEES

MOTION 85

85. EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED EMPLOYEES

This Congress calls on GMB to campaign to improve employment prospects for people who are visually impaired. To improve recruitment of this group and to improve retention and reasonable adjustments for those who develop impaired vision after they have been employed. The percentage of registered blind and partially sighted people who are employed is much lower than other disabilities showing the disproportionate discrimination that this group of people face. We call on GMB to campaign against this discrimination and encourage employers to be more inclusive and embrace diversity.

S01 SHERWOOD FOREST HOSPITALS BRANCH

Midlands Region

(Carried)

Helen Some (Midland): This Congress calls on GMB to campaign to improve employment prospects for people who are visually impaired. Recent research carried out by Birmingham University and the Royal National Institute of Blind People found that employment prospects for blind and partially sighted people have not improved in a generation. There are around 84,500 registered blind and partially sighted people of working age in the UK. Of these only 27% are in paid employment compared with 51% of disabled people and 75% of the general population. Only 40% of employers have stated that they are confident that their recruitment processes are accessible to blind or partially sighted people, and 90% of employers state that it would be difficult or impossible to employ a visually impaired person.

In 2021, Lord Blunkett, Vice President of the Vision Foundation Charity, urged UK employers to act to tackle the rising tide of unemployment for blind and partially sighted people stating that they are hidden victims of discrimination. Many employers have shown that they are unwilling to make reasonable adjustments to adapt work processes, to employ someone with visual impairment. This is despite the fact that they have a legal obligation to do this under the terms of the Equality Act and the fact that there are continuing improvements in technology and other support.

Blind and partially sighted people are able to carry out many of the jobs that sighted people do, if appropriate support is given. It is the attitude and mindset of employers that needs to change to remove the barriers to employment. The inspiration for this motion to Congress was a TV article about a blind farmer, called Mike Duxbury, having lost his sight at the age of six he was able to study to become an animal nutritionist. However, having applied for many consultancy jobs without being offered a single interview, he decided to create his own inclusive farm. He wanted to create a space which was fully accessible for people with disabilities to be able to do every job required. He has used his farm to inspire young people with disabilities to consider a career in farming stating that everybody should be dealt with on an equal footing, everybody should be given opportunity, and everybody should be given the chance to have hope.

Surely, this is what the Equality Act is about yet 13 years after its introduction blatant discrimination is still a problem. The Equality Act states that disability is one of the nine protected characteristics and to discriminate is prohibited, to make reasonable adjustments is a duty.

I call on GMB to campaign against the discrimination and encourage employers to be more inclusive and to give visually impaired people the hope of employment with fair opportunity free of discrimination. Please support this motion. I move. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Helen. Secunder?

NICOLA HOWELL (Midlands): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* £28bn per year is the estimated cost of sight loss in the UK and unemployment contributes hugely to those costs, more than for heart disease or cancer. However, many employers said that they are not willing to make adaptations to employ someone with visual impairments, despite the legal obligation to do so. With advancements in technology there are plenty of opportunities for workplaces to provide equipment such as video magnifiers or software such as Zoom Text. About 5,000 blind or partially sighted people used Access to Work last year, that is only 2% of all those who are eligible for that help. Better awareness is needed of what is available for visually impaired people and what reasonable adjustments are accessible for employers. This is why I support this motion and I call on Congress to support. I second. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Nicola. Can we have the mover of Motion 87, please?

DISABILITY PASSPORTS BEING PUT INTO LEGISLATION MOTION 87

87. DISABILITY PASSPORT PUT INTO LEGISLATION

This Congress we ask that you recognise that members with disabilities are all too often falling through the cracks in the workplace, where reasonable adjustments either aren't being put into place or get forgotten about due to a change in management, this needs to stop.

If we had the Disability passport in place as compulsory legislation then we could use this to ensure our member were given the correct support in the workplace by all employers not just those who chose to follow it. We shouldn't have to always explain and fight to get what is a basic right for our members. If we make this legislation this would greatly improve the massive turnover of employees with disabilities who are forced to leave their jobs by unscrupulous employers, as it would ensure they are getting what they need to stay in the workplace.

N39 DURHAM AND TEES HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE BRANCH North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region

(Lost)

JACKY KITCHEN (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): I know that the CEC have requested further information on this motion and we are keen to work together to

make sure that we get this issue right. Many of you will be wondering what a disability passport is and why it matters so much. To explain this I want to tell you about a GMB member who worked in a Call Centre in Sunderland. For this instance I will call her Sarah. Sarah has severe allergies including to citrus fruits, flowers, and deodorants. The allergy is so serious that not only does she carry an Epi-pen wherever she goes but she also has a defibrillator in the back of her car. When she started with the company they created a reasonable adjustment plan, which allowed her to work effectively but then a manager left and their plan disappeared with him. As a direct result of this, Sarah ended up in hospital on several occasions.

You would have thought that the company would have learnt their lesson but, no, that year they put a 20-foot real Christmas tree in the foyer of the office. They then had the cheek to say that because Sarah could not access her workplace she was not getting paid. Thankfully, the GMB stepped in at this point and sorted the situation out but this is just one example of what our members with disabilities are facing every day.

Going forward, if all staff that needed one had a disability passport it follows, then, as managers change or if they move jobs, people like Sarah would not fall through the gaps. It really would be as simple as replacing a new style to health questionnaire with a disability passport. Of course, it would always be the choice of the worker what and how they choose to disclose their disability to their employer. It is not about being compulsive, it is about giving the individual the power to choose and the employer the responsibility to make sure that they use that protected information to do the right thing and to demonstrate that they are committed to ending the stigma of disability at work. This would empower disabled workers. I urge you all to show support for this motion and close off situations like Sarah's making work safer for everyone. I move. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, colleague. Seconder?

SUE SOWERBY-SCOTT (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Branch Secretary D30 Durham & Teesside General Branch. Disability Passports, also known as a Disability Health or Workplace Adjustment Passport. It is a simple effective document which provides a framework for those with disabilities. Care sector workers who have long-term health conditions, or those who are new or diverse, that being suffering from ADHD, perhaps, or maybe dyslexia among others, changing jobs or managers, or line managers often means starting difficult conversations from scratch, sometimes having to re-negotiate a plan that has already been agreed. Can you imagine how frustrating this is for someone with a disability to constantly explain the situation which is out of their control.

The RCN (Royal College of Nursing) has successfully implemented a disability passport with fantastic results. It was inspired by a couple of members who had an almost revolving door of new managers. People often do not find it easy to speak about their own health conditions, especially those with a stigma attached, and therefore a disability passport would alleviate the constant discussions. To prevent the most vulnerable falling through the cracks this needs to be made into legislation. We need to be able to say to people, "If you have a condition, don't be afraid to declare it." I second this motion. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sue. Mover of 88?

BEREAVEMENT CHARTER MOTION 88

88. BEREAVEMENT CHARTER

This Congress notes that a parent of a child under the age of 18 dies every 22 minutes in the UK and upwards of 21,000 children lose a parent each year.

It is also noted that the circumstances and needs of those bereaved are very different and often unique to the individual person.

However, benefits such as bereavement payments and support given to those individuals at work, is especially unfair and unjust when the circumstances are that the parents are unmarried.

This union believes that there should be equity and fair treatment for all those bereaved, no matter what their circumstances or marital status. We as a union resolve to achieve this aim by creating and signing up to a Bereavement Charter, which will encourage and promote employers to also sign up too. With an aim to ensure the equality of treatment of all those bereaved and to take a full and fair account of individual circumstances.

L10 LEICESTERSHIRE BRANCH Midlands Region

(Referred)

NICOLA HOWELL (Midlands): It does not seem five minutes ago since I was a first-time speaker and I am now moving Motion 88. We call on the GMB to create a bereavement charter for workplaces to sign up and help employees through all grief-related issues. A parent of a child under 18 dies every 22 minutes in the UK. This equates to 22,000 people in the workplace suddenly having to support a family on their own. There is no statutory right for bereavement leave. When my long-term partner died I was seven months pregnant and unmarried. Until 9th February this year all unmarried widows were discriminated against with no access to bereavement payments, pensions, benefits, and I am not even legally classed as next of kin. Bereavement payments that came in to replace the

widow's pension allowance was for married parents only, and it only lasts for 18 months, not until the child reaches adulthood as per the previous support.

Over the last 12 years the WAY Foundation for widowed and young has successfully campaigned for a change in legislation. We call on delegates here to acknowledge this change but note it is for married parents only and does not include those widows without children. Unmarried partners continue to struggle; many find themselves homeless due to a lack of support. There is a long way to go to create a fair system.

When my partner died, my workplace initiated their bereavement policy, two days' leave, which they considered equal and fair. That month other staff had accessed that policy for loss of an uncle, a grandmother, a sister, a parent, no loss is more tragic than the other. One manager even used it after their pet dog died. I know the heartache of losing a pet, I do not have a problem with someone using this leave to come to terms with it, however, what my employer was saying to me in that moment was that my manager's dog was as important and equal to the father of my unborn child. With those two days' leave I had to arrange a funeral, inform the banks, utility companies, rearrange a mortgage, sort out probate, deal with courts, the list was endless and took many months of heartbreaking administration, all whilst trying to grieve, work, and become a good mother: two days bereavement leave. At a time when you still have not even comprehended what has happened, you are expected to return to work and continue as normal.

This is just one example of unjust bereavement leave and you have already heard our colleagues in London Region about the injustice following pregnancy loss. This union has set great precedent in supportive charters and toolkits, building on the success of these GMB could become trailblazers creating a bereavement charter providing understanding of the unique requirements of all bereaved workers. Employers need our guidance to enable a fair and equitable support system for our members. Let us not let down our widows and widowers, our bereaved brothers and sisters at their time of need. Let us show them we are serious about understanding their needs. Let us create a bereavement charter to assist all. We call upon you all to support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Nicola. Seconder?

DAWID MAKUCH (Midlands): Congress, losing a loved one is the biggest tragedy that one can face. It is tragedy that no one – let me say that again, no one – is prepared for. It is our duty as a union to support our brothers and sisters facing those difficult times. Let me tell you something, I come from a workplace where we have so-called good bereavement policy but my employers have a question

for the widows, they are asking for death certificates, they are questioning the dates that my members need to use their leave. It is just not right. We are not starting from scratch. In 2023 we have a good example from how to be supportive but do we need it? Every one of us here at Congress knows exactly that people who grieve should be treated with compassion, should be treated with empathy, and should be treated with kindness. We all here know that their wishes, choices, and beliefs, should be listened to, should be considered, and should be respected by all.

This Congress must recognise that grief, bereavement, and death, are a natural part of life. We have to take an open culture which is supportive of people who grieve. We must create a culture where accessing support is seen as a right and we need to, and should, ensure equal bereavement support is accessible for everyone. Therefore, I am supporting my colleague's motion to sign the bereavement charter. Thank you. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dawid. Can we have the mover of Motion 267, please?

NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENTS

MOTION 267

267. NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENTS

Conference commends the GMB for the production of the Monaghan report, the work of the Taskforce for Positive Change and for acknowledging the serious issue of sexual harassment and sexual assault both within and outside our union.

Despite a rise in global consciousness of the scale and impact of sexual harassment across many industrial sectors since 2017, the frequent use of Non-Disclosure Agreements continues to undermine real structural progress to eradicating sexual violence as well as other forms of bullying, discrimination and harassment. GMB Policy notes that non-disclosure agreements, have been inappropriately used in many circumstances, including to cover up sexual abuse and harassment.

During the cost-of-living crisis and wide-ranging cuts to public services, money is clearly still being spent to cover up harmful behaviours rather than improving workers' pay and conditions. Indeed, work by GMB London region found that Newham council spent over £2.8 million of taxpayer's money on NDAs.

Conference calls upon the GMB to Lobby and campaign for a ban on use of NDAs by employers in incidents of sexual harassment or discrimination.

NATIONAL EQUALITIES CONFERENCE

(Carried)

HAILEY MAXWELL (GMB Scotland) moving 267 on behalf of the National Equality Conference, she said: A non-disclosure agreement, or an NDA, is a signed legal document that restricts the sharing of information. Use of NDAs originally

designed to protect commercially sensitive information has been widely abused. Workers are being asked to sign NDAs when making formal complaints about discrimination, harassment, equal pay, as well as during whistle-blowing. These agreements sometimes called “settlement agreements” are different from simply requiring confidentiality during complaints or a grievance process. NDAs will silence the worker indefinitely. If the worker speaks out about a process or an outcome after signing an NDA, then legal action can be taken against them. An NDA has no time limits and is intended to bind the parties to stay silent for ever.

We are now well aware of the scale and impact that sexual harassment has across many industrial sectors and many reps here all know that the frequent use of Non-Disclosure Agreements undermines real structural progress eradicating sexual violence and other forms of bullying, discrimination, and harassment. Where existing GMB policy recognises the inappropriate use of NDAs in sexual harassment cases across workplaces, as part of the national women’s group I feel this is an issue we should be proactively campaigning on. These practices need to be banned. NDAs often make the harm of harassment or discrimination worse, those who have been harassed or discriminated against find themselves totally isolated, legally silenced, and unable to get support from colleagues, friends, family, or even counsellors, about what happened.

I have worked for seven years supporting survivors of rape and sexual abuse. I know the harm that is caused to survivors of sexual violence when they are unable to speak. Abuse thrives on violence, whether it happens in childhood, in adult relationships, or in the workplace and this violence allows perpetrators to continue to cause harm where the survivors are steeped in fear and shame. It is unacceptable that employers feel able to bully and coerce workers who have experienced serious negative mental health impacts into selling their silence, just to avoid discomfort or to preserve the reputation of an organisation.

Despite wide-ranging cuts to public services money is still being spent on NDAs. GMB London Region find out that Newham Council spent over £2.8m of taxpayers’ money on NDAs. They are used in workplaces across the country to cover up abuse and to allow employers to pass on abusers to become someone else’s problem. Work has been done through campaigning to ban the use of them in universities, but we need to root out this abhorrent and shameful practice from every single sector. This motion calls upon the CEC to lobby and campaign for a ban on use of NDAs by employers in instances of sexual harassment and discrimination and to report back to Congress next year. Congress, I move. Please support this motion and end this despicable use of Non-Disclosure Agreements. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Hailey. Secunder?

TARANJIT CHANA (London): Seconding on behalf of the National Equality Forum Motion 267 Non-Disclosure Agreements. Congress, Non-Disclosure Agreements in cases of sexual harassment or discrimination, are misogynistic, sexist, racist in their very nature. These Non-Disclosure Agreements protect the rapist, the perpetrators of sexual harassment, and the organisations who are enablers for this conduct to continue within the workplace. The silencing of someone who has been subjected to sexual harassment is not only an exertion of the control over the survivor and victim but reinforces the power dynamics which exist in a patriarchal society.

Congress, institutional racism, endemic bullying, misogyny, sexual harassment, is found in many workplaces and society. To eradicate sexual harassment both in the workplace and in society includes a ban on Non-Disclosure Agreements by employers in sexual harassment and discrimination cases. These NDAs (Non-Disclosure Agreements) should never be used to silence victims or prevent the enforcement of criminal law. The onus of preventing a sexual harassment culture should not be on a survivor or victim but on the employers and regulators. This motion, Congress, extends existing policy. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Taranjit. Can I now ask for Samanta Zubrute to respond on 85, 87, and 88, please, and could the movers and seconders of 89, 90 and 93 please come to the front ?

SAMANTA ZUBRUTE (CEC): Good afternoon, Congress. Responding to Motions 85, 87, and 88 on behalf of the CEC. First of all, Motion 85, Employment Rights and Visually Impaired Employees the CEC is supporting with a qualification, that it may not be possible to prioritise producing a specific high quality impact campaign focusing on visually impaired work is concerned. However, concerns for visually impaired members continue to be the key to GMB across impairment campaigning for disabled workers, including unreasonable adjustments passport.

Secondly, on Motion 87 disability passports put into legislation, the CEC is asking for the motion to be withdrawn. We thank the branches for engaging with the GMB and TUC for Reasonable Adjustment Passport Campaign recognising this powerful tool for workers to ensure their rights in the workplace are upheld. However, we are not confident that calling on the Government to legislate for compulsory use of passport is the best route to securing reasonable adjustment for disabled workers at the moment. There is a real risk that the current right-wing Tory government would use this to implement a version of the passport which does not endorse the social model of stability, does not empower disabled

people and may instead force them into a process which may not work for them. We encourage regions and branches to continue to campaign for employers to give disabled workers the option to use the passport to secure the adjustment.

Finally, the CEC is asking for Motion 88, Bereavement Charter, to be referred. The CEC agrees with the principles set out in the motion but we will need further to consider how to actually call for what can be incorporated into GMB's campaigning industry award. The motion raises both inequality, entitlement to a bereavement benefit and the need for better workplace policies on bereavement leave. This therefore requires careful consideration of what action the union can take industrially and politically. This should take into account the recent changes to the law on bereavement support payments and where GMB representative have secured better workplace conditions in this area. A charter will provide a useful general policy but is not the only way GMB can achieve fair treatment for our members in bereavement and should not undermine where better policies have been negotiated by our representatives at work.

Therefore, the CEC is asking Congress to support Motion 85 with the qualification set out, Motion 87 to be withdrawn, and for Motion 88 to be referred back. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you Samantha. Does the Midlands agree with the qualification for 85? (*Agreed*) All those in favour please show? Any against? That is carried.

Motion 85 was CARRIED.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Does Midlands agree 88 to be referred? (*Agreed*)

Motion 88 was REFERRED.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Motion 267 is already supported. All those in favour please show? Any against? That is carried.

Motion 267 was CARRIED.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Does North East, Yorkshire & Humberside agree to withdraw Motion 87? No? Right, they disagree to withdraw 87, so the CEC is asking you to oppose that motion. All those in favour please show? All those against please show? That is lost.

Motion 87 was LOST.

EMPLOYMENT POLICY: HEALTH, SAFETY & ENVIRONMENT

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much for that. Can I now call Motion 89 to the rostrum, please?

ANTI-BULLYING

MOTION 89

89. ANTI-BULLYING

This Congress condemns bullying behavior in the workplace which has been recognised as the most common form of misconduct in the UK, with over a quarter (26%)[i] of office workers having experienced this at some point in their career.

Bullying has a detrimental affect not only on the individual but also the organisation the individual works for and society as a whole. Bullying in the workplace can lead to increased stress, can impact on an individual's mental health, lead to workplace absences, legal proceedings, financial settlements and reputational damage for organisations. It is estimated misconduct, including bullying costs the UK economy approximately £1.2 billion[ii] in unproductive hours annually.

A recent report into workplace misconduct highlighted the additional risk for public administration/government organisations. This risk is due to their size, fear of reputational damage if exposed and a lack of adequate procedures. The most recent national data comes from an FOI request made in 2019 to 152 councils, showing formal grievances involving bullying and harassment by council staff have increased by 7.5%[iii]. A lack of trust in procedures, victimisation and protection from personal harm were issues highlighted as a significant barrier to reporting bullying, with over a third of UK office workers interviewed stating that they believed their employers would brush aside workplace misconduct if it was likely to impact profits or reputation[iv].

We believe that everyone in an organisation should be treated with dignity and respect and that it is the duty of the organisation to nurture a 'Speak Up' culture, understanding that employees must have the confidence to report bullying confidently. Whilst bullying as well as accusations of bullying cannot be eliminated altogether, we can ensure our policies, processes and procedures are an example of best practice, creating a zerotolerance culture to bullying throughout our organisations.

This Congress resolves:

- To set out a Zero Tolerance Anti Bullying strategy and issue a joint approach with the branches representing staff.
- To ask branches to work with the leadership and management across our recognised workplaces to ensure all their staff know how to report bullying including having access to an internal confidential anti-bullying hot line.
- To direct employers to institute antibullying training for their senior staff and line managers.
- To regularly review anti-bullying policies with Trade Unions input to ensure the highest standards are maintained.
- To ensure that all avenues are available to bullied staff in workplaces. This would include a grievance, mediation, Occupational Health, trade Unions, ACAS and HR.
- For GMB to create resources to support branches with anti-bullying campaigns.

Sources:

(i) (ii) (iv) THE TRUST GAP A vault platform report: "Expectation vs Reality in Workplace Misconduct & Speak Up Culture" (Vaultplatform.com) <https://f.hubspotusercontent20.net/hubfs/4979575/Whitepapers/The%20Trust%20Gap%20Report.pdf>

(iii) Local Government Chronicle: "Bullying & Harassment on the Rise"
<https://www.lgcplus.com/research/exclusivebullying-and-harassment-on-the-rise-14-02-2019/>

P17 PLAISTOW BRANCH

London Region

(Carried)

SHARON WALDRON (London): Plato said: "Be kind. For everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle..." so I think you have guessed that I do like a quote. Did you know that there are often three major groups involved in bullying behaviour: those who are bullied, those who display that bullying behaviour, and those who stand by and watch other people being bullied and do nothing. Congress, I have a question: how many of you have been bullied, how many of you have stood by and watched someone else being bullied, and there is a third question but I really do not want to ask it, I do not think there are any bullies in here so I will not.

To help you consider my question I am going to give you some examples of what bullying behaviour is, spreading malicious rumours, unfair treatment, picking on regularly or undermining someone, and denying someone training and promotion. This can happen face-to-face, via emails, or letters, by telephone, and as we all know these days by social media. Some of the effects of bullying are feeling disconnected from work and not wanting even to attend, lower outcomes in your work, being subject to things like procedures, feeling vulnerable, avoiding conflicts, becoming socially withdrawn, having low self-esteem, becoming depressed, anxious, and socially withdrawn, feeling suspicious of others, not being able to sleep and having nightmares, and in extreme cases having a high risk of self-harm and/or suicide.

To illustrate this I am going to tell you about a member who I shall call member A. Member A, obviously a GMB member, is a well liked and respected manager working for Newham, someone I could work with. I always won cases when it was one of his staff members because he was a fair manager and always understood the reasoning behind my argument. Unfortunately for him, he had a head of service who was a bully, was a notorious bully and had a reputation for being a horrible man.

Member A, unfortunately lost both his parents in quite a short amount of time and was really struggling to deal with his grief and needed to take some time off, and his bullying manager decided he was going to give him a hard time, he was not going to allow him to take time off, was not going to understand that this man was grieving and needed support from his manager. So, fast forward, his head of service started to exclude him from meetings and scrutinised his work. This made him really stressed and in turn it affected his personal life, he started arguing with his wife, having problems at home with his children. He was a devout Muslim, did not drink, very religious man but, unfortunately, due to the stress he was under he started drinking and became quite an alcoholic. In the process eventually he had a mental breakdown and was asked to leave the marital home. Meanwhile, his head of service showed no compassion at all, continued his campaign of bullying and employed policies against him and used staff members also to attack him. Congress, he was destroyed by bullying and he was eventually sectioned and detained under the Mental Health Act, and I am happy to tell you he survived that ordeal.

Now, I know that most of you are reps in here and you go after bullies, that is what you do every day, but I am going to ask you, all of you in here, to have a commitment, to meet this commitment, and to go out there and ensure that you are not the person standing by when someone is being bullied, go out there and ensure that you are fighting all the time, no matter where you are against bullies. I ask you to support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sharon. Secunder?

SHAH RAHMEN (London): Hi once again, President, and Congress. Second-time speaker now. I myself have faced bullying in the workplace. I did not realise it at first. After 16 years of service I realised that my manager wanted me out of the organisation. I was broken, I was hurt, and I blamed myself. I lost all confidence. However, looking back I should have fought it more than what I did. I escalated it to senior management and I soon realised that they all stick together and quickly get HR on their side. My complaint was duly brushed under the carpet quickly enough as it is the culture, and it needs to stop. We need to show these organisations that they cannot get away with this. We need our members to speak up and encourage them to speak up. We need the GMB support to hold the managers to account and do more for our members. We need to provide support and counselling, work with HR to resolve issues and mediation, and make sure that fair processes are being followed during the restructure. I second. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Mover of Motion 90?

NHS CALL HANDLERS

MOTION 90

90. PROTECTION OF HEARING FOR NHS CALL HANDLERS

This Congress notes that working in NHS Call Centres is tedious. There is relentless inflow of calls due to which call handlers take back-to-back calls.

Apart from high call volume, Call Handlers face emotional situations and stress when they listen to the frustration of the patients/callers complaining about not receiving the 111 clinician's call-backs on time or the ambulances being delayed.

Due to the constant receiving of calls, noise within the call centre and the noise at the background of the caller, there is a potential risk that the hearing of the call handler can be impaired.

We are therefore asking for all NHS Employers to include hearing tests in their health surveillance or risk assessment for the call centre employees. The hearing test must be reviewed on regular basis and referred to the specialist if medical intervention required. We are also asking that the employer pays towards regular hearing tests in the same manner as eye tests for all affected employees.

Employees are entitled to the above under Regulation 9 of 'The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005'. This is in addition to the Regulation 6: The Elimination or Control of exposure to noise at the Workplace and Regulation 7: Hearing Protection which requires an employer, who carries out work which is likely to expose any employees to noise at or above a lower exposure action value, to make personal hearing protectors available upon request to an employee who is to be exposed.

We also call for GMB to look at producing health and safety specific guidance for other workers whose job involves a large percentage of call handling.

L55 LONDON AMBULANCE SERVICE NHS TRUST BRANCH

London Region

(Carried)

VICKY HOOD (London): This motion was submitted by the L55 London Ambulance Service NHS Trust, so the reason I speak to that, it is provided to me by them. GMB London Region members operate the NHS 111 call centres which are very busy workplaces. These call centre handlers receive relentless calls from patients with various ailments, sometimes even urgent and need emergency attention, and this rises during the winter months. The number of calls has increased as more people struggle to get GP appointments and are told either to go to the A&E or call 111. On top of this is a staffing shortage in the NHS of emergency call handlers as government targets to reach this number has failed.

To set the scene, at the 111 call centre there are many handlers next to each other talking on the phone at the same time so all call handlers face the background noise from those around them. They also have to zone into the call with the background noise from the caller and the people around them, and traffic noise if

the caller is outdoors. Also, callers are often distressed or angry if they have been kept waiting. All this noise pollution means the call handler putting in extra effort and straining to hear the symptoms which the triage patient has. Missing out any important symptoms may jeopardise patient safety and lead to incorrect advice being given.

NHS 111 staff are offered the provision of regular eye tests. However, there is no provision of regular hearing tests. They are only offered as occupational health measures, so that could be too little too late. I am sure you will appreciate that excessive loads in the sense of hearing can be detrimental to the staff and may lead to permanent or partial hearing impairment. We are asking that the employers also provide regular and free hearing tests so that anything in loss can be identified and remedied at an early stage.

Just to add as well, I was trying to do some research so that I could add to the speech but there is actually very little data on the prevalence of hearing impairment in call centre workers so we have to rely on the evidence given by our members and mandatory regular testing with the interventions for preventative measures, and reasonable adjustments be put in place, but also give us the ability to collect that data and hold employers accountable for health and safety failures because no worker should have to sacrifice their health for their job. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Vicky. Secunder?

ADRIAN STOHR (London): The mover has explained the stressful and pressurised environment our members are working in. To add to this all calls are monitored and after each call ends there is a 15-second wrap up time before another call comes through on the headset. Management say those 15 seconds is enough to provide staff with a quick breather in between calls but in reality it is taken up with closing screens and current case finishing, and writing up notes from the call. Can you catch your breath in 15 seconds? Congress, our members used to have just five seconds between calls but staff complained and this was increased last October. Staff are also instructed to take comfort breaks for getting a drink or going to the toilet no longer than five minutes. The comfort break is also used to check our personal mobiles.

Congress, this is giving you a glimpse of members working at NHS call centres but our members also work on other stressful helplines and call centres. Our motion is asking GMB to campaign to protect our call centre members or others whose jobs involve a large portion of call handling and tasks for targeted health and safety specific guidance. Please support. I second this motion. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Adrian. The mover of 93?

**DUTY OF CARE – MENTAL HEALTH
MOTION 93**

93. DUTY OR CARE- MENTAL HEALTH

This Congress calls on GMB to support and promote extensive research into work related stress and poor mental health leading to depression and possibly suicide, with a view to being able to hold management to account when their processes lead to such failings. Congress will be aware that despite the link between workplace stress and suicidal feelings there are no known cases in the UK where an employer has been prosecuted after a worker has taken their own life because of the pressure they were under at work. We would call for the scope of duty of care in Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to specifically include sections on mental health, depression, and suicide.

S15 SMART ENERGY BRANCH

North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region

(Carried)

JAMIE UTTLEY (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* The GMB can have a role to play in helping to prevent suicides and supporting those who have suicidal thoughts. There can be few more sadder issues that a union representative has to deal with than the suicide of a fellow worker. The TUC thankfully state that this is something that most union representatives will never encounter but in mine it has become the norm to know or know someone in my job who has tragically taken their life. In our branch alone we have had one such tragedy and only by luck just avoided one more.

We need to start giving data and statistics, for example, what is the largest cause of death whilst within a certain job role, is it suicide. Employers need to start working around suicide as a stand alone piece of work and businesses need to acknowledge the detrimental effect changes have and address them. There has to be consequences for worsening the mental health of the people that sell you their 40 hours of labour a week. If you have to save lives and fight back against suicide and the changes that contribute to it, we must always reflect on the importance of empowerment. Unions should support and educate and promote inclusion and they should be permitted to intervene when work pressures overwhelm its members. Congress, I urge you to support this motion. I move.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jamie. Seconder?

PAUL HARGATE (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Thank you. Work-related stress is not an illness, it is a state. With tradesmen under the age of 50 suicide is sadly the highest cause of death in my demographic. How is it that an employer can create an environment where over 50% of sickness is work related stress and that continues to be unchecked even, even, when an employee sadly commit suicide. It seems employers these days believe they can satisfy their obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act by doing as little as possible, giving workers access to novelty phone apps, relying on unpaid and often poorly trained voluntary mental health first-aiders, or a host of other ways to help you cope with your poor mental health done on the cheap even though the actual cause of poor mental health is due to the company's working practices and the behaviours of management.

This motion is calling on GMB to put pressure on the Government to include a specific reference to the care of an employee's mental health whilst at work, in the same way it faces duties around physical health. Those changes will only come into place if health and safety reps have the legislation to back them up. Until then the workers will continue to endure discrimination, inequality, excessive workloads, low job control, and job security. So, let's end the era of mental health being only a tick box exercise for employers. Please support our motion. Congress, I second. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Paul. Can I now call on Gwylan Brinkworth to give the response for the CEC?

GWYLAN BRINKWORTH (CEC): Congress, speaking on behalf of the CEC on Motion 89, 90 and 93, which we are supporting with a qualification.

First, Motion 89, Anti-bullying, the qualification is simply to say for clarity that the action called for in the first five bullet points of the motion are for employers to implement, not for the GMB to provide directly to members.

Secondly, on Motion 90, protection of the hearing of NHS call handlers, the qualification is that campaigning and guidance would be directed at all call centre workplaces rather than being restricted solely to the NHS.

Finally, on Motion 93, Duty of Care – Mental Health, the two qualifications are, first, that the CEC believes that work related mental ill health, depression, and suicide, are already within the scope of section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Our policy for this is that these issues should be explicitly addressed by the enactment of a new Mental Health at Work Act and, second, the GMB is not in a position to commission primary research into work-related stress and mental ill

health. We are, however, connected to networks of academics, such as Prof. Sara Walters of the University of Leeds and Herbert Palmer of the UK Hazards Network, and we would simply seek to amplify the research that such experts produce.

Thank you, Congress. Please support these motions with the qualifications I have outlined. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gwylan. Does the London Region agree with the qualification for 89? (*Agreed*) Thank you. All those in favour please show? Any against? That is carried.

Motion 89 was CARRIED.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Does London agree with the qualification for 90? (*Agreed*) Thank you. All those in favour please show? Any against? That is carried.

Motion 90 was CARRIED.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Does the NE, Yorkshire & Humberside agree with the qualification for 93? Yes? (*Agreed*) Thank you. All those in favour please show? Thank you. Any against? That is carried.

Motion 93 was CARRIED.

C15 CUMBRIA PUBLIC SERVICES BRANCH EQUAL PAY CAMPAIGN

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Malcolm. That leads us on to section 6, where I would like to invite up to the stage Joanne Wear and James Keith from the C15 Cumbria Public Services Branch in North West & Irish Region to speak about their Equal Value Campaign, and just to remind the movers and seconders of 103 and 105 we have put them on the agenda this afternoon.

JAMES KEITH (North West & Irish): President, Vice President, good afternoon, Congress. I am James Keith from the North West & Irish Region C15 Cumbria Public Services.

WEAR, JOANNE (North West & Irish): Madam President, Vice President, Congress, I am Jo Wear and from the North West & Irish Region and also from the C15 Cumbria Public Service Branch. (*Applause*)

JAMES KEITH: We are here today to talk about the Equal Value Campaign that we have been running in Cumbria. This includes where we have been in the past as a

branch but due to recent events this is more about the pay and treatment of women working within the care sector in Cumbria. There will be a short video towards the end of our speech.

Basically, we have come from having a branch secretary plus one convenor to having the same branch secretary today plus six convenors and are now the largest local government union branch in Cumbria. (*Applause*) As a branch we have to do a lot of work taking a look at what we were doing and how we could do things better and we made some changes, and we made some improvements. I could go into detail about what we did but we have a fringe event on Wednesday so we do not want to spoil it.

However, one of the main reasons for the recent increases in recruitment and retention has come from the work we have done on re-grades, or job valuation, and being successful on most of these. The reason we do these is because it is relatively quick to complete and it increases pay for our members, which in the public sector has fallen in real terms, except for the care worker re-grades, which were refused.

JOANNE WEAR: In 2009, after our branch lodged one of the first equal pay claims in this country, our care staff were compensated several thousands of pounds in back pay, some of them got tens of thousands of pounds, yet today, 14 years later, we are in the crazy situation where the female staff are paid up to 10 grades less than men in equivalent roles in Cumbria.

JAMES KEITH: To add a bit more context, after the pay claims were sorted out the comparators were outsourced and then they came back in-house but they have had their pay increased and this has caused the same situation all over again. In Cumbria most of the staff in the care sector are female, which is reflective of the national picture. However, many councils have outsourced their care responsibilities to private companies but in Cumbria they have not, which makes our claims possible. With the support of our General Secretary, the Women's Campaign Unit, and our region, North West & Irish (*Cheers*) we are saying that women must never be paid less than men for equal work. (*Applause*) Because of this, we are taking equal value claims in Cumbria once again. It was not right back in the 2000s and it certainly is not right in 2023. (*Applause*)

JOANNE WEAR: Anybody with a relative in care knows that carers help our frail family with washing, dressing, eating. They help our frail relatives to get up in the morning and help them to go to bed at night. Our domestic staff, the cleaners, that work in the care homes have had to endure horrific situations during Covid. To give you an example, in one of our care homes in Cumbria nine residents died.

The family members could not go into that care home and it was the cleaners, the domestics, that had to go into the bedrooms, strip the rooms of all the personal belongings, strip the beds and then do a really thorough deep clean of that bedroom. As you can imagine, this was really upsetting. Those residents were like family members, to the cleaners, to the care workers, to everybody in that care home, and all the while we were doing this without proper PPE.

JAMES KEITH: So, how do you think our domestic staff got paid during that time? Maybe you think they got a bonus for going above and beyond, maybe you think they got double time, time-and-a-half: nothing, they got nothing extra. In fact, they were the lowest paid in Cumbria with the council back then and they are still the lowest paid now. We are fighting to change that.

JOANNE WEAR: The care workers, the domestics, the cooks, gave our communities and families so much but they are valued so little.

JAMES KEITH: They give elderly relatives the glimmer of a normal life with respect, dignity, and compassion, yet our councils continue to value them less than men. When our elderly relatives fall down our carers are there to pick them up, to sit with them, to give them time so they do not feel alone and afraid.

JOANNE WEAR: This is a national shame and it must not continue. These are the same staff who worked throughout Covid, without proper PPE, putting their own lives in safety at risk as well as that of their families. They saw service users who had become friends and like family to them sadly pass away, and they became very unwell. They had to deep clean those rooms and they are still having to do that now. Care homes still go into lockdown. The world might have moved on but Covid in the care sector has not.

JAMES KEITH: For those in Cumbria the situation could not be clearer, a support worker in a care home is paid £11.38 per hour. If the shift cannot be covered then they bring in agency workers and that means £25 per hour. Now, I am not taking aim at agency workers, everyone needs to earn a living. This is about what an employer is willing to pay for and what they are not willing to pay for. I had an example given to me that a four-hour shift needed covering of an evening and no one would cover it so the care home had to get an agency worker in on £25 an hour but they had to pay for a 12-hour shift so that would have cost £60 in-house and it ended up costing at least £300 because I am not including the travel expenses that would have been paid to the agency worker, and I am not including the agency cut that would have been paid on top of the hours.

JOANNE WEAR: So, the work that our support workers do is hard and the pay they receive is not giving them a square deal. Our fight in Cumbria is not about bringing the pay of male workers down, it is about bringing up the poverty pay of women and valuing those female staff properly.

JAMES KEITH: We have a short video to show Congress. Unfortunately, our members could not go on the video due to the risk to their employment so we have included some anonymised comments sent in from our members. These have been taken from a WhatsApp group that was set up as part of the campaign.

Video played to Congress.

JOANNE WEAR: GMB will fight to get our carers, cooks, and domestics, the dignity and respect they deserve. Paying our female staff equal to male roles is just the beginning.

JAMES KEITH: To the council in Cumbria, we really hope you are tuned in to see this and take note. Congress, thanks for your time and, please, if any of what we have said today has interested you, please come along to our fringe event on Wednesday. Congress, together we make work better.

JOANNE WARE: Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Joanne and James, thank you so much for sharing that insight into the amazing work your branch is doing and I am sure it inspires other branches to think about what they can do and we wish you every success in your campaign and look forward to hearing when you have won, because you will win.
(*Applause*)

Can I now ask the movers and seconders of Motions 119, 120, 121, to come to the front and also 103, 105, as I said that have been deferred from this morning, and while they are coming down can I do a reminder that Wilco and Asda delegates, about the meeting with Angela Rayner tonight at 5.00, there is a photo call at the front of the centre with Gary and Angela followed by a meeting with Angela in Syndicate Room 2, and I will try and give a reminder to you about 10 to 5 so that you do not forget. The mover of 119 is ready to come to the rostrum, please?

EMPLOYMENT POLICY: RIGHTS AT WORK

TWO-TIER TERMS AND CONDITIONS IN THE WORKPLACE MOTION 119

119. TWO-TIER TERMS AND CONDITIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

This Congress calls on GMB to influence the Labour Party with a view to extending their existing two-tier workplace rules (for the public sector) to include previously nationalised industries. This policy should also be extended to include pension provisions along with terms & conditions already included.

Colleagues, in the gas industry there are companies who openly employ our members on different contracts depending on their start dates. We know of examples where a gang or team has members on different rates of pay, different hours of work, different holidays, different shift payments and different company pensions all doing the same job. This is a form of discrimination, which would be illegal if administered under terms of race or gender rather than simply a start date. This can cause resentment within teams and in many cases, inhibits recruitment. In the longer term this is an erosion of pay, and terms and conditions, as mostly the better paid with better T&C's are the longer serving members who once retired will leave a poorer workforce. Unfortunately, we have to accept that in some cases these conditions were agreed by GMB in order to protect existing members. We must stop any such future negotiations taking place and lobby the Labour Party to implement policies to outlaw such practises wherever possible.

L34 NW GAS BRANCH
North West & Irish Region

(Carried)

JASON SMITH (North West & Irish): First-time delegate, first-time speaker.
(Applause) This Congress calls on GMB to influence the Labour Party with a view to extending their existing two-tier workplace rules, currently employees for the public sector, to include previously nationalised industries. This policy should also be extended to include pension provisions, along with terms and conditions already included.

Colleagues, in the gas industry there are companies who openly employ our members on different contracts depending on their start date. We know of examples when even a small gang or team has members on different rates of pay, different hours of work, different holidays, different shift payments, and different company pensions, all doing the same job. This is a form of discrimination which would be illegal if administered under terms of race, or gender, rather than simply a start date. This can cause resentment within teams and in many cases inhibits recruitment. In the longer term this is an erosion of pay and of terms and conditions as mostly the better paid with better terms and conditions are the longer serving members who, once retired, will leave a poorer workforce.

This motion should in no way erode the existing negotiated conditions of our legacy members but bring our new members in line with those improved terms

and conditions. Unfortunately, we have to accept that in some cases these conditions were agreed by GMB in order to protect existing members. We must stop any such future negotiations taking place and lobby the Labour Party to implement policies to outlaw such practices wherever possible. We note that the CEC has added a qualification to our motion which we fully support and agree with the qualification. Please support Motion 119. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Thank you. Then the seconder? Or are you seconding it formally, North West & Irish Region? Formally. Thank you.

Motion 119 was formally seconded.

THE PRESIDENT: Can I have the mover then of Motion 120?

EROSION OF EMPLOYEES' TERMS AND CONDITIONS MOTION 120

120. EROSION OF EMPLOYEES' TERMS & CONDITIONS

This Congress calls on the CEC to campaign to stop the erosion of employees' Terms & Conditions.

The erosion of Terms & Conditions is affecting employees across the UK. To change the employers' attitude/direction will require the GMB to engage with Government and Ministers. As at this point in time the continual erosion of employees' terms and conditions by both Private and Public companies across the UK is undermining productivity due to employees feeling undervalued and disrespected.

This appears to be driven by an increased drive for profit and greed across all sectors within the UK.

This ultimately will be a long-term goal due to the current attitude within Government and companies.

B40 BNFL BRANCH

North West & Irish Region

(Carried)

ANDREW DOWNEY (North West & Irish): First time at Congress, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Congress, we call on the CEC to campaign to stop the erosion of T&Cs of employees, the change of attitude of employers across the UK by working with an incoming Labour government. Erosion of T&Cs affects employees across the UK regularly. We hear from employees that their number one assets are their employees. However, we also consistently see that the number one assets that they are first talking about in line with our terms and conditions are changed at the drop of a hat. Why, because they are deemed too expensive. Why, because on a regular basis when they see the shift patterns, annual holidays, overtime rates, they decide that they are too expensive to keep up so what do they want to

do, they want to turn round and erode them, they want to turn round and cut them back. Why would they want to do that, because the almighty profit and costs raises its head, profits that they do not want to share with the workforce but it seems cheaper to take away the benefits from the workforce and pay the savings to the shareholders instead. This is driven by an increased desire to drive profit and greed across all sectors within the UK. Thank you, Congress. We ask the CEC to support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Can I have a seconder, please? Is that formally as well? Formally. Thank you.

Motion 120 was formally seconded.

THE PRESIDENT: Can I have the mover for Motion 121, please? 121? 121? Southern Region?

RIGHT TO REST

MOTION 121

121. RIGHT TO REST

This Congress proposes a motion that gives further protection for our members to have the right to rest. GMB members in the United Kingdom work long hours and often covering a variety of shift patterns including weekend and night working. Members are regularly contacted outside of normal working hours and in some instances are told to respond, check emails even when they are on holiday outside of the United Kingdom.

Members should be able to feel that their work is finished for that day or week and should be looking forward to a well-deserved holiday and not feel pressured into undertaking work during a period of rest.

L16 GREENWICH BRANCH

Southern Region

(Carried)

MARZENA ZBOROWSKA HUGGETT (Southern Region): Congress, I meant to second this motion but I am going to move it. Congress recognises that workers have rights to rest. We work long hours, we come home, have shower, have dinner, spend some time with family, and then what we do, we open our emails and once we open them we may respond to them as well. The weekend is coming, Friday, 4.55, we are about to go home and all of a sudden, ping, we get the email from the manager with a super important task that has to be done by Monday morning, and a note, "Have a lovely weekend." Exciting times, you are going for well deserved holidays, but before you go your manager will pressure you to make sure you still respond to emails and join some meeting. So you end up working in the time you should rest and have a break from work, "Enjoy your

holiday.” Brilliant. None of the workers should work during their rest time. We all deserve the rest time. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Marzena, thank you. Does that mean you are seconding? Okay. She has moved and you have to second so you have less time, remember.

EARL JACKSON (Southern): Madam President, you caught me completely by surprise. First-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Colleagues, members work hard during the working day and night and look forward to periods of rest which should mean a total exclusion of work-related tasks or duties. However, this is clearly not the case. Employers are very good in gaining the confidence of members and placing them in a position of awkwardness and pushing them to work, when employers want them to work such as at times of rest. We can agree that there is some protection in the form of the Working Time Regulations 1998 but this only gives protection in actual contractual working hours. Members are made to feel pressured to undertake duties and tasks and in doing this will rise to a reduction in periods of rest which can seriously impact on their mental health and wellbeing. Employers need to understand that there is a significant benefit in avoidance of contacting members during periods of rest, such as beyond shift times. Weekends or times of annual leave, this period is to recover, rest, and to also enjoy a reasonable work/life balance either on an individual basis or with family and friends. Our members should have the right of non-contact away from the workplace and not feel pressured or feeling guilt to answer their work mobile phone or to check on any work related emails.

Congress, what would be of great benefit to our members is a policy which gives additional protection and gives clear instructions to employers that a contract of employment has boundaries in terms of contact outside of normal working hours. This policy would also give our members the opportunity to hold employers to account if they decide to ignore it. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Earl. Well done. If there is nobody speaking in opposition then I will ask Kevin Buchanan to respond from the CEC.

KEVIN BUCHANAN (CEC): President, Congress, responding to Motions 119, 120, and 121, which we are supporting with qualifications.

First of all, on Motion 119, Two-Tier Terms and Conditions in the Workplace, the motion raises questions about how best to protect members potentially affected by two-tier workplace issues in the private sector and, in particular, in former nationalised industries and utilities. The two-tier workforce code that applied in

the public sector was set up by the last Labour government and was a useful tool in that area and there are good arguments for extending the two-tier code to the regulated utilities. Our qualification is that we may wish to extend this policy to other sectors that receive taxpayer or low payer support.

Secondly, on Motion 120, Erosion of Employees' Terms and Conditions, our qualification is to note that the branch has qualified that the motion refers to the practice of changing people's terms and conditions on a 90-day notice, as well as ending fire and rehire, which of course is existing GMB policy.

Finally, to Motion 121, Right to Rest, the CEC supports the motion in principle but the motion does not identify specific aspects of the enforcement mechanism or particular aspects of the regime which needs reform. It does, however, highlight the long hours culture in the UK and confirms our fears about what may happen if much of the European based law and working time is removed.

Congress, please support these motions with the small qualifications I have outlined. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kevin. Does North West & Irish Region accept the qualification for Motions 119 and 120? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Southern Region, do you accept the qualification to Motion 121? (*Agreed*) Thank you. I will put those to the vote. Motion 119, all those in favour please show? Thank you. Any against? That is carried.

Motion 119 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: Motion 120 to the vote, all those in favour please show? Thank you. Any against? That is carried.

Motion 120 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: Motion 121, all those in favour please show? Thank you. That is also carried.

Motion 121 was CARRIED.

EMPLOYMENT POLICY: RIGHTS AT WORK

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to section 8, Employment Policy: Rights at Work, which have been moved over from this morning. Can I ask the mover of Motion 103 and then also can the movers of 124, 129, 131 and 136 come down as well.

MATERNITY LEAVE MOTION 103

103. MATERNITY LEAVE

This Congress calls upon GMB to support fully paid Maternity leave for 52 weeks from birth.

The reason we call for this is to allow the primary care giver to bond with their child and to support the child's growth throughout the year. Together with our motion calling for free childcare from the age of 1 this will allow the child to develop at home then progress after their 1st birthday into a childcare setting.

136 ISLINGTON APEX BRANCH London Region

(Carried)

CHRISTINE HUSTON (London): Congress, longer paid maternity leave has been proven to have positive economic effects. It allows mothers to maintain their employment and skills, reducing turnover costs for employers. Moreover, research has shown that countries with longer maternity leave have higher female labour force participation rates and improved economic growth. Extended time off for maternity leaves enables mothers to prioritise their own health and wellbeing, which has long-lasting effects on their overall happiness and productivity. It allows them to recover from childbirth, establish breast feeding routines, and adjust post, past, and mental and physical health concerns. Adequate bonding time between parents and newborns is crucial for the child's development. By extending maternity leave we promote early attachment, nurturing, and emotional support that contributes to the child's social, emotional, and cognitive development. This lays a strong foundation for their future success. Enhanced maternity leave policies contribute to achieving gender equality in the workplace by providing equal opportunities for men and women to take parental leave. We break down traditional gender roles and encourage shared care giving responsibilities. This not only benefits families but also creates a more inclusive and diverse work environment. Companies that prioritise work/life balance and support their employees during important life transitions build a loyal and motivated workforce. Longer paid maternity leave not only helps attract and retain talented employees but also increases employee morale, loyalty, and job satisfaction. It shows that the company values the wellbeing of its employees and recognises the significance of family life.

I would just like to stress or emphasise the importance of public support and raising awareness of the challenges faced by working mothers, and I would like to encourage individuals to advocate for improved maternity leave policies by

engaging with their local representatives, participating in campaigns, and sharing personal stories to highlight the need for change. Congress, please support our motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Christine. Secunder?

VARSHA UNADKAT (London): We know that if you are an employee and have a baby you can have a year or up to 52 weeks of statutory maternity leave, which is made up of 26 weeks of ordinary leave and then 26 weeks additional. If this was not so desperate, how much pay you get is a different matter. You need to have worked for your employer for at least 26 weeks and then you only get statutory maternity pay for 39 weeks of your 52 weeks. The current rate of statutory maternity pay or SMP is under £72.48 a week, which is really not enough. Many mothers are struggling to cope making them return to work much sooner than they are ready and losing out on precious bonding time with their babies. Also, SMP does not keep up with the living wage or the real cost of living as it is paid at just 47% of the national living wage based on the 35-hour week driving more pregnant women and new mothers into poverty and hardship. We need action. You can have one of the lowest rate of maternity pay in Europe. We are asking GMB to lobby the Government for a real change as maternity pay is outdated and not fit for purpose. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Varsha. Thank you. Then the mover of Motion 105?

PAID FAMILY EMERGENCY LEAVE MOTION 105

105. PAID FAMILY EMERGENCY LEAVE

This Congress recognises that every parent has responsibility to their children and all children deserve to have their parent by their side in most difficult times.

Yet, too many working parents go without pay due to unforeseen family emergencies, for example sickness, accident, serious problems at school.

Employees currently can access emergency leave at their workplace, but all of those days are unpaid. If the child is seriously ill the parent is forced to choose between being with the child or go to work to feed that child. None of the parents should even be presented with that choice.

Congress recognises that type of choice in emergencies is inhumane and unfair to many working parents. As a result, Congress instructs to campaign via the Labour Party for the introduction of paid time off (at least 5 days per year) for emergency leave.

L27 LEICESTER GENERAL BRANCH
Midlands Region

(Carried)

RACHEL CLARKE (Midlands): First-time speaker. *(Applause)* Congress, no one should have to choose between caring for their children or being able to put food on the table, or keep their home warm, but for too many parents this is a harsh reality for them; they have to make a choice on a daily basis. When your child is ill they cannot go to school or a childminder as they are unable to attend. Family and friends, if you are lucky enough to have the support, may be unable to care for them due to their own illness or responsibilities, so parents have to lose pay to care for a child who is ill. This is not right and although some employers do offer paid dependant leave for emergencies, most do not. This motion is calling for Congress to lobby the Labour Party to campaign for the introduction of paid time off for emergency leave. Congress, please support this motion. I move.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Rachel. It is always really difficult to be a first-time speaker and then to have your motion moved to a time of the day when you did not expect it. Well done. Secunder?

ROBERT FERGUSSON (Midlands): First-time delegate, first-time speaker.
(Applause) I am here to second Motion 105, Paid Emergency Parental Leave. In this day and age where food banks outnumber high street banks, parents are struggling from day to day to actually pay their way, and when you ask in an emergency that you need time off, you have to have time off for whatever reason for your child, should it be unpaid in this day and age? I am asking the question, is that a reality? No, it should never be unpaid. You should never choose your health and welfare over your child, to bring food on the table, bills, it could be five days off work, a quarter of your salary lost and unpaid. In this day and age, this is why I am seconding this motion, that we need Congress and GMB to back and push the Government to make this legislation that we should have paid time off for parental leave. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Robert. If there is nobody who wants to speak in opposition to those motions, the CEC is supporting Motion 103 but I will call on Brian Farr to respond on behalf of the CEC to Motion 105.

BRIAN FARR (CEC): I am speaking on behalf of the CEC on Motion 105, which we are supporting with a qualification. Before I give you the CEC qualification I would like to share my experience with you. March 14th 2004, my third granddaughter was born with severe problems, health problems. She was at one day old sent to Bristol Children's Hospital and underwent heart surgery. She went on to live for 32 weeks in which time my son-in-law and my daughter spent time in Bristol and

trying to juggle work with two other children as well. My son-in-law was actually threatened with dismissal from his work. I was very fortunate, I had a very understanding manager, and he let me have unpaid leave as much as I wanted. With my wife, we looked after the two children. If we did not look after the two children we would be up in Bristol Hospital. That is the experience we had so my only regret is that my branch should have put this motion in 19 years ago. So, I will go on to give you the qualification. (*Applause*)

It is any parent's worst nightmare when sickness, accident, or serious problems arise with a child/children. The extra stress of worrying about their workplace policy, have they met their pay during emergency brings an added burden which no one should have to face. The qualification is any campaign should involve an organisation such as the TUC and other interested parties. Further to that best practice and policy design should be considered when campaigning and considering how to build the union membership. Please support this qualification. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Brian, thank you for sharing that very personal story. Does Midlands accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) Thank you. I will take the vote. The CEC is supporting Motion 103. All those in favour please show? Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried.

Motion 103 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: All those in favour of Motion 105 please show? Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried.

Motion 105 was CARRIED.

INDUSTRIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY: COMMERCIAL SERVICES

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to motions under Industrial and Economic Policy: Commercial Services, and can I ask the mover of Motion 124 to come to the rostrum, please?

DELAYED PARCEL DELIVERIES

MOTION 124

124. DELAYED PARCEL DELIVERIES

This Congress agrees and requests that as general policy, all existing and future recognition agreements with Logistics and delivery companies should include clauses in relation to late arrival of deliveries or items that may impede or delay their onward transmission to the public or companies.

This is where we would implement Time on Task for our members as this should have already been agreed and no further action has been taken.

The individuals who often deliver are workers and often companies do not pay couriers or delivery staff for the lost time leaving them out of pocket and often delaying them from other responsibilities including their role as carers.

G50 GMB@EVRI BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

TRACY BEESON (London): Our motion is asking GMB to work with companies to add clauses into recognition agreements for logistic or delivery companies to factor in delays in deliveries. As an Evri courier myself I know only too well that late lorries are a problem that affects us all. All couriers work tight targets where timing is of the essence. When lorries arrive late this then causes delays in delivery of goods which can have significant impact on businesses and individuals alike. This can result in loss of sales, missed deadlines, and increased costs. Furthermore, late lorries can cause congestion in the roads which can lead to increased traffic and longer journey times as well as further congestion.

Congress, this problem is not unique to couriers as we have members in food service companies working extended hours where the company fails to legislate, drivers are often working as many as 12 hours behind the wheel and companies are ignoring the law, sometimes threatening drivers with suspension. Finally, we should look at ways to incentivise couriers and the logistics companies to prioritise on deliveries. This could include financial penalties for late deliveries or bonuses for early deliveries, as well as consideration of time on task for couriers who in turn are subjected to daily financial and personal costs such impediments may cause. We understand the CEC say that it is an industrial issue that could require company negotiation as it could affect pay and terms and conditions that our branch wanted to address Congress.

In conclusion, late lorries are a significant issue that affects all couriers as well as drivers in the workplaces around the country. By working together to address this problem we can move the efficiency of our delivery companies and create a more sustainable future for all couriers. Please support this motion on behalf of every courier. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tracy. Secunder?

MIKE TINNION (London): I will keep this really short. Congress, companies like Evri and the national company Amazon make millions of pounds every year by short-changing their workers, our members. Issues with logistics such as incorrect labelling, misrouting, or sorting errors can cause delays in deliveries. Delays cost our delivery drivers and courier members money. Please support this motion.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: That was short, Mike. Well done. Can I have the mover of 129, please?

PRIVATE EQUITY HAS NO PLACE IN RETAIL MOTION 129

129. PRIVATE EQUITY HAS NO PLACE IN RETAIL

This Congress notes the alarming amount of retail enterprises being bought up by Private Equity Consortiums, mainly from overseas, who immediately sell off assets such as property and land and cut jobs.

Has no one learned anything from the Philip Green fiasco with Arcadia?

Congress calls upon the CEC to lobby all sponsored MP's to investigate thoroughly any future and current private equity deals with a view to preventing these sell offs from happening.

A62 ASDA BRANCH North West & Irish Region

(Carried)

MICHAEL TURNBULL (North West & Irish): Congress, last week we saw the £10bn merger of Asda with the EG (Euro Garages Group). This decision taken in boardrooms and well away from public scrutiny will only serve to further impoverish our union members on the shop floor, potentially adding to rising costs above the pump and the checkout. Shamefully, this has been met with a wall of silence from the competition and markets authority. Let's start by being clear on what private equity means for our GMB members at Asda.

Private equity means those of us who have helped to generate Asda its £886m of operating product must now deliver the same service but with depreciating levels of investment. For those of us working on the shop floor staff levels and morale are at an all time low. The equipment we need to do our very jobs is hard to come by and the great sell-off has now become as depots are being sold off only for the company to lease them back. I am sorry to say that Asda at one time a family run company famous for its pocket tab advertising is now clawing money back by snatching it from the pockets of its very workers. This year alone we have seen the expansion of twilight shifts, a cynical move designed to remove premium

pay from our members, the continued refusal to roll out premium payments for home shop drivers, the current threat of fire and rehire if members do not give up their paltry 60p supplement for living near London, and the removal of the staff bonus for all except management.

This has all been met with fierce resistance from our reps with some fantastic results. We have won our first ever mid-year pay rise and have literally taken thousands of workers out of redundancy consultation. I am proud to say that the GMB and Asda are on the up but we need a concerted effort by all arms of the labour movement if we are to secure our future. Private equity is traditionally focused on old world industries with fixed assets and there are serious question marks over its ability to sustain levels of investment and innovation required within supermarkets. Ultimately, it has resided over some of the UK's biggest retail disasters. Ask former employees of Debenhams who had their pensions drained from under them, or perhaps those Top Shop employees who had the indignity of watching Sir Philip Green sunning it up at the same time as they faced the sack. We will not allow the same for our members. Congress, it is time we called private equity what it really is, asset stripping. Please support this motion. I move.
(*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Michael. Thank you. A seconder?

SARAH HARTLEY (North West & Irish): First time at Congress, first-time speaker.
(*Applause*) I am seconding Michael's motion 129. I have worked for Asda for nearly 21 years. I have been a GMB rep for 17. I have been lots of changes, most of them not for the good. Since the brothers have taken over it has just declined. We work harder. We lose staff. I have had to move stores. I was on the Wirral. I have to travel to Wales now because my job was going. I have members ringing me crying as £600 each pay day they are losing. The brothers are buying jets. It is getting to the point in this day and age where we cannot afford it. It is getting to the point we cannot afford to work. Please support Michael's motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sarah. Can I have the mover of 131, Midlands.

A NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO BEAT AMAZON MOTION 131

131. A NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO BEAT AMAZON

This Congress notes that Amazon is a viscous anti-union employer making massive profits and cutting workers' wages.

Amazon workers in the UK and worldwide are starting to fight back and organise.

This Congress salutes:

The fantastic determination and defiance shown by Amazon workers who walked out and protested over pay last summer.

The amazing achievement of GMB members in Coventry in launching the first ever official strike action against Amazon in the UK.

Congress believes that the example the Coventry strike and the innovative organising tactics employed should be learnt from and applied across the whole union.

Congress resolves that the union will commit major national resources to turn organising Amazon into a priority organising objective for the whole GMB.

A25 THE AMAZON WORKERS BRANCH

Midlands Region

(Carried)

GARFIELD HYLTON (Midlands): Amazon BXX4 Coventry striker, Amazon Branch Secretary, Representative, first-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* You are aware of the history in the making of Coventry concerning our fight to establish workers' rights here in the UK. This has become a catapult sparking a worldwide movement for workers' empowerment. We have taken the steps in Amazon's words, "Work hard, have fun, make history, job with union recognition on the site". We worked as essential key workers, who had all experienced suffering and death. We risked our lives for an extra £2 an hour for just six weeks. Amazon's profits were record breaking in the UK alone. No reason was ever given to taking back the £2 an hour increase. Workers are in dismay. The cost of living is a noose around the neck as workers struggle with day-to-day living. We are insulted by the low pay offers and the loss of a high value share. We are fed up with the management dictatorial approach to all of us. There is no fun in work, just a depressive air. First label, August 2020, GMB membership stands up 50 members, another 50p offering breaks the camel's back, events now unfold at blistering speed, not just at BXX4 but across Amazon UK. These next points are deliverers' bullet points.

Workers down tools, hold wildcat strikes both day and night, workers meet in Coventry City Centre to join force with the GMB family, workplace leaders discuss strategy, planning, and coordination, what do we want and how are we going to get it. We ballot on industrial action. We are short by three votes. We identify why. It won't happen next time. Round one is to Amazon.

Still under bullet points: information is cascaded in multiple languages. We progress chase members so that everyone understands the importance of voting. Members target GMB. They want protracted action. We are not messing about. Strike class is a key word for day and night shifts. The campaign starts and talks of a plethora of organisations, unions, magazines, and the press begins. Leaders are campaigning constantly and will continue until we get what we deserve. This monumental process could not have been achieved without the GMB support. We are grateful to become part of that family. Why, because we had no plan, no organisation, and no direction, just our power and anger.

Next label, during 2023 we have 800 GMB members at Coventry BXX4 site. (*Applause*) Our fight for recognition has started. We deliver the letter to BXX4 management. Amazon declines and responds immediately by employing 1,000 new hires at breakneck speed in order to divide and weaken us. We are being got at but our actions have other sites watching. They are crying out for help, Coalville Rugeley, Mansfield, the Fulmer Centres have now joined us and are currently being balloted to take strike action. Swansea asked us to visit them, and we did, and we sparked the ignition process again and we were the talk of the building across the day and night shifts. We also sent a message to Bristol so they know that we were there for them as well. We now have the likes of Peterborough, Oldham, Manchester, Doncaster, and Essex. They are all asking for our support. We shall respond to your call. We shall give you the support, the knowledge, the solidarity, and walk the journey with you all.

I beseech Congress to galvanise and commit resources for the ongoing fight in the vein of David v Goliath. The impact is not just in the UK, it is across the globe, giving all workers hope to unite. I ask you to move this motion. Thank you, Congress. Round two is ours. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Brilliant, Garfield. Well done. Absolute perfect timing. Good luck in your campaign. A seconder to that motion?

STEPHEN ALEXANDER (Midlands): Guys, Garfield has explained it all. He has been amazing. His team have worked so hard and been dedicated and they are making great inroads. We have made amazing advances out of Amazon and we are so near to achieving the goals of recognition there but we are also near to breaking through Amazon across the country. It is time to ride this wave and push for a campaign nationally. We call on the CEC to release the funds and get behind a full national campaign to take this forward into all Amazon workplaces. I support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Steve. Mover of Motion 136.

A FIGHTING FIT EMPLOYER MOTION 136

136. A FIGHTING FIT EMPLOYER

This Congress calls for a union campaign to support workers' rights in the sport and leisure industry. For far too long young and old employees have had no protection in this industry due to the volatile nature of the area.

Most people are on zero hour contracts, flexible hour contracts, casual hour contracts with very few opportunities to obtain permanent positions. Many graduates and aspiring young coaches/ development officers are asked to go above and beyond for this industry to stand out from the rest doing above their job specifications, working unsociable hours. After being exploited they are dropped like a stone. We as the GMB should be there to support and offer guidance in this industry. These employers should be held accountable for their exploitation of workers as commodities.

Countless qualified people have left this industry due to direct exploitation. Not just those who are qualified within the sports industry but also all supporting roles from cleaning, catering and many other supporting roles in this sector. These workers need to know they can be heard. To pass this motion we would become a step closer to stopping the exploitation of workers in the sports industry.

The union calls upon all sports clubs to become A Fighting Fit Employer.

W60 WELLINGTON BRANCH Midlands Region

(Carried)

IAN PREECE (Midlands): Good afternoon. I am going to be talking about Motion 136, A Fighting Fit Employer. I want you to imagine a place where workers' rights do not mean a thing, where you can be let go in minutes, even seconds in some cases, and asked to do things well above your pay station, where the normal is working way over what is expected. Welcome to the sports and leisure industry, the Wild West of the working world, zero hour contracts, minimum pay, unsociable hours, sometimes no pension, bullying, even less than minimum pay, with no thank you. It is just appalling.

There is approximately 193,000 working in the sport and fitness industry. The industry is worth billions but yet workers are being treated unfairly on a day-to-day basis with next to no rights. I work in the football sector. I watch millions of pounds coming into this industry but yet I see workers' rights being abused on a weekly basis, from groundsmen to canteen staff, cleaners, coaches, to admin staff. If the club is not doing very well, who are the first people to get the chop, not the players, not the agents, it is the hardworking low paid staff. For the past two years I have been working closely with clubs and employees to make it a fighting fit organisation. My experience is I managed to get pay increases in some cases,

more staff development, better working conditions, and equality in pay. I cannot believe that is still going on, but it is.

As my granddad said in 1988, on this very stage, a happy worker is a more productive worker. I am working with boards and chairmen to make sure workers' rights are heard. I am calling on the union to support all staff and companies in the sport and leisure industry, offering them guidance and help, and to stop the exploitation of the workers. I want GMB to call upon all sports and leisure businesses to become a fighting fit employer. I just want to say thank you to the clubs and businesses that I have worked with over the past two years and they have changed their mindset, and it is fantastic.

A message to the clubs and businesses who carry on exploiting workers, I'll be seeing you soon. I am asking Congress to move this motion. Thank you.

(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ian. It is great that you are carrying on your granddad's tradition. A seconder, please? Is there a seconder or is it being formally seconded? Sorry, they are coming up.

MILES SHORT (Midlands): I could talk to you all day about football but I would just like to say Leeds, Leicester, Southampton, the chairmen have already turned round and said 50% of the workforce is going to be made redundant. No messing about, no consultation, just, "50 of you get out of the club". My own personal club, Telford United FC, I have represented them for three years, I love the club, but the chairman, now we have dropped down two leagues, I cannot believe it, he has already turned round and said he is shutting the restaurant, there is apprentices working there, he is shutting different parts of it where the club works in the community, he is shutting that, and that is how it goes on. These people are allowed to run football clubs. Every now and again they are assessed. How do they get it? He has been in jail. He has been bankrupt five times. How do they get into it? They are supposed to be looking into people like this. Please back this motion because there are a lot of young people working in the industry. There is a lot of lads who are on the – I forget what they call it now – anyhow, they are just kicked out of the clubs, just, "Go away," 18 years of age and you are on the scrapheap. I know because I have been there. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*
Don't forget Derby are going to Grimsby!

THE PRESIDENT: I have never been to Grimsby. I want to come to Grimsby. You invited me last night. Yes, I will come, if you are ready to invite me again. Thank you, Miles. You did not need the handkerchief, you got it all in time. Unless anybody wants to speak in opposition, I will ask Margaret Gregg to respond for the

CEC and whilst she comes up can I call the last movers and seconders for 132, 133, 135, 137, and 138, the last motions of the day.

MARGARET GREGG (CEC): Responding to motions 124, 129, 131, and 136, on behalf of the CEC. We are supporting these with qualifications.

Motion 124, on delayed parcel deliveries, raises very important issues and the CEC is supporting this motion with two qualifications. The CEC recognises that the unfair penalisation of members as a result of delays to deliveries is a practice that must be contained and is a core industrial issue for our union. The first is to make it clear that we believe the clauses in relation to late arrival of items should only ever be to the protection and benefit of our members. Our second qualification is that while Congress can give its full backing to important campaigns led by our members, including this campaign, decision-making on national and local pay conditions and recognition bargaining must always be in the hands of the members who are directly affected.

On Motion 129, private equity has no place in retail. GMB fully support restricting and eventually preventing the going rate of private equity buyouts of the UK high street. To achieve this we need to campaign for a regulatory framework that creates a hostile environment for private equity firms. This could include calling for the expansion of the CMA to have a greater oversight of private equity buyouts, calling for the Labour Party to beef up tax implications for private equity and, of course, improve employment, collective bargaining, and strike legislation. Some of this work has begun with the GMB National Office looking into any current legislation that is currently moving through the parliamentary process that we have the ability to influence, for example, the Competition and Markets Bill.

On Motion 131, a national campaign to beat Amazon. The CEC wholeheartedly echoes the motion's reference to Amazon workers and the GMB organising response to working conditions at Amazon. Significant resources have been committed to organising at Amazon at a national and regional level. We are seeking to support the motion with a qualification that there is an established process for determining national targets, which should be discussed with the national organising team, and we ask that that considers the call of the motion in more detail.

Finally, on Motion 136, a fighting fit employer. The branch has clarified that the fighting fit standard has been established by Telford United Football Club. We applaud efforts to raise employment standards across the league and non-league football. We are seeking to support the motion with a qualification that there is a little public information about what the fighting fit standard involves,

and further investigation and member consultation will be needed before we could promote the standard to other employers.

Thank you, Congress. Please support these motions with the qualifications I have outlined. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Margaret. Does London Region accept the qualification to Motion 124? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Does North West & Irish Region accept the qualification to Motion 129? (*Agreed*) Yes. Then does Midland accept the qualification to Motions 121 and 126? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Motion 124, all those in favour please show? Thank you. All those against? That is carried.

Motion 124 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: Motion 129, all those in favour please show? Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried.

Motion 129 was CARRIED

THE PRESIDENT: Motion 131, all those in favour please show? Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried.

Motion 131 was CARRIED

THE PRESIDENT: Motion 136, all those in favour please show? Thank you. Anyone against?

Motion 136 was CARRIED

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Just before I move on to section 10 I would like to remind Wilco and Asda delegates that you are to go to reception as there is a photo call at 5 with Angela Rayner; if you go there leave in five minutes' time to make sure you leave yourself plenty of time to get there. Thank you. Can I ask the mover of Motion 132, please, to take the rostrum?

INDUSTRIAL & ECONOMIC POLICY: COMMERCIAL SERVICES

SIX POINTS AND OUT

MOTION 132

132. SIX POINTS AND OUT

This Congress demands that Local Authorities remove their draconian policy of revoking Taxi and Private Hire drivers' licences.

Across the country, Taxi and Private Hire drivers are having their licences revoked for acquiring six points on their licence.

The DVLA standard twelve points don't apply in many licencing authorities, putting drivers out of work on a policy, which is not backed by law.

G56 PROFESSIONAL DRIVERS BRANCH

London Region

(Carried)

MIKE TINNION (London): Congress, in recent years there has been a growing trend amongst local authorities across the country to ban taxi and private hire drivers from working with just six points on their licence instead of the 12. The DVLA allows drivers to drive with up to 12 points on their licence and in certain circumstances with more. We have argued that a ban on drivers with six points is unfair and draconian. Many drivers can accumulate points on their licence for relatively minor offences and banning these drivers from the industry could have significant impact on their ability to earn a living, and could lead to shortages of drivers. There are already concerns about shortages of taxi and private hire drivers in some parts of the country and banning drivers with six points will exacerbate the problem. This could lead to longer waiting times for passengers and higher fare prices. We as a union have pointed out to the Institute of Licensing that these local authorities do not hold their own drivers to the same standards, a double standard that would have dire consequences that would cripple councils within months.

Congress, our taxi and private hire membership is growing in every region. We are by far the biggest taxi and private hire union in the country and we are still growing, but we cannot allow our members to be unfairly persecuted in this way. We call on our GMB councillors and our GMB MPs, and our GMB London Assembly members, to make sure that our GMB membership is protected. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Mike. Thank you. Secunder?

SIMON WILDE (London) I am a new boy, first-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Thank you. I represent the newly formed L56 London Logistics Branch. I also represent the London Region and am here today to second Motion 132. Can you imagine a rule propagated by licensing officers that has been created to stop professional drivers from driving after receiving the maximum of six points on their driving licence. Two speeding offences a couple of years apart is enough to cost

the driver their career and then costs associated with car payments, tax liability, and all the other expenses associated with driving for a living.

What makes this wicked best practice guideline most despicable is the fact that the same civil servants who are prosecuting this rule have colleagues working in their local authorities as drivers in roles such as waste services, social services, and any number of roles where driving is a necessary part of the job. The only difference is they are allowed to drive with more points on their licence without fear of losing their job. The place to decide if a driver is fit to hold a licence is a court or based upon the DVLA system that is in place for every UK motorist. A licensing officer who deals with matters from restaurant licences, to counterfeit cosmetics, should not be acting as judge, jury, and executioner in such instances. Even when they make seizures or revoke licences, there is generally involvement of the judiciary. In the instance of private hire and taxis revocation can take place even before a driver can appeal to court. A simple acceptance of a journey on an app can earn a driver six points, even when sitting at traffic lights. Even LGV drivers, plumbers, and couriers, can drive with more points on their licence. Who made licensing officers who push for the punitive rule the arbitrators of what is appropriate. This is simply an earner for solicitors and no one else. Congress, please support. I second this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Can I ask the mover of Motion 133, please?

FAIR PAY FOR SECURITY WORKERS MOTION 133

133. FAIR PAY FOR SECURITY WORKERS

This Congress notes that for many years' pay for Security workers has been kept low and now with mandatory top-up training requirements and the additional costs incurred this is driving people out of the industry.

This conference calls upon GMB to campaign for better pay and conditions for Security workers.

G36 SECURITY BRANCH Southern Region

(Carried)

PAUL SONY (Southern): Conference, as you know, for many years security officers have been getting a bare minimum in terms of wages when they face abuse during Covid-19 or preventing theft, etc. just because they are doing their jobs. As of 2021 the SIA (the Security Industry Authority) introduced new requirements for security officers to obtain their security licences. This in terms is top-up training and first aid training. With these are extra requirements you may think security

officers would receive a pay increase but, guess what, they do not. Some security employers require them to pay for their own top-up training themselves. It should be noted that first aid training has to be renewed every three years, which is adding to the cost. With these extra costs and responsibilities it is time that all security officers received a fair decent living wage for the work they do.

SIA wants to try and get people to see the security industry as a professional job yet they allow security companies to pay the bare minimum for the job and responsibilities that the officers have. It is time for the SIA as part of their requirement to get security companies to pay their security officers a fair decent pay for the work they do. GMB union needs to work with other unions to put pressure on the SIA and the Home Office, and security companies, to pay a fair wage for work that the security officers do and to urge the next Labour government to look at introducing a fair wage as part of the SIA standards to ensure security companies pay their security officers a decent fair wage for the work they do. Please support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Paul. Thank you. Secunder, please?

CHRIS APPLETHWAITHE (Southern): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Congress, since 2021 any security officers who want to renew their SIA licence are instructed to do top-up training and have first aid training as a part of the new requirements when applying for a new licence. With these extra requirements they do not get any extra pay. For many years the security industry has kept security pay low even when a security worker is right on the front line and working during Covid-19. Even at major events where security is required, officers are often paid low wages and do not receive a pay increase for many years. It is time that security officers are paid fairly for the work that they do, especially as they face abuse and attacks from the public just because they are doing their job. SIA are trying to raise standards yet they do not do anything to encourage security companies to pay security officers a decent wage. Therefore, we need to put pressure on SIA to open the door and get security companies to pay security officers a decent and fair wage. Sadly, there has been a common theme today that our members feel underpaid and undervalued and, unfortunately, this is not going to change and right now we have a lot of work to do. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Chris. A mover for Motion 135?

THIRD SECTOR WORKERS

MOTION 135

135. THIRD SECTOR WORKERS

This Congress notes that according to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) 2022, the sector contributed £20.2billion (1% of total GDP) to the economy in 2019/20, with a total income of £58.7billion, employing over 950,000 people who work in the voluntary sector. Many of these services were deemed essential during the pandemic and the sector as a whole contributes an enormous amount of paid and unpaid labour to the economy.

Many organisations in the sector act contrary to the values which they proclaim, especially in the treatment of their employees, and use 'service-user-need' as a cover for the imposition of poor working practices. The sector routinely bears the brunt of the enormous human cost of austerity – mopping up the mess of government cuts and mismanagement. Workers in the sector experience low pay, bullying and harassment, precarity through endless sequences of temporary, funding dependent contracts, constant threats of redundancy and chronic overwork and the expectation to work for free. Workers are paid on average 7% less than workers elsewhere and

14.1 per cent of jobs in the third sector are paid less than the real Living Wage, which is higher than across the economy as a whole.

The sector can also be difficult to organise due to high levels of precarity, management and trustee hostility to trade union representation of their workforce and insecure funding. Worker's feelings of obligation and responsibility towards individuals receiving care from these services can make them reluctant to engage in industrial action. In some organisations, volunteers are recruited instead of workers to keep down costs.

GLASGOW GENERAL APEX BRANCH

GMB Scotland

(Carried)

HAILEY MAXWELL (GMB Scotland): Over the last decade the government has used austerity and privatisation to shrink the range and volume of services it provides. Many motions this week point to cuts to public services, health, social care, and community services. There are now fewer banks than MacDonald's in the UK, and more than a quarter of a million households are homeless. Clearly, people in Britain still need services and where public services are being cut the staggering way of demand for care and support is being mopped up by the third sector, by charities and voluntary organisations.

The third sector contributes a huge amount of paid and unpaid labour to the economy. According to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations the charity sector contributed over £20.8bn to the economy in 2019–2020. They have a workforce of almost a million people, about two-thirds of the size of NHS, and as a sector has grown by more than a quarter in the last decade. While many of these organisations do fantastic work, workers and charities very often experience low pay, bullying, chronic overwork, and constant threats of redundancy. I have worked in charities where I have been told that because I worked in the voluntary sector I was expected to work overtime for free, where there has been little or no attention to health and safety, and where the idea of job security or a pay rise was just completely unheard of.

It is important that some of these organisations have independence and autonomy to be able to carry out their work. It is also true that the Government and local authorities are shirking their responsibilities by forcing what should be public sector jobs onto the third sector guaranteeing jobs but only two or three years through funding cycles and preventing workers from being able to collectively bargain for pay. In our branch we have quite a few workplaces that recognise GMB that fall within this category. Usually, ultimate power and responsibility for the charity lies with an unpaid, unaccountable, and often uninterested board of trustees who can walk away when industrial relations become too tough. Rape crisis, domestic abuse, homelessness services, welfare rights, disability, and mental health services across the country are run by dedicated long-serving staff making ends meet on low wages with poor pension schemes. Many of our members have no idea if they will have a job in a year's time or if the people that they support will be guaranteed the care they need beyond the next funding round. Charity workers are more likely to be women on part-time low paid insecure contracts and what I am describing is systemic exploitation of these women; we were key workers during the pandemic too.

This motion calls upon the GMB to conduct research amongst existing members on the working conditions in the third sector and identify viable staff used for increasing trade union influence in the charitable sector, specifically through investigating options around governing structures, charity regulations, funding conditions, and local authority service level arrangements. Workers in this sector are constantly told that there is never enough money and that because we work out of love and principle we should not expect good pay. Love does not pay the bills and third sector workers have had enough. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Hailey. Secunder?

SHONA THOMSON (GMB Scotland): During the pandemic we were all so grateful for the essential work of health and social care staff, who were often treated appallingly during the crisis. This work was done in the private sector and the public sector, but also involvement with the third sector, and according to the Charity Commission a fifth of social care in the UK is delivered by charities. Now, like public or private care workers, charity workers often support a wide range of people, those who are homeless, those with addictions and disabilities, looked after children, the vulnerable and those with significant and enduring mental health problems.

The third sector is full of low paid women workers providing care and support of marginalised and vulnerable people in the community, often because they

understand the experiences of those they support because they have been there themselves. According to the International Council for Voluntary Organisations women make up two-thirds of the voluntary sector workforce and also supply most of its unpaid labour. One in three women in the UK, one in three women, volunteer at least once a year. The voluntary sector also has the oldest workforce compared to the public and private sectors with one in four staff aged 55 and above. In the public sector charity workers are more likely to be women on part-time low paid contracts but according to the International Council for Voluntary Associations charity workers are paid on average 7% less than workers elsewhere, or 14.1% of jobs in the third sector being paid less than the new living wage, which is lower than across the economy as a whole. Why should a worker employed by a charity through government funding have such worse conditions, so much less job security, sections with reduced ability to bargain when the workers are doing almost exactly the same job employed by a local authority.

THE PRESIDENT: Shona....

SHONA THOMSON (GMB Scotland): No, that is me. Okay. I am too slow. The voluntary sector can be difficult to organise due to high levels of insecure work because of complex finances. GMB are winning on the front line by making work fair for women workers who care for others. If we can do it in the public sector and the private sector, we can also do it in the third sector too. Congress, support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Shona. Thank you. If there is no one to speak in opposition to those motions, the CEC is supporting all three motions so I can move straight to the vote. All those in favour of Motion 132? Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried.

Motion 132 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: All those in favour of Motion 133? Thank you. Any against? That is carried.

Motion 133 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: Then all those in favour Motion 135? Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried.

Motion 135 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: We move on to our final motions to debate this afternoon and can I have the mover of Motion 137, please?

LEVELLING UP ON SKILLS AND PROFIT FOR ALL IN JOBS MOTION 137

137. LEVELLING UP ON SKILLS AND PROFIT FOR ALL IN JOBS

This Congress notes that we need to make Great Britain the manufacturing powerhouse we used to be, with job security, meeting the bills each month and paying the rent and mortgage.

People are struggling to make those commitments today, the cost of living is out of control, but the bosses are not! For the past twelve years in this country, the government of today has created austerity and chosen a path of "them and us".

Now is the time companies need to level up, showing equality and fairness for all, plugging the skills gap to get the best out of our workforce today by better training and paying them a share of the profits that corporate bosses starve us from today.

We face unfair targets to meet bonuses, while bosses and bankers own and decide on our money and taxes and are driving the rich richer keeping the rest of us in poverty.

Congress this needs to stop, we need to rise and stand for a fair day's pay for a fair day's work, corporates need to pay us our worth and stop taking from your workforce for your own greed.

We call on Congress to ensure that the benefits of work are passed down to the people. We are not slaves, we work and we all benefit, so we are calling for Manufacturing companies to invest in the workforce and take the stress out of the working class who worry how the next bill is going to be paid, with better profit share for all, not the few.

This would likely encourage some of those who have now become economically inactive to re-join the workforce, and enable some of the vacancies to be filled, benefitting the economy.

B22 BRAINTREE & BOCKING BRANCH London Region

(Carried)

ADRIAN STOHR (London): Congress, Gt. Britain and also Ireland should be the manufacturing powerhouse it used to be. With job security, meeting the bills each month, and paying rent or mortgage. The past 13 years have shown that this is not possible with company bosses from some of the biggest companies in the world taking some huge pay rises and bonuses worth thousands and millions, while their workers, our members, suffer to meet rents, suffer to meet bills, as the companies make it harder for us to reach those targets to receive bonuses and given a pay rise which does not cover inflation or the ever increasing cost of living. What happened to a fair day's pay for a fair day's work?

Congress, we are still battling those words in the workplace today and we must continue to do so. Our cost of living is out of control. We must stand up and be counted as equal to all. Discrimination is just ongoing with pay being for all genders and age at the top of the list for many. Bonuses create a competitive workforce pushing out others who cannot achieve. This does not mean they do not do the same amount of work as everyone else does. We need opportunities for skills and pay which values a person. Skills training should be offered fairly and fair pay must come with that. Bonuses should be equal to all. By sharing the profit of a bonus this brings a friendly productive approach and helps drive the skill set. Directors and CEOs do not have this problem with their large pay packets and huge bonuses. They receive from the hard work you put in to make that happen.

Congress, we must share equal bonus for all. We are human, there is no difference other than one may have a degree, and one may not, but the outcome is the same. The results are the same and, what is more, who is driving those results: we are. The shop floor is filled with men and women of all genders. Congress, we should not be singled out so the rich become richer and the poor become poorer. We work to live not live to work. We are calling for manufacturing companies to invest in their workforce and take the stress out of the working class, who worry about paying the next bill, with better profit share for all, not the few. We need to see the benefits of work passed down to the people. We work and we all benefit. We think this would likely encourage those who have become economically inactive to rejoin the workforce, plugging the skills gap and enable some of the vacancies to be filled benefiting the whole economy. Congress, please support the levelling up on skills and pay for all. Corporates need to pay us our worth and stop taking the workforce for their own greed. GMB 1889, our members built our industries in this country. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Adrian. Well done. A seconder?

BISMILLA MAHOMED (London): I am going to keep this very short because I believe Angela Rayner is waiting for! Congress, more and more these days our members are suffering the consequences of having their bonuses or other work-related perks such as company cars, travel expenses, or technical equipment being taken away and the savings being spent on additional bonuses for their bosses. Congress, this not only means our members are underpaid and have to subsidise their work costs but also without the correct equipment their jobs have become harder. Congress, I urge you to support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. You had better shoot off! Thank you. You better shoot. Cheers! Then, can I have the mover of Motion 138, please?

MORE WOMEN IN INDUSTRIAL ROLES

MOTION 138

138. MORE WOMEN IN INDUSTRIAL ROLES

This Congress notes the perpetual under representation of women in manual and industrial roles in the shipbuilding and aerospace sectors and the many persistent barriers that exist to women's participation in the sectors.

This Congress requests the equality and research departments to produce a full report into the barriers that exist in conjunction with the national officer. Following the report, a meeting should be convened of lay activists across the sectors to review the report and produce an action plan and for a trade union approach to address the issues with a focus around organising.

D19 DEVONPORT BRANCH

Wales & South West Region

(Carried)

SARAH ALLEN-A'HERNE (GMB Wales & South West): Congress, we note the perpetual under-representation of women in manual and industrial roles in the shipbuilding, aerospace, and construction sectors and the many persistent barriers that exist to women's participation in these sectors. Congress requests that the Equality Research and Women's Campaign Unit produce a collective report into the barriers that exist in conjunction with the national officers.

We need a CEC group to work with the relevant GMB department, follow the recommendations from the report, and implement, organising and campaigning activity to address the barriers preventing women developing in these higher paid sectors. Many automated industries and occupations are particularly vulnerable to reinforcing harmful stereotyping and create unfavourable environments to make it even more difficult for women to excel. Women working in a male-dominated workforce face a variety of challenges, which include lack of expectations and beliefs about women's abilities and leadership.

In 1942, Britain struggled and needed every hand available to help turn the tide of the Second World War. At 18 years old, Janet Harvey was the youngest of only four women to be trained as an electrician. She and her colleagues had three months' training at Glasgow's Royal Technical College which was a lot of time compared to other industries or uniformed service roles available to women. Janet was sent to Harland & Wolff's yard in Govan Cross and to John Brown's in Clydebank. Janet and her colleagues would spend the rest of the war years scrambling up and down dangerously high ladders with their toolboxes fitting the wiring throughout the ships. Like many other industries at the end of World War One and Two the

girls and women who were so praised by the public were unceremoniously sacked as the war contracts ended and Janet and the other women were cast aside like the old rags they worked with, and dismissed without a medal or any word of thanks from the nation, until 2018 when Janet Harvey's war service was finally recognised when she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Engineering from Glasgow's Caledonian University in recognition of her outstanding contributions to the war effort. Colleagues, we could do it then and we can do it now. We need to enhance the opportunities for women to build careers in these high paid skilled jobs. Let's build a campaign and develop our strategy to one day have a balanced number of women and men in these industrial sectors. Congress, please support this motion. As a woman I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Sarah. Then the seconder, please.

JULIAN VRAJITORU (GMB Wales & South West): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. Congress, when we talk about the jobs of the future it seems quite obvious that they should be good jobs, jobs that are open to all, but what does this mean in practice. Hinckley Point site, for example, the largest construction site, has two great practices which would teach us something. Thanks to the great work of GMB Equality & Diversity Reps, including myself as the leader - (*Applause*) - out of the apprentices hired by the project four in ten also so far have been women. This is against the background of the construction industry in general where women make up only 11% of the workforce. There is a dedicated women's network in GMB where women staff can support each other and can have privacy, and come up with ways to make the workplace more welcoming for women in general as well as for more specific groups, like parents and carers.

Don't get me wrong we all know we have many hurdles to climb before we get where we should really be and have a gender-balanced workforce within HBC and in general in the construction industry. We are currently completing projects which have issues like PPE and shoes in women's size, simple things, accessible washrooms which are placed with consideration and women do not have to walk for miles across the site to reach a suitable washroom. Within HBC our slogan is careers have no genders, HBC approach this from encouraging girls still at school to consider careers in the industry, to getting the culture right at work so that everyone feels welcome and valued. The key word there is "everyone". Let's carry on making it better together. Please support this motion. I second. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Well done, Julian.

THE PRESIDENT: There is no one to speak in opposition against these motions. Can I call on John Dolan from the CEC to respond, please.

JOHN DOLAN (CEC): Responding to Motion 137 on behalf of the CEC. Congress, CEC supports this motion with the following qualification. The only purpose of this motion is in with the *Make Work Better* campaign and the GMB union purpose is set out in the rulebook. The qualification is that the union extends beyond Gt. Britain so the motion text should instead read "Gt. Britain and Ireland". Furthermore, the wording "we are not slaves" would be insensitive. We suggest that "we work to live, not live to work", would make a better point. Congress, please support this with the qualification I have just given. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, John. 137 was London Region? Yes. Do you accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) Thank you. I put that one to the vote, Motion 137, all those in favour please show? Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried.

Motion 137 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: Then the CEC is supporting Motion 138, all those in favour please show? Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried.

Motion 138 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: That concludes this afternoon's session, delegates. Thank you. I have got two very quick announcements before you go off: the RMA stand asks for any region that has not taken sales from raffle tickets back to the stand, could you please do so, so they can include those tickets in the raffle draw, and tomorrow morning the main doors at the front of the building will not be open until 9 o'clock. You can have a lie-in, if you want! Enjoy your evening whatever you are up to. Thank you. See you tomorrow morning.

Conference adjourned.