

# **Decisions of Conference**

## **21<sup>st</sup> Annual STUC Disabled Workers' Conference**

**Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> November 2024.**

**Golden Jubilee Conference Hotel, Clydebank,  
Glasgow**

# RESOLUTIONS CARRIED

## SECTION 1: TRAVEL AND ACCESSIBILITY

### Resolution 1. Peak Rail Fares

“That this Conference is deeply frustrated and disappointed with the Scottish Government’s decision to reintroduce peak fares on 27 September 2024 after it achieved 7% of the 10% target increase in passengers during the trial.

“Conference believes that peak fares are a stealth tax on workers and that re-introducing peak fares will harm the ability to truly achieve modal shift or climate change targets by encouraging private motor vehicle use for commuting through cost prohibition.

“Whilst disabled passengers can utilise a Disabled Persons Railcard to secure a third off during peak times, the reintroduction of peak fares will still see the cost of travel increase for railcard users, this is compounded by the recent reduction of the discount offered by railcards.

“The National Entitlement Card (NEC) meanwhile offers differing benefits and restrictions depending on the holder’s local council, meaning a holder in Strathclyde can use the card at anytime whilst a holder in Fife can only use the card after the morning peak, resulting in some disabled workers facing a higher increase than others for rail travel depending on their region within Scotland.

“Conference believes that the Scottish Government’s decision is short-sighted and could cause lasting damage in workers’ confidence in the use of rail for commuting.

“Conference therefore calls on the STUC Disabled Workers’ Committee to:

- write to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport calling for the removal of peak fares for rail travel, highlighting that those in possession of a Disabled Persons Railcard will face a further rise as the railcard benefit has been reduced; and
- write to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport to request that Transport Scotland review the use of the NEC across Scotland with a view to providing a consistent benefit to holders for local rail travel following the return of peak fares.”

**Mover: Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen**

## **Resolution Composite A - Making Scotland's Rail Transport Accessible for All (Covering Amended Motion 2 and Motion 5)**

“This Conference notes that whilst a lot of transport is devolved, rail accessibility is still a matter that is mainly reserved to the UK Government. As such, Conference notes that the change of the UK Government in Westminster presents an opportunity for the introduction of legislative changes which can improve accessibility on Scotland's railways.

“This Conference notes with concern that around two-thirds of ScotRail stations are currently unstaffed and that disabled people in Scotland take around half as many journeys by rail as non-disabled people.

“Conference believes that the presence of staff, at stations and on trains is vital to making the railway properly accessible.

“Conference notes that plans by the previous Conservative UK Government to close around 1000 ticket offices, including the Avanti West Coast ticket office at Glasgow Central, were scrapped after an unprecedented public outcry. Conference notes that alongside the RMT, disabled and older people's organisations were at the forefront of this campaign.

“Conference commends members of the RMT union for their successful campaign in 2024 to defend the role of the guard at ScotRail on the Barrhead and East Kilbride lines after it was threatened by the Scottish Government owned rail operator. Conference believes that there must be no future attempts by ScotRail to extend Driver Only Operation (DOO).

“The Department for Transport (DfT) undertook an accessibility audit of all UK railway stations in 2021 to highlight locations that needed work, which concluded in February 2023.

“Whilst progress is slowly being made with new accessible stations at Leven and Cameron Bridge, there is still much more to be done with platforms too short and current train coaches inaccessible resulting in disabled passengers being overcarried.

“Scotrail is planning to replace 65% of its train fleet between 2027 and 2035 and this presents an opportunity for accessibility improvements on Scotrail’s trains.

“Currently, facilities for disabled persons, including wheelchair spaces are determined by The Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations 1998. A lot has changed with train design since then and it is important that the legal minimum is appropriate for the 21st century.

“Conference believes however that to make our railways fully accessible we need mass investment in new rail infrastructure and staff to ensure that passengers can turn up and go and travel independently.

“Conference welcomes the newly elected UK Labour Government which has committed to bring the UK’s privatised rail passenger services, including cross-border operators into public ownership in an integrated railway with enhanced powers for the devolved transport authorities. Conference further welcomes Labour’s stated commitment to keeping ticket offices open and making the railway properly accessible.

“Conference therefore calls on the STUC Disabled Workers’ Committee to:

- Reconfirm its call for Scotland’s public transport networks to be accessible for disabled and older people with properly staffed public transport networks, no cuts to ticket offices and no extensions of DOO;
- Lobby the DfT to deliver on making the railways accessible following their accessibility audit and for the audit to be published in the public domain;
- Publicly highlight all the stations in Scotland that need accessibility improvements and campaign for the works to be carried out when the DfT audit is published;
- Lobby the UK Secretary of State for Transport to review the Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations 1998 and update it for the modern world; and
- Write to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport to ask them to ensure that Scotrail’s new fleet is fully accessible, with a safety

critical guard on board all services, and far exceeds the current legal minimum requirements.”

**Mover: National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers**

**Seconder: The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen**

### **Resolution 3. Improving Disability Access on Scottish Island Ferries**

“That this Conference notes with concern the significant challenges faced by disabled individuals when using Scottish island ferries. Despite the vital role these ferries play in connecting island communities, many vessels remain inaccessible to those with disabilities.

“Reports indicate that ferries, particularly older ones, lack essential features such as ramps, lifts, and accessible toilets, making travel difficult and at times, impossible for disabled passengers.

“This Conference acknowledges the legal requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Equality Act 2010, which mandate that all public transport services, including ferries, must be accessible to disabled individuals.

“However, it is evident that many ferries built before these regulations came into effect do not meet these standards.

“We call upon the STUC Disabled Workers’ Committee to lobby the Scottish Government and relevant authorities to prioritise the modernisation of the ferry fleet, ensuring that all new vessels are fully accessible.

“Also, we urge the implementation of interim measures to improve accessibility on existing ferries, such as installing portable ramps and providing staff training on assisting disabled passengers.

“In addition, the Scottish Government should be increasing funding for ferry services to support these necessary upgrades and to ensure that all passengers, regardless of their physical abilities, can travel safely and comfortably.

“By addressing these issues, we can promote inclusivity and ensure that our island communities remain connected and accessible to everyone.”

Mover: Communications Workers Union

## **Resolution 4. Dignity When Travelling**

“That this Conference notes, where is the dignity when travelling via an aircraft and also their accompanying carers throughout their journey through the airport and when boarding the plane, and then the journey on the plane and to go through it all again when you all come out the other side.

“The signposts for disabled do nothing to protect the characteristics as they are visibly segregated from other passengers in an openly visible area.

“When on the aircraft the toilets are not big enough if the disabled passenger would need to use them, but what if the passenger does not have the use of their legs, how do they get to the toilet.

“The aisle is not wide enough for the wheelchair, so the passenger cannot use it, the chair has to go into luggage hold, or at the front of the plane depending on the dimensions of the chair, but it is not guaranteed that the chair will not be damaged.

“Conference asks that the STUC Disabled Workers’ Committee:

- lobby the MP’s, MSP’s and also the airlines to find a way to assist disabled passengers when boarding a plane to go on holiday with dignity, and that dignity is also shown especially when the passenger has to use the toilet”.

**Mover: GMB Scotland**

## **Resolution 6. Making Scotland's Ferries Accessible for All**

“That this Conference notes that the Scottish Government has tendered a design and build contract to replace seven small ferries on the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services contract operated by public sector company CalMac Ferries. Conference also notes that the average age of the seven ships which need replacing is 34 years and that these ships are not fully accessible to disabled passengers.

“Conference believes that all life-line ferry services should be run in the public sector to the benefit of all.

“Conference calls on the STUC Disabled Workers' Committee to lobby the Scottish Government to:

- award the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services contract to CalMac Ferries for the long term; and
- ensure that all public ferry services and associated infrastructure are fully accessible to all passengers supported by seafarer and port staff who are appropriately trained in line with RMT's People's CalMac campaign.”

**Mover: National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers**

## **Amended Resolution 7. Call Out Discrimination**

“That this Conference notes that with the state of the UK economy (most of it left over from previous government) far-right narratives have adversely impacted the general public’s view of people with protected characteristics. Some people's senses have been heightened resulting in a lot more unrest among the general public. Many feel powerless and right-wing politicians and right-wing media claim the only way they can see themselves getting control back is by bullying vulnerable people including disabled people.

“There is also a perception of disabled people receiving benefits draining the public purse dry therefore leaving less for them. This is grossly inaccurate and unjust.

“Aberdeen TUC calls on the STUC Disabled Workers’ Committee to:

- Call out this discrimination (make a statement);
- Encourage trade unions and trade councils to call it out as well; and
- Call upon Trade Union Councils to invite speakers to support disabled people and denounce the current right-wing narrative on their St Andrew’s Day rallies.”

**Mover: Aberdeen Trades Union Council**

## **Resolution 8. EHRC Disability Discrimination**

“That this Conference welcomes the EHRC Strategic Priority which expressly outlines a requirement to challenge employers where there is evidence of consistent failures to make reasonable adjustments for workers. Despite the clear purpose of the Equality Act and specifically Sections 20 and 21 of the Equality Act 2010, which require those to whom the provisions apply, to “take such steps as it is reasonable to have to take” to avoid putting disabled people at “a substantial disadvantage, we are still seeing workers with disabilities facing disability discrimination at work.

“Conference notes the fact that the TUC is working closely with the EHRC on these priorities and calls on the STUC Disabled Workers’ Committee to work with the TUC Disabled Workers Committee and other stakeholders to:

- encourage affiliates in Scotland to report employers to the EHRC who are systematically discriminating on the grounds of disability;
- lobby the EHRC to push for appropriate sanctions against such employers;
- provide a report to affiliates of data relating to relevant ET cases highlighting respondents who are repeatedly found to breach disability law so perpetual offending employers can be identified; and
- launch a campaign highlighting those employers identified in the report who are accredited as ‘Disability Confident’ to be stripped of this status.”

**Mover: Communication Workers Union**

## **Resolution 9. Standing Up for Sitting Down**

“That this Conference endorses the PDA Union campaign “Standing Up for Sitting Down”. The campaign calls for pharmacy employers to provide appropriate reasonable adjustments which are regularly reviewed, and for members to know their disability rights and have confidence to ask for reasonable adjustments. Fair work dictates that employers must create a compassionate culture where there is zero tolerance for disability discrimination against any employee.

“Conference notes that 40% of PDA members, individuals that are experienced, highly qualified health care professionals, but that also happen to have a disability have been excluded, underemployed or made unemployed. This is woeful and a sad indictment of a world that does not value people who have skills and want to be active members of the workforce but need adjustments to enable them to work safely and well.

“The PDA Ability Networks’ recent disability discrimination survey found that 52% of respondents had experienced disability discrimination at work. The PDA Union call on all employers in pharmacy to comply with their legal responsibilities under the Equality Act and Scotland’s fair work legislation, whether that is as simple as providing a chair for a disabled employee who cannot stand all shift or enabling a flexible working pattern for someone with a long-term health condition who is in chronic pain.

“Employers need to ensure that there is no room for disability discrimination in the workplace, and that their managers are fully trained to understand their responsibilities and how to take appropriate action to end discrimination.

“Conference therefore calls on the STUC Disabled Workers’ Committee to work with the STUC General Council to support the PDA campaign and demand that employers work constructively to create a culture where pharmacists with disabilities or long-term health conditions are valued, supported and protected from discrimination.”

**Mover: The Pharmacists’ Defence Association**

## **Resolution 10. Taking Action to End Bullying and Harassment of Disabled Workers**

“That this Conference is deeply concerned by the extent to which disabled workers are exposed to bullying and harassment at work. Research shows that over half of disabled workers compared to less than two fifths of non-disabled workers experience bullying and harassment at work. Young workers, women, LGBT+ and Black disabled workers are disproportionately impacted because of their unique combination of protected characteristics.

“Whilst bullying and harassment takes many forms and affects workers differently it can have a profoundly damaging impact on mental and physical health, on a person’s personal and working life and on workplace cultures. Stereotypes about disabled people fuel discrimination and less favourable treatment. They prevent disabled people getting into work, remaining in work and getting on in work. They also have broader implications and can limit how disabled workers behave in the workplace as they seek to avoid situations and people that might put them at further risk.

“Conference asserts that harassment and bullying at work is part of a larger pattern of discrimination experienced by disabled people.

“Disabled workers, disabled people’s organisations and trade unions need to be consulted about the design and implementation of effective and preventative workplace interventions.

“Conference welcomes the important role the STUC Disabled Workers’ Committee plays in setting the record straight about the contribution disabled workers make, and asks the STUC to lobby the Scottish and Westminster Governments to:

- take positive action to change the way disabled people are viewed, valued and included in society;

- consult on extending the new preventative duty to sexual harassment to other forms of harassment including disability harassment; and
- reinstate standalone protection from third party harassment and enact Clause 14 of the Equality Act 2010 providing protection against discrimination that occurs for reasons related to a combination of protected characteristics.”

**Mover: Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers**

## **Resolution Composite B – Neurodiversity Workplace Toolkit (Covering Motions 11 & Motion 12)**

“That this Conference reiterates its support for neurodivergent workers in Scotland. Conference highlights the benefits that neurodivergent workers bring to the workplace and society across Scotland.

Although "neurodiversity" refers to the diversity of all individuals, it is commonly used in relation to learning disabilities, ADHD, and other neurological or developmental disorders, including autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

“Conference notes that:

- According to the NAIT Adult Neurodevelopmental Pathways report 1 in 10 people are neurodivergent in Scotland.
- Many neurodivergent workers still face unnecessary challenges in workplaces across Scotland.
- A disability employment gap of 31.9% exists within Scotland.
- Neurodivergent workers in Scotland often feel excluded from the world of work.
- The number of neurodivergent healthcare professionals in Scotland is increasing, however exact numbers are unknown because of lack of diagnosis and fear of prejudice.

“Conference believes that employers need to consider what can and should be done to support individuals and train managers in changes they can make to support a neurodivergent individual.

“RCM has seen a rise in member feedback and requests for assistance regarding individual neurodivergent challenges within the workplace. Challenges were mirrored within midwifery education from student members. To assist neurodivergent midwifery students and reduce challenges in navigating undergraduate courses, RCM has created a Neurodivergence Acceptance Toolkit that assists and encourages providers of midwifery education to assess all their procedures, from recruitment to accreditation, to guarantee the delivery of a comprehensive and inclusive midwifery education. It provides an

accessible environment where neurodiverse students can thrive as they train.

“Many of the principles of the toolkit apply to qualified midwives and other healthcare professionals, even though the target audience is students. Extrapolating the toolkit, would develop a Neurodivergence Workplace toolkit that implements procedures that meet standards and considers the abilities and needs of workers with neurodivergence. This toolkit is imperative to fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce that allows neurodiverse employees to contribute distinctive perspectives and problem-solving techniques.

“Conference calls on the STUC Disabled Workers’ Committee to:

- Lobby the Scottish Government on their plans to introduce a Bill championing the rights of people with learning disabilities, autism and neurodivergent conditions ensuring that:
  - the interests of neurodivergent workers are championed.
  - the voices of neurodivergent workers are heard in the development of the Government’s Bill.
  - a Bill championing the rights of people with learning disabilities, autism and neurodivergent conditions is developed, delivered and implemented in full.
- Facilitate the development and sharing of training, guides, and supportive practices around neurodivergence between trade unions and employers that operate within Scotland;
- Campaign for employers to train managers to better understand the nuances of neurodiversity and to recognise that small reasonable adjustments can be made in the same way they are for visible disabilities: to make job adverts more appealing, hiring processes easier, and to allow employees to flourish in the workplace who are not ‘neuro typical.’
- Endorse and support the proposal of developing a Neurodivergence Workplace Toolkit to secure NHS Scotland's position as a leading employer and innovator in healthcare delivery with an inclusive workforce. This can be achieved by assisting each worker in discovering their full potential and fostering an ideal workplace.”

**Mover: Community**

**Seconded: Royal College of Midwives**

## **Amended Resolution 13. Shorter Waiting Times and Better Post Diagnostic Support for Autistic People**

“That this Conference notes that societal barriers can cause significant social, communication and behavioural difficulties that can impact all aspects of life for autistic people.

“In Scotland thousands of potentially autistic people are waiting up to four and a half years just to be invited to begin their diagnostic process. Early diagnosis and intervention have been proven to contribute to positive outcomes for children and young people and are key to them receiving the right support in education, the workplace and at home.

“With a diagnosis being key in accessing many supports, entitlements and benefits this leaves people feeling let down, left out and frustrated that valuable time is being lost while they remain on waiting lists.

“Many people feel so distressed and unsupported that they have felt their only option is to seek help by paying for costly private assessments which in turn creates a two-tier health system that will see those from disadvantaged backgrounds left waiting longer.

“We acknowledge that whilst the pandemic has negatively impacted services, all children and young people deserve to have timely assessments and the vital support they need at the earliest possible stage in their development.

“Conference calls upon the STUC Disabled Workers’ Committee to:

- put pressure on the Scottish government to put additional resources into autism services and address these appalling waiting times;
- raise awareness of and promote inclusive practices; and
- campaign to advocate for people to receive timely and appropriate supports.”

**Mover: Unite the Union**

**Seconder: The Educational Institute of Scotland**

## **Resolution 14. Impact of Education Cuts**

“That this Conference notes with grave concern the impact of Education cuts, including those by Glasgow City Council, which are having an adverse effect on the health and wellbeing of teachers and the ability to provide quality education to learners, including those with additional support needs.

“Conference believes that these cuts compound the difficulties caused by large class sizes, insufficient time for teachers to prepare, and a systemic lack of resourcing for additional support needs provision, and contribute further to the high levels of workplace stress for the education profession.

“Conference further believes that underfunding results in an overstretched workforce and a lack of flexibility within the workplace, which may in turn impact disabled people’s access to reasonable adjustments, making this a health and safety matter as well as a disability equality issue, for both teachers and learners.

“Conference notes research by the EIS showing that violent and aggressive behaviour has increased significantly across schools in Scotland, putting education staff at risk of workplace injury and highlighting the imperative for additional funding to address the underlying causes of harmful behaviour.

“Conference therefore calls on the STUC Disabled Workers’ Committee to:

- issue a statement in support of Glasgow EIS campaign “Teachers Make Glasgow”, condemning the cuts to Education, most notably a reduction of 450 teacher jobs;
- use the recent research from the education sector on violent and aggressive behaviour towards staff, to inform any ongoing and future work related to Health and Safety, and within campaigning on protections related to workplace injury.”

**Mover: Educational Institute of Scotland**

## **Resolution 15. Creative Scotland**

“That this Conference notes the closure and subsequent reinstatement of Creative Scotland’s Open Fund for Individuals, Access to Music and Strengthening Youth Music funds, all within a few weeks, represents a precarious landscape for musicians in Scotland, particularly those who are disabled and/or young.

“Justified through the Scottish Government’s decision to freeze all non-contracted, non-essential spending, essential work and learning opportunities tied to funded projects and programmes have been significantly impacted. This also follows delays to funding decisions earlier in the year, which saw both organisations and individuals deeply impacted.

“The global pandemic, Brexit, cost of living and arts funding crises have had a profound impact on disabled musicians’ ability to create and deliver projects, and earn a living from this work.

“Disabled musicians often face ableism and barriers to employment opportunities and are navigating some of the most challenging conditions simply to be able to work and earn a living. The precarity of these vital funds removes a significant avenue towards working and earning.

“Years of standstill funding and underinvestment has meant that the creative industries, organisations, and individuals who practise within it desperately need stability now more than ever.

“Conference calls on the STUC Disabled Workers’ Committee to lobby Scottish Government to:

- raise public revenue and increase investment in the arts and cultural sector through the STUC’s progressive taxation recommendations;
- provide ringfenced, sustainable funding, for disabled musicians in Scotland, and establish a targeted fund for disabled musicians to provide more robust financial support to cover

- accessible equipment, training and other requirements for disabled musicians and creative freelancers;
- commit to ensuring that disabled musicians are not overlooked or disadvantaged in the forthcoming review of Creative Scotland; and
  - ensure the needs of disabled musicians and creative freelancers are represented in all discussions on arts funding and policy.”

**Mover: Musician’s Union**

## **Amended Resolution 17. Mental Health and Disability**

“That this Conference believes that mental health is a workplace issue, and a disability rights issue.

“Conference notes that discrimination, stigma and bias associated with disability issues may cause or exacerbate stress and contribute to ill mental and physical health.

“Conference further notes that groups who are at risk of experiencing inequality and discrimination related to their protected characteristics, may need tailored support that is informed by an understanding of inequality-related trauma.

“Conference notes the value of disability (or reasonable adjustments) passports so that adjustments do not need to be restated or explained and can stay with the worker when jobs change.”

“Conference therefore calls on the STUC Disabled Workers’ Committee to:

- Raise awareness of the issue of mental health as a disability equality issue, for example during Mental Health Awareness week;
- Consider possible avenues for peer discussion to provide support and organise around mental health for disabled workers;
- Provide guidance and learning resources to Health and Safety Reps on disability and reasonable adjustments in relation to mental health; and
- Campaign for the use of disability passports to include reasonable adjustments related to mental health, and ‘hidden’ disabilities”.

**Mover: The Educational Institute of Scotland**

**Seconder: National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers**

## **Resolution 18. Discretionary Sick Pay**

“That this Conference agrees that, to varying degrees, the following policies and agreements can positively protect workers from losing their jobs (in particular through the misapplication of sickness absence measures):

- the counting of disability-related absences separately from sickness absence;
- the establishment of a disability leave provision; and
- the utilisation of a discretionary extension of sick pay.

“Conference notes that, while some employers have a sick pay policy that includes a discretionary period which means the employer can offer better pay for some sickness circumstances, such clauses are inconsistently applied.

“Conference continues to believe the pandemic shone a light on the inadequacy of statutory and contractual sick pay provisions with many employees finding themselves unfit for work for over 12 months, certainly compounded by increased waiting times for diagnosis and treatment.

“Conference calls on the STUC Disabled Workers’ Committee to:

- support information sharing between affiliates to identify good practice models which assist disabled workers to maintain employment;
- provide advice and training on how to negotiate improved local policies and procedures, such as attendance, sickness, capability, and redundancy procedures; and
- provide an intersectional lens to advice on sick pay, sickness absence and disability leave models, ensuring intersectional disadvantage is acknowledged and no employee is discriminated against as a result of any protected characteristic.”

**Mover: NASUWT**

## **Resolution 19. Updating NHS Scotland Arrangements for Medical Exclusion Following Infectious or Notifiable Disease**

“That this Conference notes the spread of Pertussis this year has affected many health staff at private contractor operated sites, like community pharmacies. The rising number of cases recorded may be inaccurate because many staff who have become ill do not seek help and continue to work while ill and infectious to others, because they cannot afford to be off sick on statutory sick pay of £116.75 per week, or 26% of the minimum wage. Pertussis is just one of many notifiable diseases.

“Through no fault of theirs, patient facing health and care workers are more likely to catch these infections, they are exposed to them on a daily basis by their work and should not be financially penalised if they are infected.

“Conference believes these staff should be covered by the established arrangements for medical exclusion and suspension if they contract an infectious or notifiable disease whereby employees are entitled to payment as if at work during the period of illness and infectivity.

“This is described as a supportive action that applies when there is a health-related concern that may mean an employee is a risk to themselves, colleagues or others. ‘Others’ includes vulnerable, elderly, disabled, or immuno-compromised patients that should not be exposed to significantly higher risk in health facilities by the presence of infected staff.

“Conference calls on the STUC Disabled Workers’ Committee to lobby the Scottish Government to update NHS Scotland’s Attendance Policy to include all workers who deliver NHS services at all sites where health and social care is provided. Including those who deliver NHS services from private contractor owned premises including pharmacies, optometry, dental and GP practices. This will enable all health and care staff to protect their fellow workers and patients receiving their services from the infection risk and entirely avoidable disease.”

**Mover: The Pharmacists’ Defence Association**

## **Resolution 20. Men Matter Trade Unions!**

“That this Conference notes that suicide remains the biggest cause of death for men under 50 in Scotland. In 2022, there were 753 deaths by suicide; 80% (602) of those who took their own lives were male. This equates to 2 deaths of men and boys every day of the year. The suicide rate in Scotland remains consistently higher than in other UK nations, most recently, 13.9 per 100,000 deaths compared to 12.3 in Northern Ireland and 10.7% in both England and Wales.

“A 2023 report by Disability Rights UK noted that disabled men were three times more likely to die by suicide than non-disabled.

“Scotland’s 10-Year National Suicide Prevention Strategy (2022) entitled ‘Creating Hope Together’ is welcome, however, there is scant detail of the role Trade Unions can play.

“A Priory Study of Scottish men in employment found 77% have suffered symptoms of poor mental health. 72% have never spoken to anyone about their mental health fearing embarrassment or stigma and felt it would take suicidal thoughts or self-harm to compel them to seek professional help.

“Enough is enough - trade unions must become part of the solution. We call on the STUC Disabled Workers’ Committee to:

- publicise and promote the National Suicide Prevention Strategy ‘Creating Hope Together’;
- encourage brave men to come forward and champion work towards creating safe spaces within our unions where men can share and discuss their experiences of mental health;
- encourage more men in our unions to undertake Suicide Prevention Skills Training such as Safe Talk, ASIST and Mental Health First Aid;
- signpost members to support groups, such as Chris’s House, CALM, Men Matter Scotland, etc; and
- remind employers that their duty of care to employees includes well-being.”

**Mover: UNISON Scotland**

## **Resolution 21. Access for Disabled Journalists to Political Events**

“That this Conference notes Government and political party conferences, campaign launches, and press events provide important information that influences the decisions that voters make.

“Journalists play an important democratic role in scrutinising and reporting on new government policies, political party manifestos, activities, and announcements, and sharing this information with the public.

“Disabled people and our rights have long been marginalised by politicians and the lack of scrutiny in the media compounds this. It is vital for disabled journalists who understand those issues to have direct access to politicians to hold them to account and question their policies.

“Disabled journalists need full access to cover events and ask questions of politicians. However, political parties often neglect to consider accessibility when organising events. Appointing access coordinators would help to achieve full inclusion.

“Conference believes:

- it is crucial that disabled journalists have access to cover political events.
- the concerns of disabled people are represented more effectively by journalists with lived experience.

“Conference calls upon the STUC Disabled Workers’ Committee to:

- campaign for the Scottish Government and political parties to be proactive in making their events and activities accessible, including providing remote access for disabled journalists to report and participate in Q&As.”

**Mover: National Union of Journalists**

## **Amended Resolution 22. Making Data Visualisations Accessible**

“That this conference notes ‘Data visualisation’ – the visual representation of data through charts and infographics – has become an integral part of how newsrooms and publishers, including trade unions, communicate information to many audiences. Hard data adds value by quickly and easily illustrating what’s really going on.

“However, accessibility for visually impaired people is too often neglected in data visualisation. Compliance with the Web Accessibility Guidelines provides the bare minimum for accessibility. Alternative text, which makes images accessible for people who use screen readers to navigate the web, is often missing from online data visualisations. When it is included, alt-text is frequently uninformative or incorrect.

“Limited diversity at decision-making levels in the media means that disabled people’s lived experience isn’t taken into consideration and accessibility of visual data journalism isn’t prioritised.

“Newsrooms are waking up to the need to make their visual data journalism more accessible. Trade union publishing has a role to play too. Conference calls on the STUC Disabled Workers’ Committee to:

- adhere to the principles of creating accessible and inclusive communications and information across all platforms, events and meetings;
- ensure accessibility of visual data across its own publications and communications;
- work with disabled people who have experience in creating and accessing visual data;
- work with disabled people to provide guidance for affiliates on accessible visual data; and
- support campaigns to highlight the issue and the detrimental impact a lack of accessibility has on audiences.”

**Mover: The National Union of Journalists**

**Seconder: Unite the Union**

## **Resolution 23. Adopting a Social Model Understanding**

“That this Conference recognises that the social model of disability is fundamental to eliminating discrimination and achieving equality and inclusion for disabled people. Conference notes that despite its significance, the medical model continues to dominate the law and the way in which employers understand and respond to disabled workers.

“This maintains and condones continued exclusion and inequality in the workplace. The disability employment gap is one way in which exclusion can be measured. In Scotland, although the disability employment gap has reduced, disabled people still have a significantly lower employment rate than non-disabled people. Furthermore, analysis by the DWP reveals that the declining gap in Scotland is due to adults already in work becoming disabled, rather than disabled adults moving into work.

“Employers continued focus on ‘adjusting’ the worker and rarely the workplace and removing barriers reinforces the widespread stereotype of disabled people as creating a ‘burden on business’. This shifts the onus onto the disabled worker to repeatedly demonstrate what they can’t do rather than on employers to make workplaces accessible. Disabled workers are increasingly seeing adjustments removed, including adjustments to absence levels and performance targets, leading to disciplinary action and dismissal.

“Where this happens, the failure of employers to adopt a social model understanding ‘individualises’ disabled workers’ responses to discrimination and pushes them into seeking justice via internal grievance and legal procedures where the odds are stacked against them.

“Conference asks the STUC, in consultation with the Disabled Workers’ Committee, to encourage unions to:

- make collective bargaining on disability equality a priority including ensuring reps and officials are trained on the social model;

- regularly review employer policies, practices and publications ensuring where possible they are free of medical model approaches to disability; and
- hold employers to account for failures in their duty to make reasonable adjustments.”

**Mover: Union of Shop, Distributive, and Allied Workers**

## **Resolution 24. Let's Talk About Assisted Dying**

“This this Conference notes assisted dying is an emotive and complex issue which people hold differing and strong views about. The issue can be polarising.

“Common arguments against assisted dying are based on appealing to the rights of disabled people, and are based on religious, moral, and political arguments.

“Many surveys representing individuals, organisations, and health professionals reflect varying levels of support for assisted dying depending on the prognosis and the professionals that may assist. Some remain opposed or silent on the issue, and others have shifted their policy position to neutrality or support.

“The issue has previously been debated, and defeated, in the Scottish and UK parliaments. In May this year, Jersey's States Assembly debated this issue and approved assisted dying for those with a terminal illness 'causing unbearable suffering'. Scotland is progressing down a similar route with an Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill recently being introduced.

“Conference re-affirms its commitment to the Social Model of Disability. This itself raises questions as to whether support for the Social Model of Disability and support for assisted dying are mutually exclusive.

“However, the debate on assisted dying is happening, whether we're part of that, or not. Given disabled people are among those people most vulnerable to abuse of legalised assisted dying, then isn't it important that as disabled members we have a clear policy position, that our voice shapes public debate?

“Conference calls on the STUC Disabled Workers' Committee to:

- develop and conduct a study of disabled workers' views in Scotland as a starting point to an informed discussion;

- use the study’s findings as the basis for a thoughtful, respectful and considered debate with a view to achieving a Scottish policy position across our sister unions; and
- contribute to the present Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill.”

**Mover: UNISON Scotland**

## **Emergency Resolution 1. BSL and the Education (Scotland) Bill**

“That this Conference notes that the Education (Scotland) Bill was introduced on the 4th June of this year, but a serious problem with the Bill became clear in mid-September – when the Stage 1 Bill call for views were made public. The Bill fails to address the needs of British Sign Language (BSL) users and learners, while rightly recognising Gaelic. Both BSL and Gaelic are rich, important languages that deserve equal status under the new Education (Scotland) Bill. Like Gaelic, BSL has specific legal recognition in Scotland.

“Conference is well aware that deaf children who use or want to learn BSL still face too many barriers, which impacts their post-education life in every way, from social interactions to accessing work or public services. Deaf children experience language deprivation and lower attainment in education, due to the lack of planning for, and provision of BSL.

“Conference calls on the STUC Disabled Workers’ Committee to:

- lobby the Education Committee to address this and ask for BSL to be in the Bill;
- call on the Scottish Government to fund training and jobs for qualified Teachers of the Deaf; and
- collate data from local authorities on the availability of BSL-medium education for our young people in education.”

**Mover: STUC Disabled Workers’ Committee**

## **Emergency Resolution 2. Save Scotrail Ticket Offices**

“That this Conference notes with concern that Scottish Government owned rail operator ScotRail announced on 31st October 2024 plans to reduce ticket office hours at 101 of its 143 staffed stations. Conference understands that these proposals would mean that ticket offices at the affected stations would be closed for parts of the day they are currently open and equate to a reduction of a third of the overall ticket office hours at the affected stations, a loss of around 2800 hours a week.

“Conference believes that staffed ticket offices are vital for making rail accessible for disabled and older people. Conference notes with concern that disabled people are already less likely to travel by rail than non-disabled people and that around two-thirds of ScotRail stations are unstaffed.

“Conference notes that the company is basing its proposals on a public consultation from January 2022 in which 98% of respondents objected to plans to reduce ticket office hours. Conference understands that during the 2022 public consultation, a poll by Disability Equality Scotland of its members found that 95% objected to the proposals.

“Conference believes that the Scottish Government, which owns ScotRail and who authorised it to proceed with these cuts, must urgently intervene and instruct it to scrap the plans to cut ticket offices.

“Conference notes the ongoing campaign by the RMT to Save ScotRail Ticket Offices and resolves to support this campaign to protect the vital services offered by staffed ticket offices.

“Conference therefore calls on the STUC Disabled Workers’ Committee to:

- lobby the Scottish Government to reverse this decision;
- support affiliates to campaign against the proposals regarding ScotRail ticket offices; and
- work with groups such as disabled peoples’ organisations to campaign on this issue”

**Mover: National Union of Rail, Maritime, and Transports Workers**

### **Emergency Resolution 3. Impact of Israeli Genocide on Disability in Palestine**

"That this Conference notes the UN report on 14 Oct established that Israeli warfare methods in Gaza are consistent with genocide.

"It condemns the unparalleled scale of disabling attacks on the Palestinian people by the Israeli Occupying Forces (IOF) during the escalating campaign of terror in Gaza and notes the growing numbers of disabled Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank who have been particularly vulnerable to Israeli assaults and starvation as a method of war.

"Between October 2023 and November 2024:

- more than 97,000 have been wounded and more than 22,500 have sustained life-changing injuries requiring rehabilitation services for years to come, according to the World Health Organisation. Many of these Palestinians have had one or both legs amputated; and
- 19 out of 36 hospitals in Gaza have been destroyed with the rest suffering from restrictions of fuel, medical supplies and clean water, fundamentally denying a lifeline to disabled Palestinians.

"Conference calls on the STUC Disabled Workers Committee to:

- write to the Scottish First Minister and UK Prime Minister highlighting Israel's deliberate and systematic disabling attacks on Palestinian workers in occupied Palestine, demanding action be taken to bring this barbarity to an end;
- call for an end to UK and Scottish Government complicity in Israeli war crimes and crimes against humanity, including an end to all arms sales;
- work with the STUC General Council and affiliates to encourage effective support for Palestinian disabled workers by endorsing the Apartheid Free Zones initiative, that align with the call for Boycott Divestment and Sanctions against Israel until it

- complies with international law and ceases the campaign of oppression and ethnic cleansing against the Palestinians;
- support workers who refuse to build, handle and transport weapons destined for Israel; and
  - encourage affiliated unions, branches and individuals to affiliate to the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign."

**Mover: Aberdeen Trades Union Council**

## **Motions Withdrawn At Conference**

### **Amended Motion 16. Failure to Support ASN in Schools**

“That this Conference notes that resources and specialist provision for learners with additional support needs, such as neurodivergent conditions, learning disabilities, and physical disabilities that impact learning, are reducing, whereas, with better diagnostic tools, the number of learners being identified as requiring support in learning is increasing.

“Conference notes that in many schools, 48% or more learners now have an identified support need for learning.

“Conference believes that:

- presumption of the mainstream and integration masquerading as inclusion is not working;
- children with severe and complex needs, including multiple neurodivergent conditions, are likely to have a disability within the definition of the Equality Act 2010 and should be able to access education as part of the wider Single Equality Duty;
- specialist provision is being eroded with the closure of special schools, while the use of school buildings for enhanced supervision which are not fit for this purpose is often seen as the cheaper option and not based on the needs of children;
- children are being prevented from accessing meaningful education as is their right;
- class sizes for learners with ASN/SfL were established in 1985 and do not reflect the situation in 21st-century schools.

“Conference calls on the STUC Disabled Workers’ Committee to campaign for:

- the end of the presumption of mainstream and integration masquerading as inclusion;
- the reopening of special centres for children with severe and complex needs, including multiple neurodivergent conditions;
- effective staffing and resources of the centres;

- support to reduce class sizes from 10 to 6 and increase the ratio of staff to learners so that the resources required can be allocated to the most vulnerable learners in our schools;
- sufficient and effective staffing and resources in mainstream establishments, including sufficient and effective staffing and resources to support learners with ASN;
- the right of all of our school communities to feel safe.”

**Mover: NASUWT**

**Seconder: STUC Disabled Workers' Committee**