

**GMB**  
**CONGRESS 2026**

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

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**Held in:**

**The Winter Gardens,**  
**Blackpool**

**on:**

**Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> June 2026**  
**Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> June 2026**  
**Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> June 2026**  
**Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2026**  
**-and-**  
**Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> June 2026**

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**PROCEEDINGS**

**DAY FOUR**  
**(Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2026)**

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## **FOURTH DAY'S PROCEEDINGS**

**WEDNESDAY, 10<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2026**

### **MORNING SESSION**

*(Conference assembled at 9 a.m.)*

#### **Call to Order**

THE PRESIDENT: Delegates, can I call Congress to order. I always think by the time we get to Wednesday we are on the home straight. Before I ask Karen to come to the stage could I just announce that Cath Murphy left her charger overnight by that North West & Irish delegation area yesterday. If anyone picked it up please could they either return to it Cath or bring it to the top table, and I will make sure she gets it. We also have our final awards of the week this morning so that is something to look forward but can I ask Karen of the SOC to move SOC Special Report No. 7 please

#### **Standing Orders Committee Special Report No. 7**

KAREN DUDLEY (Chair, Standing Orders Committee): President, Congress, moving SOC Report No. 7.

Congress, the SOC would like to express its deep disappointment that delegates from the Midlands Region were unable to ask their questions to the Secretary of State for Defence yesterday. *(Applause)*

Congress, the following questions would have been asked by the Midlands delegation had they had the opportunity to do so. I will read it verbatim as it was presented to the Secretary of State.

Question 7, from Sharon Yates, Midlands Region:

“The Midlands is the heart of British manufacturing and I am proud to be a Potter. This year we have seen several companies - Denby Ceramics, wheel manufacturer GKN, iconic pottery firm Royal Stafford and paper giant DS Smith - fall into administration. Nigel Farage and Reform say they are on the side of workers but we know they voted against our new rights. How will your Government support British manufacturing and show communities like mine that it is Labour that is on our side?”

Question 8:

“My name is Ruweida from the GMB Amazon branch. Amazon workers in the Midlands have recently faced an outbreak of tuberculosis, adding to a long and shameful history of health and safety failures Amazon workers face at work. Amazon still receive millions in tax-funded public contracts. What can the Government do to confront this and make Amazon safe for workers?”

Congress, the SOC would like the record to show that the above questions would have been asked to the Secretary of State for Defence from the Midlands Region. (*Applause*)

**Withdrawn motions**

There have been no further withdrawn motions.

### **Emergency motions**

Sorry, Gary! Congress, please note that Emergency Composite 17: Mileage Rates, comprising Emergency Motions 10 and 11 from the North, East, Yorkshire & Humber and Southern Regions will be debated this later this morning.

### **Bucket collections**

London Region raised £516.10 in cash (*Applause*) plus £185.90 online, making a grand total of £702 for Motor Neurone MND charity. Congress, please note the above also included a £10 Irish note, a £5 Scottish note and a GMB lip balm! Well done to London Region!

The SOC will consider further requests for emergency motions. The SOC will update Congress accordingly. President, Congress, I formally move the adoption of SOC Report No. 7.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen. Thank you for reading out those questions. I think it is important they are recorded, thank you. Does anybody want to speak in opposition? Farzana.

FARZANA JUMMA (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): This is meant to be a composite of two motions and it is not: it is Southern Region's motion only. Mine is on the cost of living and includes a number of different areas, not just mileage rates, so although this is going to be debated this morning it is not mine, mine is separate and needs to go through the formal channels. So, I oppose the SOC report on that basis.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Farzana.

KAREN DUDLEY: President, Congress, not a problem. We can decouple them and they can be debated separately. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen.

THE PRESIDENT: The vote is, firstly, are you happy as Karen said, to decouple those composites? All those in favour please show. Anyone against? Thank you. Then I can put the rest of the report to Congress. All those in favour of the report, please show. Anyone against? That report is carried.

*SOC Report No. 7 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen. We will now show regional success videos from Scotland and North East, Yorkshire & Humber Regions.

### **GMB Scotland Success Video**

*Video shown to Congress.*

## **North East, Yorkshire & Humber Success Video**

*Video shown to Congress.*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Scotland and North East, Yorkshire and Humber. Two more inspirational videos. So many campaigns and so many successes. It is a great way to start the day.

## **JOHN McCLEAN HEALTH & SAFETY AWARDS**

Congress, It is my great pleasure to announce the winners of the John McClean Award for the GMB Health and Safety Team of the year for 2026. It goes to Abeda Uddin from London Region, Jo Pitchford from North West & Irish, Ruth Pitchford, North West & Irish, Marcia Durkey, London, Martina Vrajitoru, Wales & South West, Tracy Immediata, North East, Yorkshire & Humber, and Vanessa Roberts, Midlands. *(Applause)* We will show a short video.

*Video shown to Congress.*

THE PRESIDENT: Abeda and Tracey unfortunately cannot be here to receive their award in person, but Jo, Ruth, Marcia, Martina and Vanessa are here, so please come up to the stage.

MARTINA VRAJITORU (Wales & South West): Good morning, everyone. I just want to say a massive thank you for all the people behind me, for the people who got involved, for the reps who joined the meetings and who will be part of it in the future.

And of course we want to say thank you, it is a great pleasure to be appreciated and to know that the hard work we do in the workplace is recognised. So thank you so much from all of us and on behalf of all of us. Enjoy the rest of the Congress.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Worthy winners. It was nice to see Amelia see her mum getting the award.

## **UNION ORGANISATION: FINANCE & CONTRIBUTIONS, UNION BENEFITS & SERVICES**

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, we will now be debating motions relating to finances and union benefits and services and also the Financial Proposals and Annual Accounts, which will be moved by the General Secretary. I will explain how I will take this debate. Delegates will move and second Motions 43, 44, 45 and the decoupled Emergency Motion 10 and Emergency Motion 11. with any opposing speakers. The General Secretary will then respond with the CEC position and also move the Financial Statement and Annual Accounts and I will be taking one speaker from each region. Could I have the movers and seconders for Motions 43, 44, 45, Emergency Motion 10 and Emergency Motion 11 and the mover of 43 to come to the rostrum, please?

## **MAKE UNION SUPPORT SERVICES WORK FOR MEMBERS**

### **MOTION 43**

#### **43. MAKE UNION SUPPORT SERVICES WORK FOR MEMBERS**

This congress moves to ensure that the GMB embraces innovation and member led initiatives to deliver infrastructure, campaigns, communications, and other activities that improve the lives of all our members.

As time moves forward society, technology, and organising changes, this is not new. If the GMB fails to keep up to date with organising techniques, digital advancements, and emerging opportunities, then we are failing our members. GMB is behind the curve on utilising technology, this is evident in the unions operational patchwork held together by emails, archaic systems, and dwindling midnight oil.

Our whole movement faces these challenges. Overcoming the challenge means utilising all our talents, and that means utilising the experiences and knowledge of our lay members, reps, and officers alike.

Members have innovative ideas and solutions to push our movement forward. They should be taken seriously or we risk losing goodwill and innovation opportunities. Technology advances have always changed how we organise. We should embrace the opportunities they provide.

#### Congress Believes

1. Where innovation is proposed by the membership, genuine efforts and investigation should be made into the feasibility and opportunities for the union.
2. Engaged activists are freely permitted in all discussions relevant to their organising activities and innovation.
3. Members must always be treated with respect and dignity, negative treatment of members should not be tolerated and will be appropriately dealt with.
4. A mechanism to challenge non lay member decisions on innovation projects should be established to ensure members can drive change forward.
5. A national committee or working group of lay members and officials should be created to drive forward digital innovation across the union.

#### **Y10 YORK GENERAL**

#### **NORTH EAST, YORKSHIRE & HUMBER REGION**

*(Referred)*

CONNAN McARTHUR (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Good morning, Congress. My name is Connan McArthur and I am proud to be representing the Doncaster Branch from the North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region as a first-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I understand the CEC has changed its position on this from seeking withdrawal to refer, so I am now going to be moving this motion and I will keep it a little bit shorter.

I am moving this motion because it resonates with me as a relatively new activist in the GMB. I got active last year when my branch launched a campaign to reverse a pay cut that had been in place at Doncaster Council since 2012. It was a campaign we fought

hard but, ultimately, I am very proud to say we won this year. A key factor in this victory was our ability to mobilise members through the new digital organising tool Movement. It allowed us to move faster, communicate more effectively and helped to make the campaign more member led. However, internally, it was a frustratingly slow battle to gain access to this valuable tool, which really shouldn't be the case.

Congress, if we want to be delivering for our members to the best of our abilities then we need to be forward thinking and listening to those on the front-line who have valuable insight. We have already heard a lot over the past few days about how the tech landscape is rapidly evolving, but our win in Doncaster demonstrates that technology can be used to drive positive change when in the right hands. However, globally and nationally we are increasingly seeing employers who are driven by profit, not public service, investing heavily into digital systems which are then used to out organise workers. In 2026, digital organising is no longer a nice to have but essential for delivering on our mission to make work better for members. Our union has a powerful voice and we have the solutions for a better world but if we aren't making a continued effort to be in the right spaces then workers won't be able to hear us. So Congress, I accept the referral. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Connan. Secunder. (*Formally seconded*) Perfect. Mover of Motion 44, please.

**GMB UNION AFFIRMED SUPPORT TO THE ANNUAL TOLPUDDLE  
FESTIVAL**

**MOTION 44**

#### **44. GMB UNION AFFIRMED SUPPORT TO THE ANNUAL TOLPUDDLE FESTIVAL**

This Congress calls for The GMB Union to implement the 2018 motion F40. That national and regional resources and funding for the Tolpuddle Festival, which was then moved and carried by congress, remains outstanding and un-implemented.

Every year the cost of this has been born solely by the GMB Southern Region Office, despite the imposition of funding having been apparently resolved by Congress in 2018. The motion of 2018 F40 – (Gmb@tolpuddle) was carried and has failed to be implemented to this day and consequently the burden remains with Southern Region.

Every year, GMB secures a field for all of its members at Tolpuddle, and offers free camping, for a week, to every GMB member and their family. Toilets and showers are always provided in the warmest month of the year.

The motion carried in 2018 ensured that adequate national and regional resources are allocated each year to deliver a strong visible and a well supported GMB presence at the Tolpuddle festival. This directive should now be implemented and the Tolpuddle Festival comprehensively supported to ensure a secure and successful future event.

#### **W27 TOLPUDDLE BRANCH SOUTHERN REGION**

*(Referred)*

CHRIS HIBBERD (Southern): President, Congress, this Congress calls for Tolpuddle Festival funding as moved and carried at Congress 2018, Motion 40, to be implemented without further delay. Every year trade unions across the country come together in a unique little village in Dorset to celebrate the sacrifice of six men: George and James Loveless, Thomas and John Standfield, James Brine and James Hammett, collectively known as the Tolpuddle Martyrs, all from the village of Tolpuddle in Dorset. These six men were agricultural labourers arrested in 1834 for forming a friendly society, an early trade union formed by taking a secret oath of solidarity. Their protest was of employer wage cuts. Despite unions being technically legal they were prosecuted under an obscure 1797 law and sentenced to seven years' penal transportation to Australia. Massive public outcry and protests led to their pardon in 1836 and they returned to England as heroes and remain universally recognised founders of the modern union movement.

In July every year, members from all trade unions descend on this tiny Dorset village. They parade their banners to honour the Martyrs' sacrifice and the foundation of what went on to be trade union movement as we know it today. On Festival Sunday, the trade union movement traditionally pays its respects to the one martyr James Hammet, who is buried in the local churchyard with a ceremonial wreath laying. This is usually attended by a senior representative of the Labour Party from which the trade union movement was instrumental in forming.

This year Festival Sunday falls on 19<sup>th</sup> July. The GMB has secured a spacious field for its members at Tolpuddle and offers free camping for a week for every GMB member and their family. The Tolpuddle Martyrs are the reason we are here today in the congressional hall. We are all here engaged in established processes, both institutional and political, to bring about change made possible through the sacrifice of a handful of Tolpuddle farm workers back in 1834. The union movement in this country has just one memorial venue, the Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival, the Parade, the Martyrs' Museum, the networking, the village memorials, the pub and of course the grave. There are many usual suspect attendees including our own Madam President. Every year the cost of this has been borne solely by GMB Southern Region despite the imposition of funding having been apparently resolved by Congress in 2018.

Congress, only collectively do we rise. The GMB family divided will fall. Only together can we ensure that our union heritage is preserved and celebrated. Co-operation and solidarity across regions will serve to sustain the celebration of our great trade union history. The motion carried in 2018 ensured that adequate national

resources are allocated each year to deliver a strong, visible and well-supported GMB presence at the Tolpuddle Festival. This directive should now be implemented and the Tolpuddle Festival comprehensively supported to ensure secure and successful future events. Congress, this motion is the subject of a referral, which is not a panacea for kicking the can down the road. It is, rather, an opportunity to endorse our heritage before it is lost. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Chris. It is always a great event and I look forward to going again this year. If you have not been please do try and get there. Secunder? Formally? No, not formally.

GARETH WILSON (Southern): President, Vice-President, General Secretary, good morning, Congress. GMB S68 Branch, first-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Thank you. They said that is supposed to make you feel better but I think the jury is still out on that one!

I am proud to second Motion 44. In 2018, this Congress carried Motion F40, a clear democratic instruction that national resources must support the Tolpuddle Festival. Not may, not should, but must. That mandate was unambiguous. It was carried by Congress, endorsed by our Rule Book structures and entered into the official record of this union. Eight years later, Southern Region is still footing the entire bill. The national commitment that Congress agreed, the commitment our members were told to expect has never been implemented. And Congress decisions are not optional, ; they are binding. Tolpuddle is not a weekend away; it is the birthplace of our movement. It is where six ordinary working men - George and James Loveless, Thomas and John

Standfield, James Hammett and James Brine - stood against exploitation and paid with their freedom. Their sacrifice is the reason why every delegate in this hall has a right to speak, organise and negotiate today. Every July thousands of trade unionists gather in that tiny Dorset village to honour them. GMB provides the field, the facilities, the welcome but only because Southern Region shoulders the entire cost. That is not sustainable and that is not what Congress instructed. The primary mover has already set out the history, the heritage and the moral obligation. I want to add this: when Congress carries a motion, our members expect action. No excuses. Not delay. Not silence. We owe that to our history, we owe that to our members and we owe that to the Martyrs who struggled to build this movement. Congress, let's put this right. I second. (*Applause*)

## **CLEAR BOUNDARIES BETWEEN LAY REPRESENTATION AND LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY**

### **MOTION 45**

#### **45. CLEAR BOUNDARIES BETWEEN LAY REPRESENTATION AND LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY**

This Congress recognises the vital role played by workplace representatives in supporting members through workplace disputes, disciplinary processes, grievances, and collective issues.

Congress notes that employment law cases, particularly those involving Employment Tribunal proceedings, statutory limitation dates, legal pleadings, and remedies calculations, are increasingly complex and time-sensitive.

Congress further notes growing concerns from branches that cases involving legal processes have, in some instances, been redirected from Unionline or legal services back to lay representatives, despite these matters requiring professional legal expertise.

Congress believes that unclear boundaries between lay representation and legal responsibility:

- place members at risk of receiving incomplete or incorrect advice,
- expose representatives to stress, liability concerns, and unreasonable expectations,
- and create inconsistency in the standard of support provided across the union.

This Congress therefore calls on the CEC to:

1. Develop and publish clear national guidance defining the responsibilities and limits of lay representatives once a case reaches a legal threshold.
2. Establish mandatory handover points where cases involving Employment Tribunal proceedings, statutory deadlines, or legal documentation must be owned and progressed by Unionline or the union's legal services.
3. Provide written reassurance that lay representatives are not responsible for providing legal advice or completing legally technical documentation.
4. Introduce a clear escalation route where representatives believe legal responsibility is being inappropriately redirected.

**M27 LB MERTON BRANCH  
SOUTHERN REGION**

*(Referred)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gareth. Mover of Motion 45.

KIM MARSHALL (Southern): Good morning Congress, Madam President, Vice President, moving Motion 45: Clear Boundaries Between Lay Representation and Legal Responsibility. This motion comes directly from the experience of workplace representatives across our union. Every day lay representatives support members through disciplinary hearings, grievances, sickness absence procedures, restructures, discrimination, complaints and workplace disputes. We do this willingly because we believe in support working people. However, employment law is becoming increasingly complex. Representatives are increasingly being asked to assist with matters involving ACAS, early reconciliation, limitation dates, legal documentation, compensation schedules and other issues which carry significant legal implications. The problem is that the line between workplace representation and professional legal advice is not always clear. Lay representatives are volunteers and activists. We are not solicitors, we are not barristers and we certainly are not employed or remunerated as legal professionals, yet many representatives find themselves under pressure to assist with matters that carry significant legal implications. This creates risks for everyone

involved. It creates risks for members, who deserve accurate and consistent advice. It creates risks for representatives, who may feel responsible for matters beyond their training and authority. And it creates risks for the union because inconsistent approaches can lead to confusion, frustration and potential reputational -- damage to reputation when members believe they have not received the level of support they expected from their union.

This motion is not a criticism of our representatives, our legal teams or UnionLine. In fact it is the opposite. This motion recognises the valuable contribution made by each part of our union and seeks to ensure that responsibilities are clearly understood and appropriately allocated. We believe that members should receive professional legal support when legal expertise is required and that representatives should be supported by clear guidance on where their responsibilities begin and end. This motion asks for clarity, consistency and protection. It asks for clear national guidance, defined handover points for legal cases, reassurance for representatives regarding legal responsibility, and a route to escalate concerns where boundaries become unclear.

Congress, our representatives already give enormous amounts of their time, energy and commitment to supporting members. They deserve clear expectations, proper support and protection. I ask Congress to support this motion, thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you Kim, well done. Secunder.

TRACEY ALLAM (Southern): Madam President, Congress, I rise and still I rise: the far right will not win. (*Applause*) Let's be honest about what is happening on the shop

floor. Every single day our workplace reps do magnificent heroic work. They navigate grievances, face down hostile management and protect our members. But we need to draw a hard clear line where lay representation ends and professional legal liability begins. Employment law has become an absolute minefield. We are dealing with rigid tribunal deadlines, complex legal proceedings and technical calculations. Things have gotten so legally intense that I asked a rep the other day how a disciplinary meeting went. They told me. "It went great! The employer brought a barrister, HR director, three corporate lawyers. Luckily, we had a secret weapon, I brought a packet of Hobnobs, a flask of tea and the GMB Rule Book. It was a completely unfair fight - for them." But joking aside, a single technical slip on an employment tribunal form that can completely ruin a member's case. It is an unfair weight to dump on a rep's shoulders yet branches are raising a massive warning sign. Complex legal cases are being re-directed away from professional legal services and passed back down to lay reps. It is unfair, it is unsafe and it has to stop. It puts members at high risk, exposes reps to extreme stress and makes our support a total lottery.

Merton is asking for the basics: clear national guidance, mandatory legal handover points, written reassurance that reps are not liable for legal documentation and a clear escalation route. The CEC is asking for this to be referred so we can evaluate how different regions resource policy. This must not be used to kick the can down the road. It must be a mandate to build a watertight national policy. Our lay reps are fighters, organisers, negotiators there are not unpaid, uninsured lawyers. Let's protect our reps, secure our members and back the referral of Motion 45. Thank you, Congress.

*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tracey. The mover of Emergency Motion 10, Southern Region.

## **EMERGENCY MOTION 10**

### **EM10: Increase in Mileage Rates**

Congress notes that the HMRC Approved Mileage Allowance Payments (AMAP) rate for cars and vans has risen from 45p per mile to 55p per mile for the first 10,000 business miles travelled in a tax year. This change was announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves in May 2026 and has been backdated to 6 April 2026.

Congress further notes that this increase comes during a continuing cost of living crisis that is hitting our members hardest. There are also the rising costs of fuel to consider. Many GMB members are low-paid workers who cannot absorb rising fuel, insurance, and vehicle maintenance costs without real financial strain.

Congress recognises that GMB workplace representatives regularly use their own vehicles to attend meetings, represent members, support colleagues in hearings, and carry out essential union duties. These reps give their time, energy, and personal resources to strengthen our workplaces and uphold the values of this union. They should not be left out of pocket for doing the work that keeps GMB strong.

Congress believes that if HMRC has increased the mileage rate to reflect real-world costs, then GMB must consider making that increase. Our union should lead by example and ensure that both members and workplace reps are properly supported, not financially penalised, for undertaking union duties.

Congress therefore calls on the CEC to:

1. Increase GMB mileage payments to match the new HMRC AMAP rate of 55p per mile with immediate effect.
2. Review mileage rates annually to ensure they remain aligned with HMRC guidance and the rising cost of living.
3. Ensure no rep or member is financially disadvantaged for undertaking union duties that support and strengthen GMB.

This motion seeks to support low-paid members, those impacted by the cost-of-living crisis and the workplace representatives who keep GMB functioning at its best. Matching HMRC mileage rates is a fair, necessary and urgent step.

**Moving Region:** Southern Region

*(Referred)*

EMMA FAIR (Southern): President, Congress, moving Emergency Motion 10.

*(Applause)* We accept the CEC's request for referral. However, Congress must also

recognise the urgency of this issue. The HMRC approved mileage allowance payment has risen from 45 to 55 per mile backdated to 6<sup>th</sup> April, reflecting the real rise in the cost of fuel, insurance and vehicle maintenance. Our workplace representatives, many of them low-paid workers, routinely use their own vehicles to carry out essential union duties. They should not be subsidising the union's work from their own pockets. While we accept the CEC's request for referral, we do so on a clear understanding that this matter will be considered as a priority by the Finance & General Purposes Committee, with a report and recommendation brought forward at the earliest possible opportunity. Congress expects and our members deserve a timely resolution that ensures our reps are not financially disadvantaged for undertaking union duties

THE PRESIDENT: Are you done?

EMMA FAIR: I am done. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Emma. Secunder? (*Formally seconded*) Mover of Emergency Motion 11 then from North East, Yorkshire & Humber.

## **EMERGENCY MOTION 11**

### **EM11: Cost of Living Crisis**

Congress working class communities are hit first and the hardest by both rising living costs and the impact of war.

The escalation of war in the Middle East has further driven increases in global oil and gas prices, worsened the cost of living crisis in the UK through higher fuel, food and energy bills.

In April 2026 the chancellor raised the mileage rate to 55p. She stated this was in part because of the costs of living crisis.

Members cannot wait another 12 months for congress policy to catch up with these changes.

Congress we call on the CEC to:

- Campaign and lobby government for urgent protection and support for workers from rising fuel, energy and food costs.
- Demand action against profiteering from industries during global crises.
- Oppose further escalation of wars and support peaceful, diplomatic solutions to such crises that are based on the unity of working people.
- Increase the mileage rate for our members carrying out their GMB roles by 10p which is the new HMRC rate of 55p.

**Moving Region:** North East, Yorkshire & Humber

*(Referred)*

FARZANA JUMMA (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Congress, Presidents, my sometimes favourite General Secretary (*Applause*), working-class communities are always the first to feel the impact of rising prices and too often they are the last to receive support. Across our regions and nations members are telling us the same story: wages are being stretched further than ever, household budgets are under pressure and everyday essentials are costing more. The continuing instability and conflict in the Middle East has contributed to higher global energy costs, which impacts our fuel prices, food production, transport costs and household bills. It is working people who pay the price while large corporations continue to protect their profits. That is why this motion is both timely and necessary. We are 103 days into this current war that none of us agreed to and none of us want.

Last month the Chancellor recognised the reality facing workers by increasing the HMRC rate to 55 per mile. This is a bare minimum that our Government acknowledges that costs have risen and our union must act, too. Members are carrying out GMB

duties and should not be left out of pocket for representing and supporting fellow workers. Congress, our activists and representatives already give their time, energy and commitment to this union. They should not be subsidising that work from their own pockets. Increasing our mileage rates by 10 p to match the new HMRC rate is fair and practical and it cannot wait 12 months.

But this motion goes further. It calls on us to campaign for meaningful protection from rising fuel, food and energy costs. It challenges profiteering during times of crisis and it recognises that working people everywhere have a shared interest in peace, stability and diplomatic solutions and not to further escalate any conflicts.

This motion stands for fairness, solidarity and common sense. This is the year of the reps and next year is the year of the reps and going forward it is the same. Without reps, without new people and hard-working people at home in regions and nations, the GMB cannot function.

So, I welcome the CEC's reference back and to committing to have a decision by October 2026 and I urge you to support it, but what I am asking for is that it is backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> April. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Farzana. Secunder? (*Formally seconded*) Does anybody wish to speak in opposition to any of those motions?

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Me!

THE PRESIDENT: You now do get the right of reply on behalf of the CEC.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Oh dear, I need a drink after that one. Right. You could see all the shuffling of bits of paper there. Thankfully, somebody keeps me right.! I am pleased to be responding to Motions 43, 44, 45 and Emergency Motion 10 and Emergency Motion 11. The CEC is asking that all those motions are referred.

On Motion 43, Connan, the campaign in Donny is absolutely fantastic. I absolutely hear what you are saying. Some incredible things have gone on in your patch. We have to ensure that we are giving you the tools and all of our activists the tools to campaign as best and effectively as possible. I had some of those cakes that you made after you won the campaign. You have all my support and best wishes.

Congress, we are putting a lot of money into our systems this year. We are having a whole overhaul of the membership system and with that, we want to look at all the campaign tools as well. I will talk a bit about that in the Finance Report as well. It is something that is long overdue and in part the reason the can was kicked down the road for so many years was the state of our membership and state of the finances of the union, but we are in a better place now. We have a whole process set up. We have got external support for the organisation. It looks like a really professional project plan that we have in place and we want to ensure that all the regions can feed into that. Please refer back. I assure you we will give you an opportunity to feed in because we want to learn from all the fantastic work that you are doing. The region is doing some trail-blazing work. You are doing some fantastic work around the reps and I assure you

we want to do everything to support you within that. Did you see that, Farzana, I am saying some nice stuff before we get to the finance bit?

Chris, Gareth, about Tolpuddle, I have got a real emotional attachment to Tolpuddle. I was a young organiser in Southern Region and I used to come down and set up the festival. And then when I was a young senior organiser in Plymouth, I often reflected on the steps of the Barbican because the ship sailed for Australia, the Martyrs were taken from Plymouth, so I have huge emotional attachment to that.

We did pass a motion at Congress, and what I would say, Gareth, is the national union has put £30,000 into the Tolpuddle campaign and I will send you details of the funding that has been provided. So, it is simply not true, and I appreciate you are not saying that to be confrontational, and I need to get underneath why that has not been properly communicated to you. We have spent a lot of money on Tolpuddle. In 2019, there was £40,000 or thereabouts spent on Tolpuddle. I want us to back these national festivals. We do the Durham Miners' Gala. We did give a commitment through the F&GP as well that all that expenditure should not fall on regions or individual branches, and if something is not happening I need to know why. But there do have to be limits on how much we spend. There are huge sums of money going into Tolpuddle and there needs to be a discussion within your region about what is appropriate by way of spending. Is £40,000 for one event the best use? You need to have that debate. But we have put £30,000 into the festival and I will write to confirming that. To be fair, over the past three years, your Region hasn't written to the Finance Committee looking for the funding. We can have a look at that as well but, remember, your Treasurer is Scottish, your Head of Finance is Scottish and we are no' just going to send you money! I

promise you we will look into it and we will get underneath what is happening to the spending. I will write to the President and your Regional Secretary today.

Kim, Tracey, excellent motion, fantastic: it makes absolute sense. We are doing some great stuff on casework but it is not consistent. We are doing some great work on systems generally. Midlands is trail-blazing our case management system. London is doing fantastic work around the retention and recruitment and I know that North East, Yorkshire & Humber has done some fantastic work on communication. We are doing things a bit piecemeal. The system upgrades will help, but what really worries me in terms of casework is discrimination type cases, because it is so complex, the law moves so often, I worry that we are potentially very vulnerable in this. Tushar, when he gets freed up from working on Congress, you see him up here every morning, is actually starting to pull together what different regions are doing, and we are going to try to come up with a national framework. I am going to talk about UnionLine a wee bit in a minute. The whole senior management team is absolutely committed to being great at campaigning, but we want to make sure we have got the best possible representation for our members at point of crisis as well. That means training, that means legal support and we want to make sure we have fantastic legal services. We have a budget for that and we need to do it properly. Please refer that. Let us have a look at that and we absolutely will come back to you.

On Emergency Motions 10 and 11, I am not going to argue with folk about it. I think the Inland Revenue rate went up three weeks ago. It is very slow and it is behind the curve. I get that people are out of pocket. I mean this sincerely, it is never lost on me that I am the highest paid person in this union and I absolutely respect the fact that we

do not want our people out of pocket doing the business of the union. (*Applause*) And again, the union's finances are in a healthy place. I will say that when I am moving the report. I am not looking to be tight here, Farzana, believe it or not, I know you think I am. Can I just remind you we had the generous inflation-busting increase of a fiver. We are not taking the money back - I promise you. Last year, subsistence went up by a fiver and the overnight allowance went up by a fiver. How generous are we? (*Cries of "Woo!"*) It has got implications for Michael and the team. It has got implications for branch finances. Please work with us and I promise you it will be done quickly and, if not, you will be back here next year giving me a kicking so I can assure you we will move that forward. I really respect the work people do.

So, for Motions 43, 45 and 45, Emergency Motion 10 and 11, we are asking for them to be referred back and we are not looking to kick the can down the road. We are in a good place financially as a union because of your hard work and we will move this forward. Given how generous we were in improving subsistence last year, I stand on my track record, Farzana, all right? (*Applause*)

*Motion 43 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 44 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 45 was **REFERRED**.*

*Emergency Motion 10 was **REFERRED**.*

*Emergency Motion 11 was **REFERRED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gary. The General Secretary stays at the rostrum to give the Financial Proposals and Annual Accounts, but can I ask one speaker from each

of the regions on that to come down to the front, please, so they can speak after Gary has spoken.

## **FINANCIAL PROPOSALS AND ANNUAL ACCOUNTS**

### **CEC Statement: Financial Proposals**

#### **Subscription Rates and Financial Position**

Congress is asked to consider and approve the recommendation outlined below.

#### **Financial Performance – 2025**

The Financial Statements for the year ending 31 December 2025 will report an operating surplus of £401,000, compared with £414,000 in 2024.

However, this statutory figure does not fully reflect the union's financial performance for the year.

The Management Accounts report a significantly higher operating surplus of approximately £5.9 million, driven by:

- Growth in Grade 1 and Grade 2 membership
- Removal of the £1 million additional employer pension contribution
- Substantial income from equal pay settlement advice provided to members

This represents a strong financial outcome and reflects the efforts of the union across all levels. It strengthens our financial resilience and our capacity to reinvest in services and support for members.

#### **Economic Context**

The broader economic environment remains challenging for members. Although inflation has eased from its recent peak, it is perilous and the overall cost of living remains significantly elevated.

Essential goods and services—including food, energy, housing and transport - continue to place sustained pressure on household finances.

The CEC recognises that:

- Wage growth in many sectors has not kept pace with cumulative cost increases;
- Real incomes remain under pressure;
- Housing costs, including rent and mortgages, have risen substantially;
- Day-to-day living expenses continue to strain working households.

For many GMB members, these pressures remain acute.

#### **Affordability of Membership**

Against this backdrop, the CEC believes that:

- Maintaining affordable access to union membership is more important than ever
- Even modest increases in subscription rates would come at a time when many members are making difficult financial decisions.

The union's current financial stability allows it to take a supportive and measured approach.

By holding subscription rates at their current level, the union can help ease financial pressure on members and ensure continued accessibility of membership.

This approach aligns with the union's broader commitment to support members not only through representation and industrial strength, but also through its own financial decisions.

**The Central Executive Council therefore proposes that Congress AGREES:**

Contribution rates be frozen from October 2026, with subscription levels maintained at their current rates.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Congress, I need to formally move the Financial Statement and ask Congress to accept the report there have been. There have been no questions on the report.

First, a huge thank you to Alison, our Head of Finance, who is not with us, and Michael. They do such a fantastic job on our behalf and it really, really is appreciated. We have had the new audit systems and new auditors in place and they have been flat out with the whole finance team, so thank you to, Michael, and please pass on our best wishes to Alison as well. Michael led on the fringe on finances on Sunday as well. I know he was supported by Manjeet and others.

It is also appropriate - finances are quite complicated, we have a national set-up, we have to get the figures in in terms of what we are obliged to report back in law, but there is a whole lot of work that goes on within the individual regions and I am very, very grateful for the support of the regional financial teams, and I would like to put that on record as well.

There are people who are often not given credit around the finances of the union because I have “Treasurer” in my job title, but I want to pay great tribute to the main budget holders in the union who are the Regional Secretaries. They are a fantastic bunch of people. They have done so much. (*Applause*) I am going to talk about what we done around the finances, but they have been integral in terms of transforming the fortunes of this union, including the financial fortunes. I mean this, I have been involved in this union for 42 years, I think it is, I have been a member of this union, and we have had some great people in the past, don’t get me wrong, I mean this, this is the most decent, honest and hard-working leadership we have ever had in the union, so thank you to each and every one of you. (*Applause*)

Above all, Congress, we have made some difficult decisions in my previous time as a General Secretary and Treasurer. Those of you who have been around know that. We would not be in the position we are if it was not for the support that you have given me and you have given the leadership of the union. So, thank you, you have transformed the fortunes of your union, as I am going to talk about in a second. We have quite literally pulled this union back from the brink and let’s never lose sight of that.

When I first stood for General Secretary, I said I wanted to make it more affordable to be a union member. We broke away from this habit of every year cranking up the subs. Every single year we came to this Congress, and put up subs by 10 p and 5 p, and what that did was disguise the failure of the leadership of the union at the time because the financial membership was falling.

So, the way we balanced the books is we moved money from the Political Fund into the General Account. We cranked up the subs every single year. Lay members effectively paid for the failure of this organisation. And we stopped that and froze the subs for a number of years, and, in real terms, at a point of acute financial crisis in the country, we put £11.4 million back into members' pockets. At the same time as we did that, we did make difficult decisions about restructuring, about costs and expenditure. We bore down on what was happening with spending. And what I am pleased to say is that for last year in real terms we had a real surplus of over £5 million. That is the best surplus we have had that I can remember, apart from over lockdown when we weren't spending any money. The value of the union is about £133 million. This is a strong union, with a strong financial base, and because of your hard work and because of the support that you have given us we have £25 million in our cash reserves. How we have got to that position is all the work that you have been talking about this week. It is the campaigns. It is the shop steward organisation that we have put in place and a growing union, be under no illusions, is a healthy union. It is important we keep the organisation growing and that keeps the finances strong, and, in turn, it creates that virtuous circle where we can invest in the systems and keep fighting and running those campaigns.

Another very important source of income has been with the work that we have been doing on equal pay. I will not go into all the detail here - we have discussed it at the CEC - but when we are getting settlements now for equal pay, and no money comes out of the pocket of the members, by the way, but rather than the settlement money going to lawyers, we have now put in place systems and technology which means the money comes to the union. It is worth millions to us, and every penny of that we are reinvesting

back into the union, particularly in the fight for pay justice for working-class women. I am very happy to show people the systems that we have got in place because it really is impressive.

I want to touch briefly on UnionLine. I have not got time to go into all this in detail, but our legal business we have had challenges with it for a number of years, but we were hit with the most sophisticated fraud imaginable. Manjeet, our Head of Legal, came in to do a whole host of things. I can tell you this has been all consuming for Manjeet and other members of the team in terms of trying to get underneath what has happened with UnionLine and, most importantly, to protect the members who could have been impacted by that fraud, there is a police investigation going on. The regulatory bodies and the law both in Scotland and down south, their investigations are ongoing. We have got to a position of stability. In the past few weeks we have had to take pretty significant action in Scotland. Thank you to Louise Gilmour and the Scottish Committee. We have had to take action there to shore things up. But the main thing for us, and it is been painful, I cannot tell you how difficult and how upsetting this has been, but the main thing for us all, including the CEC, has been to safeguard the position of members, so no members are out of the pocket as a result of that fraud. We will keep working it through and we will keep reporting to the Finance Committee and the CEC.

One of my huge frustrations is when I look at the money coming in through the personal injury work, there is a lot of money coming in, there are a lot of payments rightly getting made to members, there is a good business there, it just for too long was subject to some really poor management behaviour and, ultimately, a very serious fraud.

Very briefly on our pension scheme for staff, our pension scheme is over 125% funded. I mean this on behalf of all our staff, and I mean this from bottom of our heart, when our pension scheme was in trouble, you stepped up as lay members and pumped a huge amount of money into the scheme to get it into the position it is today. Thank you so much for that. The scheme is in robust good health and we have been able to give some benefits back to the staff over the past couple of years such is the strong position the scheme is in. I want to say to each and every one of you. Thank you very much.

*(Applause)*

Congress, this is going to be a tough autumn and winter. We are starting to see big issues around membership already. I am not hiding from what is coming. In a two-week period, and colleagues in the Midlands and Scotland will tell you this because they were the biggest hit, we had 10 factories either closed, mothballed or laying people off. Unfair competition from China, energy bills - that was part of the story - and failure of government policy in things like house building, but you can see the way the economic situation is turning. We have had big job losses in Asda recently, as some of you announced. This is about technology. So, we have Trump's war on the one hand, government policy on things like energy which is hitting our manufacturing base and you can start to see the impact of tech and AI on jobs as well. In the public sector, I hope I am wrong, but I think the cost of borrowing will go up and there is going to be pressure on public spending, all of which has got implications for our membership levels. It is ultimately the membership that is really important in terms of the finances of the union.

What I am saying, Congress, is that as a leadership group and as the Treasurer and the finance team, we are walking a very thin line here, because if we get the finances wrong, all of a sudden we are tipped into real problems and not able to support and do the great stuff that we have been talking about here today. In line with what I said we would do four or five years ago, we want to make membership of the union as affordable as possible. Recognising the huge financial pressures on the union, we are investing heavily in systems, we are overhauling what we are doing with legal, we want to invest in our staff and lay activists, inflation hits the union as well, petrol costs, energy bills, the whole shebang, but I mean this, as a leadership I think we do listen to our membership. That is very important in terms of the culture of the union now. We know our members are struggling and things could get worse and will get worse this winter. So I am very, very pleased to say to Congress that we are recommending a freeze in subs again this year. It is the right thing to do by our people. (*Applause*)

I will bring my comments to a close. I say this with a heavy heart but I mean it. The coming period is going to be tough. I look at what is happening with the finances and the position of other unions and some sister unions are not going to survive. I can see what goes on. I know how this works. We, on the other hand, are in a very strong position because we worked hard and we pulled this union back from the brink, with hard work, discipline, through building the union properly, and very importantly, being serious about how we go about our business. The job we do is serious and when we get it right we change lives - campaigning, winning, growing. Tough times ahead, folks, but we are ready. Thank you. (*Applause and stand ovation*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gary. The first of the speakers from London Region pleas, and then it will be Midlands. No speaker from London Region? Okay, I will go straight to the Midlands then.

IAN BURKETT (Midlands): Morning, Gary. 7-0, wasn't it, but never mind! Speaking in support of this proposal. Before I start, though, we only received this this morning. Is it really right that we have to wait until this morning to find important proposals? Special reports are coming out later and later and later and we don't get the chance to have a proper debate on them within the region before we come to Congress. It is wrong. So much so, I have been promising and next year I will bring a rule amendment to make sure the special reports come out in line with the rest of the motions.

As the Midland Region, we support this proposal because we recognise the hardship people are facing and we welcome it. For that, Gary, I will let you off. Thank you.  
*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ian. Short and sweet, thank you.

FARZANA JUMMA (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Hi, everyone. Trouble again! Our region supports the Financial Report. We have a question relating to the report through. Our union delivers a lot with very little. We are like a certain detergent: small but mighty. Will we be able to use our positive financial health to invest in our people and systems, especially at the centre?

THE PRESIDENT: You have got to submit your questions in time, North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region! (*Laughter*) North West & Irish Region.

BILLY GOULDING (North West & Irish): President, Vice President, speaking in support of the Financial Statement. This report shows a union that has grown not only in numbers but in strength, confidence and influence, at a time when working people continue to face huge pressures. It is excellent to see that the GMB has grown by over 6,000 members. That growth matters because every new member strengthens our collective voice and strengthens our ability to win. Resources raised through that group allow us to continue Making Work Better for our members in every sector and every workplace. A strong financial position means we can keep building strong workplace organisations, support our reps, lead industrial campaigns and challenge bad employers wherever they try to undermine workers' rights. These finances are not just figures on a page. They represent investment in protecting jobs, improving pay and conditions, defending equality and ensuring that our members' voices are heard loud and clear. This Financial Statement demonstrates responsibility, stewardship of our union's resources and a commitment to using those resources where they matter most: Supporting members and growing the union. A growing union is a strong union and a stronger union delivers for working people. For those reasons, I urge Congress to support this report. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Billy. GMB Scotland.

GERALD MALLON: (GMB Scotland): Speaking in support of the Financial Statement and Report. GMB Scotland welcomes this Financial Statement and Report

before Congress. The report shows that our union is in a strong financial position. That is the result of hard work across every region of the GMB, our staff, activists, workplace representatives and members who organise, recruit campaign and deliver for this union every day.

GMB Scotland also welcomes the recognition of the position through the decision to freeze subscription rates at a time when members are still facing real pressure as a result of the standard-of-living crisis. I am sure that decision will be appreciated across our membership, but, Congress, we cannot for a moment rest on our laurels or settle into complacency. Workers across the country continue to feel the pressures of insecure work, low pay, attacks on terms and conditions and under-funded public services. We are also conscious of the repercussions of the war in Iran, still to be fully felt.

Our financial strength must have purpose. Our union is built on its membership and membership is built through campaigning. Our strong financial position should be the base from which we build further, organising in workplaces, recruiting new members, supporting members who struggle and campaigns for better pay, better conditions and stronger rights at work. We cannot relax. We cannot stand still. We need to keep campaigning across Scotland, across every region and across every part of our union. GMB Scotland is pleased to support this report, thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gerald. Southern.

JANET FREWIN (Southern): President, Vice-President, Congress, I am a proud member of the National Care Committee. (*Applause*) We are supporting the Financial

Proposals and Annual Accounts. These accounts show that GMB remains a financially strong, stable and independent trade union, but, Congress, this is not just about balance sheets, it is about whether we have the strength to stand up for our members, when our members' jobs are threatened, when restructures and redundancies are announced and when wages are under attack. The headline figures are positive. Membership income remains strong at over £74 million, with a surplus of more than £10 million and net assets now exceeding £130 million. Those are strong results and they matter because they give us the ability to act. They mean we can support members in dispute at a time of real economic uncertainty. That strength has never been more important because, Congress, our members are still feeling the pressure. The cost-of-living crisis has not gone away. Families are still struggling with food, household energy and everyday bills. We welcome the decision not to raise membership fees because we recognise how important it is to keep membership affordable for those we represent because strong finances should mean support flows back to where it matters most: our members, our branches.

Congress, this is a union that is financially secure, a union with growing assets, strong reserves and healthy cash balances but, more importantly, a union with the resources to support our members through uncertain times and invest in our future. The challenge now is to use that strength wisely, to protect our members' jobs, defend wages, to support members, to reverse our membership decline and to ensure every worker understands the value of being part of GMB.

In that spirit, in view of the buoyant financial position outlined in this report, we believe the time is right to return the 10% branch commission (*Applause*) rather than the current

7.5%. And I say to Gary Smith, respectfully, considering the economic challenges our members face and the strength shown in these books, let's give their branches their 2.5% subs. Congress, I ask to you to receive and adopt the 2025 Financial Statements.

*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Janet. Wales & South West. *(Formally supported)*

Thank you very much. Ian, just to come back on your point, the CEC receive the proposals themselves on the eve of Congress. The AR21 that we need to submit to the certification officer was submitted just before Congress and the audit was completed on time. We have to make sure that every potential loose end is done before we go for a freeze. That is the reason why that was late to you and the delegates. I can now put that report to the vote. All those in favour, please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

*The Financial Proposals & Annual Accounts were **ADOPTED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: I now go back to the motions. I did hear people accept them in their speeches but I will just, confirm, does North East, Yorkshire & Humber accept the reference back on Motion 43? *(Accepted)* Does Southern accept the reference on 44? *(Accepted)* Does Southern accept the reference on 45? *(Accepted)* And on Emergency Motion 10? *(Accepted)* Does North East, Yorkshire & Humber accept reference back on Emergency Motion 11? *(Accepted)* Thank you very much. That means there is no vote needed.

*Motion 43 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 44 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 45 was **REFERRED**.*

*Emergency Motion 10 was **REFERRED**.*

*Emergency Motion 11 was **REFERRED**.*

## **UNION ORGANISATION: EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

THE PRESIDENT: I now go on to Union Organisation: Education & Training. Please could I have the movers and seconders for Motions 46, 49, 51 and 53, please, and the mover of 46 to come to the rostrum.

## **UNION LEARNING**

### **MOTION 46**

#### **46. UNION LEARNING**

This Congress calls upon the CEC to ensure that Union courses such as Workplace Representative courses, Health and Safety, and all Union courses are able to be run both in the daytime and also offered as an evening course.

This congress notes that evening courses may take two to three times longer, however this will open up the learning to members who may struggle to get one day for ten weeks at a time off work or even wish to minimise the effect on the working day to avoid unnecessary issues within the workplace or childcare issues.

This union needs to be flexible with learning.

#### **W60 WELLINGTON BRANCH MIDLANDS REGION**

*(Referred)*

BEN COOK (Midlands): Good morning, Congress. Just to let you know I am on it today. I am speaking on behalf of the Midlands Powerhouse, moving Motion 46. This

motion is not just about courses and timetables; it is about fairness, inclusion and the reality of working life today.

Congress, in sectors like mine retail does not sleep. Asda is a 24-hour operation. Just like many of us represented in this room, our members work nights, they work lates, earlies, weekends, rotating shifts, and that changes week to week and there is no normal working day any more. And yet the way we deliver union education still often assumes there is one. As a representative and someone with a family, I know what it means in practice. It means trying to balance work schedules with childcare, with school runs and family life, and it means planning weeks ahead, only for shifts to change, and it means making sacrifices. Under the current arrangements, where in some cases agreements like ours in Asda give us six days of learning, it creates a real barrier. Six days is not flexibility, six days is not access, and six days is a limit placed on opportunity. Congress, if we are serious about equality then we must be serious about removing barriers. Because the truth is simple: if education is only available at times that suit the employer or to fit with traditional working patterns, then it is equally not available to our members. The member working nights is excluded, the parent juggling childcare is excluded and the worker on unpredictable shifts is excluded. That is not because they lack commitment. It is because the system does not flex to meet them where they are.

This motion recognises reality. It recognises that offering evening courses, adapting delivery and extending access, even if it takes longer, opens the doors to members who otherwise would be locked out.

Congress, I stand here as proof of why this matters. Truthfully, I left school with no GCSEs, no qualifications, no obvious path. I worked hard and I went to university, and I am proud of that achievement, but I will honestly tell you, the most meaningful education I have ever received didn't come from university, it came from the trade union movement. (*Applause*) It did not just teach me knowledge, it taught me values, it taught me about equality, not as an idea but as something you must fight for every day. It taught me humility. It taught me to listen and learn from others. It taught me empathy, to understand my experiences beyond my own, and it gave me confidence; the confidence to speak, to represent and to challenge when something isn't right. Most importantly, it taught me solidarity, it taught me friendship. It showed me what it means to stand together, to support one another and to be part of something bigger than yourself. And that is what union education does.

But Congress, there are too many members that never get that opportunity, not because they do not want it but because they cannot access it. They cannot afford to take unpaid time. They cannot afford to take time to step away from family responsibilities and they cannot fit rigid course structures around irregular lives. That is why this motion matters so much - because flexible learning is not a luxury, it is an essential in the 21st century. It is about ensuring a night worker has the same opportunity as a day worker. It is about ensuring that parents are not penalised for caring. It is about ensuring that every rep and every member has a chance to grow, learn and lead. Congress, when we widen access -- I am covering that up (*Covers light*) when we widen access to learning we strengthen our union, we build more confident reps, we build more informed workplaces, we build an inclusive movement, one that truly reflects the diversity of its members so let us not accept limitations.

THE PRESIDENT: Finish, please, Ben.

BEN COOK: Please support this motion. Thank you very much. (*Applause and cheers*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ben. Secunder.

IFTKAHAR UMAR: Mine is going to be a lot shorter than Ben's. I am from Midlands Region, seconding Motion 46. (*Applause*) Ben has raised some really, really good issues in relation to training, learning and being a union rep. Since the pandemic, our working lives have drastically changed for many of our members and our reps. Workplace reps are finding it very difficult making time between work, family life, school runs and caring duties, to attend rigid training days. In order to serve and support our members and colleagues properly and challenge employers, managers and unscrupulous HR officers, we need to have the confidence in our reps with their training and also give them the tools for them to challenge workplace issues. This can only happen with comprehensive training courses and, more importantly, different methods in accessing training, whether this be face to face, hybrid or virtual. This is nothing new in the current working environment. All we are asking is that GMB give the tools to our members and our reps to access and give them the better training that they need. I second this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. No red light. Well done. The mover of Motion 49 please. *(Formally accepted from the floor)* You accept the referral. Good. Mover of Motion 49, please.

## **DIGITAL ORGANISING PLUS**

### **MOTION 49**

#### **49. DIGITAL ORGANISING PLUS**

This congress moves to enhance and expand on the 2024 motion “Digital Organising” to develop our movement.

The world around us is evolving rapidly and we must evolve with it. Employers are increasingly ahead of us in utilising digital technology. Gigification of work is on an underestimated, wide ranging, and immensely powerful rise, stripping traditional jobs of terms and conditions like taxi and package delivery. No profession is immune or safe. It is also the case that digital technologies can be used to our advantage, removing barriers to organising such as manual documentation processing, data extraction, and coordination across lay members and workforces. Leverage of digitalisation could drastically reduce the effort required to bring equal pay-claims, analyse pay/conduct pay disputes, recruit new members, and engage current members. These would all empower our movement and improve the wellbeing of organisers and reps alike.

The GMB must invest in the digital fight urgently, doing nothing or doing little on digital organising is not an option, and that demands more than increasing our use of social media platforms and video media.

On this platform we ask congress to mandate that the GMB go further than social media and videos, the GMB needs to genuinely organise our movement digitally, this mandate includes but is not limited to:

1. Establish a digital innovation delivery group that reports directly to the CEC
2. Resource member led digital innovation
3. Pay analysis tools
4. Workplace mapping tools
5. Digital congregation mechanisms
6. Digital forms and processes
7. Recruitment platforms and tools
8. Pay analysis mechanisms
9. Create a digital mechanism whereby organising needs can be voiced and met with modern purposeful solutions

#### **Y10 YORK GENERAL**

#### **NORTH EAST, YORKSHIRE & HUMBER REGION**

*(Referred)*

THE PRESIDENT: Then the mover of Motion 51, please.

## **BRANCH YOUTH OFFICER TRAINING**

### **MOTION 51**

#### **51. BRANCH YOUTH OFFICER TRAINING**

This Congress acknowledges that properly trained Branch Youth Officers are essential for recruiting, representing, and retaining young members. Youth engagement should not depend on individual initiative alone but on systematic support, mentoring and education. Empowering Youth Officers builds stronger Branches, more diverse leadership and a union ready for the future.

If Congress wants to build a Union that reflects and represents the next generation of workers, Congress must invest in those who lead that work. Training Branch Youth Officers is not just about education, it's about ensuring the GMB's future is active, confident and youth led.

This Congress calls on the GMB to develop and implement a standardised training programme for Branch Youth Officers, delivered regionally and supported nationally.

The training should include: an introduction to GMB structures and democracy; skills in recruitment, campaigning and communication; guidance on supporting young members in the workplace; opportunities to connect with regional youth networks and mentoring schemes.

This Congress requests that Regional Organisers and Education Officers work with the National Young Members Network to ensure the training is accessible, inclusive, and ongoing, not just a one-off session.

This Congress encourages Branches to actively nominate and support Youth Officers to take part in this training and to recognise the role as a vital part of Branch activity, not an optional extra.

#### **M15 MANSFIELD CENTRAL BRANCH MIDLANDS REGION**

*(Carried)*

JAKE HEELEY (Midlands): President Congress, first-time speaker *(Applause)* We acknowledge the CEC's stance to seek referral for Motion 51. However, we do not accept this for the following reasons.

First, this motion is clear, specific and in full order. It calls for consistent, high-quality training for all youth officers across our union. There is no ambiguity, no legal barrier and no procedural fault that justifies sending it back. Congress exists precisely to consider proposals like this, to shape policy and set out priorities.

Secondly, this is a urgent and well-recognised need. Our youth officers are part of the GMB. They represent young workers, organise new members and bring fresh energy to our movement. As a recognised position of our branches, it is crucial that we give our youth officers the best possible training to be able to do all of the things outlined in our Rule Book, but without standardised training, many are left unsupported, unsure of their role and less able to do the job we ask of them. Delaying this motion means delaying support for those who need it most and, like Gary has said, we have to provide our reps with the tools they need to be a success.

Thirdly, this motion come from the grass-roots, submitted by branches and supported by regions. Reflecting the views of ordinary members, the democratic process has been followed in full. Referring it risks overriding the democratic voice. Any details about delivery can be discussed, amended or worked out after Congress agrees the principle, not before we even get to debate it.

In the past, as a union, we used to have a Young Members' Organising School. That was not too many years ago - 2020 to be precise. The turn-out of young members was absolutely phenomenal. It is clear and evident there is a young members' network with a burning flame to grow and progress within the GMB. There are 13 Young Members here at Congress in 2026. Those 13 could be the start of the next organising school.

In conclusion, we need to invest in our branch youth officers with the best support and knowledge possible to bring more youth into our movement, in order to ensure the union carries on supporting our members year after year in the best way they possibly can. Young members are the future of GMB. Congress, I ask you to support our refusal to not refer and support our young workers. I move. (*Applause and cheers*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jake, well done. Secunder.

ANDREW HUMPHRIES (Midlands): Morning, Congress, brothers and sisters, top table. I am not going to be here as long as that, but what I am going to say is we are very proud to have Malcolm Sage in our branch for the youth, because he has a lot of knowledge and supports our youth. Basically, all we are asking for is specific training for all branches so we have the same training. That is all we are asking for.

On another note, a lot people know I am a bee keeper. When a bee dies in a colony, they all die but they have all got a task when they are born. That is what we are saying. The youth is our future. Please support. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Andy. I can testify the honey that his bees make is beautiful! Mover of Motion 53, please.

## **STRENGTHENING REPRESENTATIVE TRAINING AND RESILIENCE**

### **MOTION 53**

#### **53. STRENGTHENING REPRESENTATIVE TRAINING AND RESILIENCE**

This Congress notes the increasing complexity of the day-to-day challenges faced by workplace representatives, including rising casework pressures, frequent legislative changes, and the growing demands placed on members and reps.

Congress believes that to meet these challenges effectively, reps must be fully equipped with comprehensive and up-to-date training. Strengthening knowledge of legislation, employment law, and case management will empower reps, build confidence, and enhance their ability to support members in more complex situations.

Congress further believes that improved training will: increase resilience and support reps' wellbeing; build strength and capability across the rep network; ensure reps are forearmed with the most current legal and procedural information; provide valuable experience that improves representation outcomes for members.

Congress therefore calls on the union to:

1. Expand and improve training opportunities for workplace representatives, with a focus on resilience, confidence-building, and practical casework skills.
2. Provide regular updates and accessible training on current legislation and employment law.
3. Develop advanced learning pathways for reps who support members with complex cases.
4. Strengthen support structures such as mentoring, peer networks, and refresher training to sustain reps' resilience and ongoing development.
5. Consideration to Nationalise Education & Training to enable good practices across all Regions are shared.

#### **L26 RICHMOND & WANDSWORTH BRANCH SOUTHERN REGION**

*(Carried)*

MARIA CHARLES (Southern): Morning, President, Vice-President and -- he's legged it! *(Laughter)* L26 Richmond and Wandsworth Branch, moving Motion 53 - originally - Strengthening Representative Training and Resilience.

This Congress notes the increasing complexity of day-to-day challenges faced by workplace representatives, including rising casework pressure, frequent legislative changes and the growing demands placed on members and reps. Congress believes that to meet these challenges effectively reps must be fully equipped with comprehensive and up-to-date training. Strengthening knowledge of legislation, employment law and case management will empower reps, build confidence and also enhance their ability to support members in more complex situations.

Congress further believes that improved training will increase resilience and support reps' wellbeing, build strength and capability across the rep network ensure, ensure reps are forearmed with the most current legal and procedural information, provide valuable experience that improves representation and outcomes for members.

Congress therefore calls on the union to:

- acknowledge the growth in members, expand and improve training opportunities for workplace representatives, with a focus on resilience, confidence building and practical casework skills.
- Provide regular updates and accessible training on current legislation and employment law.
- Develop advanced learning pathways for reps who support members with complex cases
- Strengthen support structures such as mentoring, peer networks and refresher training to sustain reps' resilience and ongoing development.
- Improve consideration to nationalise education and training to enable good practices across all regions to be shared.

Thank you. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Maria. Seconder.

MICHELLE POWELL (Southern): Hi, Madam President, Madam Vice-President, first-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) I support strengthening

representative training and resilience because representatives face increasingly complex challenges and responsibilities. Better training can help them make informed decisions, communicate effectively with the public and respond to issues with greater confidence and professionalism. Resilience is also important. Representatives often work under pressure and must deal with difficult situations and a rapidly changing environment. Providing support and opportunities can help them remain effective and focused on service and communication. Well-trained, resilient representatives are better equipped to understand the needs of the people they serve, make sound judgments and maintain public trust. For these reasons I second this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Michelle. Does anybody want to speak in opposition to any of those motions? (*No response*) Can I ask Donna Spicer to respond on behalf of the CEC?

DONNA SPICER (CEC, Southern): Morning, Congress. President, Congress, responding on behalf of the CEC to Motions 46, 49, 51 and 53. On Motion 46: Union Learning, the CEC is asking that the motion is referred. The Education Review of January 2025 recognised the value of flexible training and highlighted the need to examine how we deliver learning to reps, particularly training and activist development. However, GMB is clear we will not move training into members' personal time or give up facility time. Training must remain accessible and properly supported. It is written into workplace facilities agreements - paid time off for training.

We have seen what works. A successful pilot for equal pay reps in Birmingham, delivered over a shorter day with proper workplace release and childcare provision,

achieved strong engagement. By contrast, attempts to run evening-based learning saw poor take-up. Work is already under way through pilot programmes led by regional education officers to explore effective delivery models. Referral will allow this work to continue and ensure that learning strategies are practicable, accessible and evidence based.

On Motion 49: Digital Organising, thank you to the region for accepting referral. I won't have to read that bit now!

On motion 51: Branch Youth Officer Training, the CEC is asking that this motion is referred. Apologies Jake, I can't say too much because I have got to read this! The Rule Book rightly emphasises the importance of branch youth officers and we recognise the need to support those in post with appropriate training and development. While there is no longer a formal Youth Members' Network, this area of work is already being considered through the Branch Working Party and the pilot programmes arising from the 2025 Education Review. These initiatives are focused on developing tailored training for the branch roles across the union. Referral will allow this work to progress in a co-ordinated and structured way.

On Motion 53: Strengthening Representative Training and Resilience, the CEC is also seeking referral. This is a helpful and constructive motion that reflects many of the things identified in the 2025 Education Review. Existing induction and training programmes already cover much of what is proposed and ongoing pilot work is focused on improving consistency and extending the reach of the reps' training. However, this motion calls for a move towards a centralised training structure. At present, the union

does not support this direction as such proposals could carry significant cost implications which would require consideration by the Finance and General Purpose Committee. Additionally, the ongoing work led by regional education officers would need to be factored into any future changes. Referral will allow this to be properly considered alongside the existing workstream and pilot projects.

President, in summary, the CEC is asking that Motions 46, 51 and 53 are referred. Thank you. Have a nice day. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Donna. Just before I go to ask the regions if they accept that, can I just say because we are making good time we are going to take Motions 91, 92 and 93 at the end of the day just before the Retired Members' Report. Do Midlands accept the reference back on 46?

MARTIN ALLEN (Midlands): Yes on 46. No on 51.

THE PRESIDENT: Hold your horses, Martin. Let me do them in order. I have heard from North East, Yorkshire they have accepted reference back. 51, it is clear, you are not accepting reference back. That does mean the CEC's position changes to oppose this motion. Southern, are you accepting the reference back on 53. So, I will now have to put Motion 51 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. Hands up really clearly. All those against. That is carried. (*Applause and cheers*) I thought you would like that.

*Motion 46 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 49 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 51 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 53 was **REFERRED**.*

## **UNION ORGANISATION: EQUALITY & INCLUSION**

THE PRESIDENT: That takes us on to Union Organisation: Equality & Inclusion.  
Could I have movers and seconders for all these motions: 54, 55, 56, 57, 58 and 59,  
please?

**The Vice-President takes the Chair.**

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Morning conference. Could I have the mover of Motion 54,  
please.

## **GMB TRAINERS**

### **MOTION 54**

#### **54. GMB TRAINERS**

This Congress notes that we have a wealth of knowledge from our membership and each member brings their own experience with them.

This Congress calls upon the GMB to identify those members and help support them in becoming trainers for the GMB. GMB knows how important it is to educate our workplace organisers and if we identify those excellent members skills, GMB should have them in the classroom, leading the education of the workplace organisers in all things GMB.

#### **L16 LB GREENWICH BRANCH SOUTHERN REGION**

*(Carried)*

STELLA ASIIMWE (Southern): First-time speaker. (*Applause*) Moving Motion 64: GMB Trainers. This motion goes to the heart of what makes our union strong: our members. Across our workplaces we have a wealth of knowledge, experience and talent that cannot be bought or imported. It comes from our workplace representatives, our activists and organisers. People who stand up for fairness, support colleagues through difficult times and know what solidarity looks like in practice.

Congress, we must harness that talent. Many members like myself already possess the skills, the qualifications and commitment needed to become effective trainers. By creating opportunities for members to train members, we strengthen not only individuals but our union as a whole. Education is more than just courses and classrooms. It is about empowerment. It is about giving people the confidence to share knowledge, develop new skills and inspire others to become active within our union. Training our members delivers real benefits. It develops leadership, helping us to identify the next generation of workplace representatives and union leaders. It strengthens our activist base, builds confidence and a culture of continuous learning and development. It also helps us retain knowledge within the GMB. Our members understand the realities of the workplace because they live them every single day. They bring credibility, practical experience and a unique and genuine understanding of the challenges working people face. Our regional education officers already do excellent work in identifying and developing this talent. This motion builds on that work by recognising that some of the best trainers we can have are our own trainers, our own members: people who have walked the walk and can pass on their experience to others.

Congress, we must invest in our members. When we do that we invest in the future of our own union. Let us create new opportunities for activists to become trainers. Let us ensure our education programmes remain member led, experience driven and proudly home grown. By educating within our union, we will build a stronger, more skilled and more united GMB. Congress, please support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Well done, Stella. Can we have the seconder, please.

ALLISON SIMON (Southern): Madam Vice-President, Congress, seconding Motion 54. This motion recognises one of the greatest strengths in our union: our members. Across every workplace, sector, region GMB members bring an incredible wealth of knowledge, skills and experience. They are reps who stand up for colleagues, resolve workplace issues, negotiate with employers and build strong workplace organisation day in and day out, yet too often, that lived experience remains untapped.

Motion 54 offers a practical solution. It calls on GMB to identify talented and experienced members to support them to become trainers of our union. Who better to train the next generation of workplace organisers than those who have done the job themselves? They understand the realities of organising, the challenges our reps face, the skills needed to win for workers. Their experience brings credibility, relevance and inspiration to every training session. Our activists are inspirational. Every one of us can point at someone in this union who has encouraged us, who has stepped up for us, who gave us the confidence to step forward. By investing in home grown training we give those activists an opportunity to inspire the next wave of workforce

representatives, branch officials, regional leaders, national leaders and perhaps even the future General Secretary of this great union.

This motion is about more than training. It is about investing in the future of the GMB. By developing GMB member-led training, we create new opportunities for the GMB activist to grow. Congress, this is a positive, practical and forward looking motion. It values our members to develop activists. I urge you to support this motion, thank you.  
*(Applause)*

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Can I have the mover of Motion 55, please.

## **TRAINING AND PROGRESSION FOR OUR MEMBERS**

### **MOTION 55**

#### **55. TRAINING AND PROGRESSION FOR OUR MEMBERS**

This Congress notes that gaps between roles in GMB limit internal progression.

This Congress believes that our people deserve high-quality training and real pathways into senior roles across the union.

We want to see our lay reps moving their way through the union and reaching their full potential.

This Congress calls on the GMB to:

1. Provide strong, accessible training and development for all.
2. Create clear progression routes into higher roles.
3. Remove unnecessary gaps that prevent internal applicants from stepping up.

#### **L16 LB GREENWICH BRANCH SOUTHERN REGION**

*(Carried)*

TERENA GROVER (Southern): President, Congress, comrades, Congress notes that gaps between roles in the GMB limits internal progress and we all know that means practised talented committed members hitting a ceiling because the training available

stops at the workplace representative. Our current courses are excellent for reps. They cover representation, health and safety, recruitment and equalities, but they do not yet open the doors to becoming officers, health and safety leaders and equality co-ordinators. We want to see our lay reps moving their way through the union, reaching their full potential and taking a rightful place in a senior role.

This motion calls on GMB to:

- Provide strong accessible training and development for all
- Create clear progressive routes into higher roles, remove unnecessary gaps that prevent internal applicants from stepping up.

The CEC qualification recognises the valuable work already done by our regional education officers. They identify and nurture talent across the membership and the Education Review signposted in 2025 is beginning to deliver a clear, professional and personal route through training, but we must go further. There is a misinterpretation in what we mean by higher roles. We must not confuse lay members' skills with office training yet we must ensure both are available. Our mission is to provide accessible training according to needs and ability, not to limit ambition.

School support staff, care workers and other large membership groups deserve the same opportunity to progress. We are a member-led union and our membership must have their voices heard. If we fail to act, we risk losing members to other unions who promise progress but cannot deliver representation, so let's make sure that GMB delivers on its promise: training that builds confidence and competency, pathways that turn reps into officers, a union where every member can see a future for themselves

because, “The NFU is not for you! The GMB is the one for me!” Let’s make this more than just a slogan. Let’s make it a reality. Congress, please support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Can we have the seconder, please. (*Formally seconded*)  
Does anyone wish to oppose the motion? Can we hear from the CEC and Mo Akbar?

MO AKBAR (CEC): Morning, everyone. President. Congress, responding on behalf of the CEC on Motion 55: Training And Progression For Our Members, which we are supporting with qualification. Regional education officers already do excellent work in identifying and nurturing talent across the membership. GMB’s approach to learning is clear. We aim to provide accessible training to members based on their needs and abilities, supporting both personal development and workplace effectiveness. The importance of clear progression pathways through training we recognised in the 2025 Education Review. Since then, regional education officers have been progressing this work through trial pilot projects, helping to develop more structured and supportive training journeys for our members.

Our qualification relates to the wording within the motion around higher roles. There is some ambiguity here and we must be careful not to blur the distinction between developing lay members’ skills and the training and progression pathways for employed officers within the union. That said, the overall sentiment of the motion is positive, constructive and in line with the direction of work already under way. Subject to the qualifications, CEC supports Motion 55. Thank you.

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mo. The CEC is supporting Motion 54 from Southern Region. Does Southern Region accept the qualification on Motion 55? (*Accepted*) Can we put Motions 54 and 55 to the vote, please? All those in support. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Motion 54 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 55 was **CARRIED**.*

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Can I have the mover for Motion 56, please.

## **SUPPORTING WORKPLACE REPRESENTATIVES THROUGH EQUALITY EXPERTISE**

### **MOTION 56**

#### **56. SUPPORTING WORKPLACE REPRESENTATIVES THROUGH EQUALITY EXPERTISE**

This Congress notes that being a workplace representative is increasingly challenging. Changes to legislation and guidance are continually evolving, particularly in relation to equality law and the discussions around potential reforms.

We ask GMB to:

- Continue to support and recognise the importance of all equality strands within our union.
- Encourage branches and groups to make full use of the knowledge and experience held within these equality strands.
- Actively engage with the equality strands to ensure workplace representatives receive accurate, up-to-date information that supports them in their roles.
- Request that strands leads contribute their expertise to the GMB@Work program, strengthening its relevance and effectiveness for stewards on the ground.

**G95 GLASGOW NURSES BRANCH**

**GMB SCOTLAND**

*(Carried)*

PAULINE WARD (GMB Scotland): Moving Motion 56. First-time delegate, second-time speaker. (*Applause*) Motion 56: Supporting Workplace Representatives

Through Equality Expertise. I am a Congress newbie and a newbie workplace organiser because I became a rep in November last year. I will admit at times it is almost overwhelming and I am not just talking about the Blackpool tram timetable and all the Congress documentation. As a rep I am talking about the pace of changes in the law, changes in guidance, and I am talking about the arguments around equality in the workplace becoming more complex and more contested. I am the LGBTQ+ officer for my branch and that is a great joy. I will take my huge GMB Rainbow Pride flag to a march and it has been known for a member from some other branch to spot the GMB flag and we will get chatting and I will sign them up for a self-organised group for LGBTQ+ members. Through the Self-Organised Group (SOG as we like to call it) our LGBTQ+ Strand Leads, Ciorstadh and Chris, listen and they develop knowledge of issues affecting our members.

My branch secretary always says in GMB everything we do is for our members. That is Linda Carr-Pollock, the best branch secretary in GMB! It is so true everything we do is for our members and it is so important we always keep focused on doing everything we can for our members. Through groups like the SOG we can build a feeling of solidarity, but I wish we were also using these groups more effectively for disseminating information. We are in the digital age now and GMB needs to move with the times. We need to be more connected. Lucy Powell, the Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, said recently: “The spread of dis and misinformation is a real and present danger to our democracy”. Certain political parties of the far right are making highly effective use of social media, so we in the Labour Movement need to get information out to our workplaces in formats that members can easily like and reshare, to amplify

the messages. We have been trying to do that through Bluesky and you can find posts from the LGBTQ+ SOG on the #GMB26 Congress hashtag.

But comrades, it has been very difficult to follow all the developments on the erosion of trans rights, the shameful and unnecessary erosion of trans rights and non-binary inclusion that we have been witnessing in the UK. I can't go through all the disappointing and distressing details. Others here have explained that more eloquently than I can. I am a busy NHS data analyst. I have deadlines. I care about my work. I do not have time to read all 342 pages of the latest version of the EHRC Code, so I have been relying on organisations like the Good Law Project and social media figures like Oscar Davies, a non-binary barrister, to get my updates. This situation has highlighted the need for GMB to improve the flow of information to reps. In autumn 2025, GMB set up the new National Equality Action Group. I hope that is going to be the focal point we need to deliver some of the asks in this motion. So, comrades, do please engage with the National Equality Action Group. What might that look like in practice? We want to see bigger and better networks on social media for our reps, more workshops, webinars, email distribution lists. We want bigger and better online resources like conference decisions. Why are our conference decisions not going online straightaway?

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Pauline, can you wrap up please?

PAULINE WARD: That is why this motion calls on GMB to actively engage with the equality strand to ensure reps get accurate up-to-date information to support us in our role. I move. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Can I have the seconder, please?

CIORSTADH REICHLE (GMB Scotland): Congress, seconding Motion 56. Congress, changes in court rules and legislation can lead to confusion within our workplaces, making it challenging determining what is law and what is not law. In GMB we have equality representatives from all regions who sit on various self-organised groups, including the black workers, the disabled workers, the LGBT+ workers and the young workers. These groups are committed to supporting and advising members on equality issues. GMB policy continues to support and recognise the importance of all people, especially those members that identify in these strand groups within the union. To this end, we encourage branches to reach out to the regional strand leads for guidance and advice. This can be ensuring members have access to more up-to-date information or just their lived experiences.

Congress, we believe that this will help members navigate the complexities of workplace equality and provide the ability to make informed decisions. Congress, we are here to help. We don't bite – much! Please support the motion. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Can we have the mover of Motion 57, please?

**ONLINE TRAINING TO HELP REPS ACCESS TRAINING WHEN THEY  
HAVE FAMILY COMMITMENTS OR CAN'T TRAVEL OR STAY AWAY  
FROM HOME**

MOTION 57

## **57. ONLINE TRAINING TO HELP REPS ACCESS TRAINING WHEN THEY HAVE FAMILY COMMITMENTS OR CAN'T TRAVEL OR STAY AWAY FROM HOME**

This motion calls for the expansion of high-quality online and blended training to ensure all GMB representatives can access vital training regardless of family, caring, health, or travel constraints.

It recognises that reliance on face-to-face and residential training creates barriers that disproportionately affect women, carers, disabled members, and those in low-paid work.

By investing in accessible, interactive online training as an equal option alongside in-person courses, GMB can strengthen participation, improve equality of access, and build a more inclusive, skilled, and representative activist base.

### **B22 BRAINTREE & BOCKING BRANCH LONDON REGION**

*(Referred)*

ROBERT BATTELL (London): Moving Motion 57 on online training to help reps access training. Congress, our union is only as strong as the activists we train. Every day GMB reps support members through grievances, disciplinaries, health and safety and workplace negotiations. But too many potential reps face barriers before they have even reached the classroom, not because of lack of commitment, not because of lack of ability, but because they have caring responsibilities, health conditions, family commitments or simply cannot travel long distances or stay away from home. Our Rule Book commits GMB to providing flexible and accessible training. This motion simply asks us to live up to that principle.

The CEC has asked for referral, noting that some regions already provide successful online options. Congress, if these regions can do it, so can London Region. If online learning is already working elsewhere, we know it works. The question is not whether online training has a place within GMB. The question is whether access to training should depend on where a member lives. Face-to-face training remains important and this motion does not seek to replace it; it seeks to expand opportunity and remove

barriers. When we remove barriers, we recruit more activists. When we recruit more activists, we strengthen our workplaces. When we strengthen our workplaces, we strengthen our union. Congress, talent exists in every workplace; opportunity does not. This motion is about closing that gap. If the other regions can make online and blended learning work, then London Region can do.

Congress, support Motion 57 and let's make accessible training a reality for every activist in London Region. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Can we have the seconder, please?

STUART WOLFF (London): President, Vice-President, Congress, seconding Motion 57. Face-to-face training in the classroom has always been good over the past few years, but times have changed. We all forget sometimes that for some members travelling can present several different issues, which I am sure you all agree. If there was an option for online training or hybrid training, it would like things easier to attend. The constraints and barriers some members face would go away. Over the long-term, a hybrid or online format would boost attendance across the regions. Reps and members would not have the pressure of working out travel arrangements, which can be a challenge for some. Overall this will upskill more reps, more members, which in turn would support the union, making us all stronger together. I second the motion. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Can I have the mover for Motion 58, please?

## **OUR ZERO TOLERANCE ON RACISM**

### **MOTION 58**

#### **58. OUR ZERO TOLERANCE ON RACISM**

Congress our union continues to make significant progress to address racism through our union and the workplace where we represent our members.

An area we are not always clear on is our affiliation to anti racism organisations.

We ask congress that we publicly join organisations and have our logo on matters pertaining to anti racism organisations, marches or campaigns.

For a number of years our members with lived experiences have felt unsafe and not fully supported when not seeing our unions logo on matters pertaining to anti racism.

Please support this motion.

**Y30 NEYH ORGANISING BRANCH**  
**NORTH EAST, YORKSHIRE & HUMBER REGION**  
*(Carried)*

MARGARETH ANDY-JAJA (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Chair, Congress, delegates, brothers and sisters, I am a first-time speaker and first-time delegate. *(Applause)* I rise today to move the motion: Our Zero Tolerance on Racism in the Workplace. Racism remains one of the greatest barriers to equality, dignity and fairness in our workplaces. Despite progress over the years, too many workers still experience discrimination, exclusion, harassment and unequal treatment because of their race, ethnicity, nationality, colour or cultural background. As trade unionists, we cannot and must not accept this. Our movement was built on the principles of solidarity, equality and justice. We believe that every worker deserves respect and dignity, regardless of who they are or where they come from. When racism exists in the workplace it undermines these principles and weakens the unity that is essential to protecting workers' rights.

Racism does not always come in obvious forms. Sometimes it appears through discriminatory remarks, offensive jokes, stereotypes, exclusion from opportunities, equal treatment or barriers to career progression. Sometimes it is hidden within workplace cultures and practices that disadvantage workers from minority ethnic backgrounds. Whatever form it takes, racism is unacceptable. Believe it or not, my friend and I experienced this in this very building a few days ago. This motion sends a clear message that there is no place for racism in our workplace, our union or our society. Zero tolerance means more than words on paper. It means action. It means ensuring that employers have effective policies in place to prevent and address racism. It means encouraging workers to report incidents without fear of victimisation. It means holding individuals accountable for discriminatory behaviour. And it means creating workplaces where diversity is celebrated and inclusion is a reality.

Congress, racism harms not only those who are directly affected but also the wider workforce. It damages trust, creates division, affects wellbeing and undermines workplace harmony. A workforce divided by prejudice is a weak workforce. A workforce united in mutual respect is a strong one. Let us send a message to employers that they must do more than simply condemn racism; they must actively tackle it. Let us send a message to our members that our union will always stand beside them in the fight against racism. And let us send a message to society that racism has no place in any workplace. (*Applause*)

We continue to make significant progress to address racism through our union and the workplace where we represent our members. An area we are not clear on is our affiliation to anti-racism organisations. We ask Congress that we publicly join

organisations and have our logo on matters pertaining to anti-racism organisations, marches and campaigns. For a number of years, our members have lived experiences, felt unsafe and not been fully supported when not seeing our union logos on matters pertaining to anti-racism.

Congress, our strength lies in our unity. Our diversity is our strength and our solidarity is our power. I therefore urge Congress to support this motion and reaffirm our collective commitment to a workplace where every worker is treated with dignity, respect and equality. I move. Thank you. (*Applause and standing ovation*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thanks for sharing your experience, well said, Margareth. Can we have the seconder, please?

FARZANA JUMMA (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): I am a proud North East, Yorkshire and Humber member. Congress, you have such heard powerful words from Margareth about zero tolerance to racism. As a union we have made important progress in challenging racism in the workplace and within our structures. We rightly campaign for no place for racism in our union and also therefore in our communities. This motion is not asking for words alone. It is asking for action. It is asking our union to publicly show when we support and affiliate with anti-racism organisations and campaigns and to ensure our logo and our name are present front and centre when initiatives, marches and campaigns take place. For many members, particularly those with lived experience, visibility matters within our union and what we have seen when we have been absent from these campaigns it feels as though we are standing on the sidelines. Our members need to know that our union is not only opposed to racism in principle but is prepared

to demonstrate that, proudly, publicly and consistently. Congress, right now in parts of our regions and nations, there are individuals trying to manipulate people's feelings online, inciting hate and violence in communities and rioting in communities on matters they allegedly care about.

We do not defeat hateful narrative by more hate. Let's remember that no matter what race or religion any of us, we are all human beings. Our neighbours and communities are still the same people we know and peacefully live we. Let's not let billionaires or the far right incite us against our own communities and workplaces. However, different we may look, we are one society and one human race. If we truly believe in zero tolerance on racism then we must show it, just like we showed it at the Together March earlier this year. Let's remember "hate" is four letters but so is "love". Please support.

*(Applause)*

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thank you Farzana. Can we have the mover of Motion 59, please?

## **LANGUAGE ON MIGRANT MEMBERS**

### **MOTION 59**

#### **59. LANGUAGE ON MIGRANT MEMBERS**

This Congress notes the continuing work being done by GMB through its Zero Tolerance approach and the 2025 Anti-Racism and Combatting Hate Special Report at Congress 2025. However, over the last 12 months, all major political parties continue to use language that is propping up a rise in terms such as 'illegal' and this is resulting in an increase in hostile, racist language including in workplaces such as health and social care settings and in front facing roles.

That terms such as "illegal immigrant" and "illegal migrant" are widely used in politics and the media to dehumanise people who move across borders, including many workers our union represents.

That no human being is “illegal”; immigration status is a matter of law and paperwork, not personal worth or humanity and that hostile language contributes to racism, xenophobia and the scapegoating of migrants for low pay, poor housing, underfunded services and other problems caused by political choices and employer practices.

That our union continually models respectful, inclusive language, should educate our members to reject wording that criminalises or stigmatises people because of their migration status and that using accurate terms such as “undocumented”, “people seeking asylum” “refuges” “migrant workers”, or “people with insecure immigration status” better reflects our values of equality, solidarity and dignity at work.

#### Action

This Congress therefore resolves a commitment to supporting members and activists to reframe the terms “illegal immigrant(s)” and “illegal migrant(s)” with alternatives such as “undocumented migrant(s)”, “migrant worker(s)”, or “people with insecure immigration status” in all documents, motions, publicity and communications, except where quoting legal text verbatim and to challenge stigmatising language when it is used in union spaces.

Additionally, to promote further campaigning material that highlights the contribution of migrant workers to our workplaces and communities, and that opposes discriminatory immigration and employment policies.

#### **BOLTON COUNCIL B23 BRANCH NORTH WEST & IRISH REGION**

*(Carried)*

KELVIN ENABULELE (North West & Irish) Kelvin Enabulele, proudly North West & Irish Region. *(Applause)* Congress, language can unite us or it can divide us and right now it is being used to divide. The racist violence last night across Northern Ireland, my region, with emergency services dealing with 62 incidents, has no place anywhere. *(Applause)* As trade unionists, we strive daily to live together in safety and peace despite the far right’s attempts to divide us. We say no to racism. We say no to violence. We say no to Farage, Robinson and Musk’s attempts to stoke through their words more hate. Because Congress, let us be clear: words matter. The words we use do not just describe reality, they shape it. And over the last 12 months we have seen a rise in language like “illegal”, used by politicians, repeated in the media, and now creeping into our workplaces, from health and social care, to front-facing roles. Let’s be clear, no human being is illegal. That term does not just describe status, it

dehumanises people. It fuels racism, it feeds xenophobia and it scapegoats migrant workers for problems caused by political choices and bad employers. Because the real issues are low pay, poor housing and underfunded services, not the people doing the work. Congress, many of those targeted by this language are the very workers we represent. As a union we must do better and echo it. We must challenge it, we must replace it and we must lead. So, when you hear it, we say we are talking about people, not labels, we say as a union we stand for dignity, and we use language that reflects that: “migrant worker”, “undocumented people”, “people seeking asylum”, because we don’t organise labels; we organise workers. We don’t divide, we build solidarity. Every time that toxic language is used, it doesn’t just harm individuals, it divides workers and weakens our power. We are here to do the opposite: to organise, to unite, to win. Congress, stand up for our members, stand up for dignity, stand up for solidarity. Congress, please support this motion. I move. (*Applause and standing ovation*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Can we have the seconder, please?

JO PITCHFORD (North West & Irish): President, Vice-President, Congress, seconding Motion 59. “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” “Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me.” But we all know that isn’t true. Words do hurt and more than that, they shape how people are treated. Right now people are being labelled “illegal”. Not actions but people, and that matters. Because once you label a person as illegal, it becomes so much easier to ignore their rights, their safety, their dignity. Let us be clear, as Kelvin said, no human being is illegal. Immigration status is paperwork, not humanity. That kind of language

isn't harmless. It fuels racism, it deepens division, it lets politicians and billionaires shift the blame on to migrant workers instead of the real causes of low pay, poor housing and underfunded services. As a union we don't stand for that. We stand for solidarity, we stand for dignity and for respect at work. So we choose our words differently - undocumented migrant, migrant worker, people seeking asylum - because language should reflect who people are, not strip them of themselves. And we don't just change our words, we challenge others. Every time we hear dehumanising language, we call it out and we explain why. Because if we let it slide, we are part of the problem. Please support.

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jo. Is anyone wishing to oppose? We have somebody who wishes to oppose.

ALI HAYDOR (Southern): President, Vice-President, I am not technically fully opposing Motion 58 but I would like to add a few points to it. In terms of the actual motion itself, I do fully support it in principle, but a large number of our members seem to get left behind. We have got over 10,000 gig workers and the words used are "workforce" or "employees". These are not employees. They are not employed by companies. They are gig workers with self-employed status. These workers get left behind because as of now private hire drivers and delivery drivers are at the forefront of this racial abuse. Last night we had reports of riders getting attacked for delivering food in Scotland, in Belfast and many other cities. We need to be very mindful that when we bring up motions about race and hate in the workforce we don't leave these workers behind because they are at the forefront of it. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ali, but that was not really an opposition, it was really further comments, wasn't it? Thank you, just for clarity. Does anyone else wish to oppose? (*No response*) Can I please ask for the CEC speaker Tracey to report back, please.

TRACEY ASHTON (CEC, Midlands): Follow all of that! President, Vice-President, Congress, responding on behalf of the CEC to Motions 57, 58 and 59.

On Motion 57: Online Training to Support Workplace Reps, the CEC is asking that this motion be referred. We recognise the importance of make training accessible to all reps, particularly those with family commitments, or who face barriers to travel and overnight stays. There are already provisions for online training and many regions are successfully delivering flexible options. However, our priority remains ensuring that reps can access high-quality in-person training. That includes supporting release from work, ensuring accessible facilities and enabling attendance wherever possible. Referral will allow regional education officers to share best practice, build on what is already working and determine how online provision can best complement not replace face-to-face training. For these reasons, the CEC is asking Congress to refer Motion 57.

On Motion 58: Zero Tolerance on Racism, the CEC is supporting with qualification. GMB is unequivocal in its commitment to a zero-tolerance approach to racism. The work of our National Race and Organising Team and Anti-racism and Combatting Hate Special Report set out a clear and credible plan to challenge racism in workplaces and communities. Through initiatives like No Place For Racism, we are building workplace

unity and challenging the narratives of the far right and those who seek to divide working people.

Our qualification reflects established policy that regions are best placed to determine how they engage with external anti-racism campaigns and organisations. Regions already play a central role in deciding where to affiliate, partner and mobilise, ensuring that activity reflects local context and aligns with our principles. This includes current support across regions for initiatives such as the Together Alliance March and, subject to that qualification, the CEC supports Motion 58.

On Motion 59: Language on Migrant Members, the CEC is supporting with a qualification. We support the principle that language should not discriminate, dehumanise or disadvantage migrant workers. We recognise how certain language can be exploited by the far right and used to stigmatise individuals who come to this country within the legal framework, including asylum seekers and refugees. However, our qualification is that language change alone is not enough. We must also prioritise education and understanding, ensuring that shifts in language are meaningful and embedded in awareness. It is also important to recognise that widely used terms are often repeated without intent and that change takes time. As a union we must lead by example and while supporting members to understand why this change matters. Subject to that qualification, the CEC supports Motion 59.

President, in summary, the CEC is asking that Motion 57 is referred and we are supporting Motions 58 and 59 with these qualifications. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tracey. Can I please ask for the speakers for Motions 61, 62, 64 and 65 to come to the front. The CEC is supporting Motion 56 from Scotland. Does London agree to refer Motion 57? (*Agreed*) Does North East, Yorkshire & Humber accept the qualification on Motion 58? (*Accepted*) Does North West & Irish accept the qualification on Motion 59? (*Accepted*) All those in favour of Motions 56, 57, 58 and 59, can you please let me know. Anyone against? That is carried.

*MOTION 56 was **CARRIED**.*

*MOTION 57 was **REFERRED**.*

*MOTION 58 was **CARRIED**.*

*MOTION 59 was **CARRIED**.*

**The President took the Chair.**

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, Sonya. Before I move on to the next set of motions, we have got some further changes to the timetable I need to make you aware of. Please listen because if you are expecting to speak tomorrow you will be debating it this afternoon. These motions 281 and 283 for Wales & South West and Motion 282 from London will be debated this afternoon. I will also be bringing forward Motion 287 from Wales & South West, 286 from Southern and 285 from North East, Yorkshire & Humber to be the last motions we debate this afternoon before our rally, so you have got lunchtime to prepare. Can I have the mover of Motion 61, please, to the rostrum?

## **EDUCATION FOR POWER - BUILDING CONFIDENT ORGANISED YOUNG WORKERS**

### **MOTION 61**

#### **61. EDUCATION FOR POWER – BUILDING CONFIDENT, ORGANISED YOUNG WORKERS**

This Congress notes:

1. Working people are under attack – from insecure work, low pay, outsourcing, and employers who feel emboldened to ignore rights with impunity;
2. Young workers are often on the sharpest end of this exploitation, concentrated in precarious sectors with weak organisation and little access to trade union education;
3. A strong union is not built on rhetoric alone, but on informed, confident members who understand their rights, their power and how to use it;
4. Political and trade union education has historically been a cornerstone of working-class organisation – yet too often it has been treated as an optional extra rather than a necessity;
5. Without systematic education, we leave young members isolated, under-prepared, and vulnerable to anti-union narratives in the workplace and wider society.

Congress believes:

1. Education is not an add-on – it is organising;
2. A union that does not educate its members weakens its own ability to win;
3. Young workers do not need lectures; they need practical, accessible education rooted in real workplace struggle;
4. Political education must be about outcomes – winning better pay, stronger rights, safer workplaces and a fairer economy;
5. The labour movement must actively develop the next generation of workplace leaders, reps and organisers – or risk decline.

Congress resolves:

1. To commit to a nationally supported programme of political and trade union education for young GMB Members, focused on building power at work;
2. To ensure this education is practical, workplace focused and includes:
  - Organising skills and industrial strategy
  - Employment rights and enforcement
  - Trade union history rooted in winning change
  - Political education that connects workplace struggle to wider economic and social justice
3. To support Regions in developing Young Worker Education Leads and programmes that reflect local industries and conditions;
4. To strengthen links between GMB Young Members and the wider labour movement, including Young Labour, where this supports workplace organising and political leverage;
5. To use digital and hybrid methods to reach young workers wherever they are – not just those already active;
6. To report back to National on delivery, participation and outcomes – because education must be measured by what it helps us win.

**S01 SHERWOOD FOREST HOSPITALS BRANCH  
MIDLANDS REGION**

ASHTON GREEN (Midlands): President, Congress, I move Motion 61 on the trade union and political education programme for GMB young workers, in line with the qualification that has been set out by our colleagues on the CEC. Working people are under attack. Let's be clear, low pay and outsourcing are at the heart of it and young workers are hit hard. Too many young workers enter the workplace without knowing their rights, without the confidence to challenge unfair treatment, without the understanding of power and collective organisation, and this is why education matters. Congress, let's be clear, education is not an optional extra. Education is organising.

Congress, last year's political report from the CEC reminded us that if we don't do politics, politics will be done to us. At a time of political change and that of a Thatcherite agenda from Reform UK, the answer to those who seek to divide working people is not better slogans but is better organised workers. Whether they work at Amazon in Coventry, East Midlands Ambulance, the Potteries in Stoke or at Mansfield District Council, every young worker should have access to trade union and political education. I want young members to know their rights, challenge unfair treatment and injustice, organise confidently and step forward as workplace activists and organisers. I want education that builds practical organising skills, grows membership, wins recognition and delivers change in the workplace. I also want a political programme that helps members understand how decisions in Westminster and in local government shape lives, and how us as a trade union can influence this. Because let's be clear us the GMB educate its members through power. A member that builds power wins.

Congress, with all this in mind, I ask you to support Motion 61 in line with the qualification set out by the CEC, which is that for us as a region to move it. Thank you.

*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, Ash. Well done. Seconder.

HELEN SOMES (Midlands): President, Congress, supporting Motion 61. In 2024, our branch found itself very short of GMB reps. We emailed out for expressions of interest and a young member came forward. He was just 18 years old, one of the youngest employees at Sherwood Forest Hospitals. After training at regional office to be an accredited rep, he was soon elected to our vacant positions of branch young members' officer and equalities officer. He quickly became involved in the Regional Equality Forum and was elected as the regional young workers' lead, resulting in a place on regional council from which he was elected to regional committee. With encouragement from the branch and the regional officer, he has now been accepted on to the third cohort of GRASP. This young member is Ashton Green. *(Applause)* Ashton has accessed significant training and development opportunities through GMB. By shadowing more experienced reps, he now represents members with confidence. Many young members like Ashton have much to offer the GMB, but many will not come forward without an investment in training to build their knowledge and confidence.

Congress, Ashton sets out why the education of young workers is important. He asks GMB to provide political and union training to help identify young members willing to step forward as workplace reps and activists, and to make the link between political

decisions and how these impact on their day-to-day working life. The future of GMB is in all of our hands but the role of young members is vital. We must provide education and training, we must encourage participation, but, above all, we must trust our young members because a union that educates its members, builds power and a union that builds power, wins. Please support this motion. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Helen. Could I have the mover of Motion 62, please.

## **EQUALITY FOR RETIRED MEMBERS**

### **MOTION 62**

#### **62. EQUALITY FOR RETIRED MEMBERS**

This Congress calls upon the GMB to ensure that we have Equality for Retired Members.

Two Retired Members should be invited to attend all Equality Forums, and indeed, all Meetings side by side of Race, Women, Disabled LGBT+ and young Members.

Age is recognised by the Law. Young and old, we feel that our great Union would gain from the fairness, humanity, and respect that our Retired Members would bring to our Organisation. Congress notes it is time for change.

Congress calls upon the GMB to consider that many Retired Members work long after retirement age. We are the voice for those members too.

Congress calls upon the GMB to please support this Motion.

**A17 ASDA BRANCH**  
**MIDLANDS REGION**  
*(Referred)*

BEN COOK (Midlands): Speaking on behalf of the Midlands Region, moving Motion 62. The Midlands Region supports this motion because equality forums must represent all members including retired members. Congress, retirement does not mean an end to discrimination. Retirement does not mean an end to inequality and they continue to contribute to our union. After campaigning for fairness and equality. Equality does

not end when employment ends. I would ask you to consider that last year a motion was passed to invite two retired members on to the CEC. Twelve months on we still do not have two retired members on the CEC in their own right. It is important that you can support this motion for equality. I urge you to ensure that an election process starts as soon as possible. We need to set up a fair and democratic process seeking advice from the National Retired Members' Association.

Congress, retirement is not the same today, with many of our members still working due to the cost-of-living crisis. Many of our members are actively campaigning on a daily basis and contribute towards our great union, the GMB.

I have stood at Congress on the rostrum and I have supported young workers for a long time, and I am going grey now, and we campaigned for young workers to have a seat on the CEC a long time ago, and we won that battle. If young workers can have a seat on the CEC and voting rights at the CEC, retired members should also have that seat. If this was in the workplace we would be saying it is ageist.

Congress, this motion means so much to me and this is why - because Margi Clark, Cath Murphy, Vic Baines, Ken Vincent, Phil Soper, Malcolm Sage, Carol Clarkson and Mary Turner, these people have all been an influence on my life and in my support and my trade union journey. All that knowledge and experience, some of which we have sadly lost. but it is still a lot, and we cannot afford to lose it. Please support this motion, Congress, thank you very much. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ben. Secunder.

GEOFFREY GREAVES (Midlands): President, Vice-President, seconding Motion 62. First-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Congress, I am proud to second this motion. Our union continues to improve equality and fairness. This motion is directly calling for a change: a change that should have happened last year or even years ago. A change for everyone to have a voice for improvement. I agree wholeheartedly on the points made by my brother Ben. Please support this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, I did not catch your name because it wasn't on the screen. Thank you, Geoff. Well done. Can I have the mover of Motion 64, please. *(Agreed to refer)* Thank you, North East, Yorkshire & Humber.

## **DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY INCLUSION**

### **MOTION 64**

#### **64. DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY INCLUSION**

The GMB Retired Members Association continues to grow & evidence shows more want to become included in our movement. We actively encourage members & their partners to maintain an interest in the GMB through our Retired Members Committees & Branches. However, an obstacle to this can be the ability to understand or gain access to digital technology.

Digital technology is playing an increasing role in our lives, whatever your age. For many people it is essential to the way that they socialise with family & friends, work, shop, manage their finances, access services, get entertainment or even attend online CEC, Branch, Committee or other meetings. However, not everyone is online & others only use the internet in limited ways.

Although many older people fully embrace the digital world, evidence clearly shows that digital exclusion increases with age. We believe people should be supported & encouraged to get online, but those who cannot, or do not want to do so should be encouraged to access services & support in a way that suits them.

Effective approaches to increase digital inclusion can be simple & does not incur massive expense. It involves providing patient tailored training courses for all those who wish to participate, offering support for using devices such as I pads, lap tops, to a skills level that

allows them to access Microsoft teams or Zoom communication platforms, telephones etc. The content should also address the security issues. Colleagues, the training & development arm of the GMB provides numerous training course that give our representatives the skills to support our members within the workplace. Therefore, the National Retired Members Committee collectively agrees to propose that the GMB creates a training course that provides the opportunity to those who wish to take up the offer.

Congress please support this motion

**Z48 RMA BRANCH  
NORTH EAST, YORKSHIRE & HUMBER REGION**

*(Referred)*

THE PRESIDENT: That moves us on to the mover of Motion 65. *(Formally moved from the floor)* Are you formally seconding that as well? *(Formally seconded)* Thank you very much.

**THE PATH TO INCLUSIVITY**

**MOTION 65**

**65. THE PATH TO INCLUSIVITY**

This Congress recognises that existing GMB Policy states that as a Union, we have and will continue to follow the social model of disability. This has been the case for many years, indeed, the TUC GMB Reasonable Adjustments Passport was created following work started in GMB London Region by the Ability self-organised group (SOG). This was originally designed for members to have a clear way to have reasonable adjustments carried with them throughout their working lives, be it within an employer or when changing employers.

Despite everyone's best efforts however, barriers remain.

As a Trade Union, it is our job to break down these barriers for our members and set a positive example to employers. In order to improve inclusion for all our members, we need to look at new and innovative ways to improve our offering.

It has come to our attention that at least one other union has started offering access to record reasonable adjustments via a form of the Reasonable Adjustments Passport on their website. We currently do not offer a way of having reasonable adjustments stored centrally except in exceptional circumstances and we are starting to fall behind in our offering.

This Congress resolves:

- To investigate and implement a way for members to voluntarily add any reasonable adjustments on the MyGMB section of the website which can be linked securely to their membership records. This does not need to be a full passport, a recording of relevant

information may be sufficient but should be discussed further with the disabled members strand before implementation.

- Ensure any such form is editable by the member if their circumstances or requirements change
- Ensure that relevant staff are able to access the information when members are attending conferences, events or Union business so that they are aware of any recorded adjustments required.
- Ensure that all reasonable adjustments recorded are checked with the relevant member before any conference or event by email confirmation.
- Further check that any member who does not have reasonable adjustments or requirements listed is given the option to give them directly to the relevant staff member ahead of any event as per current process.

#### **A55 BRANCH**

#### **WALES & SOUTH WEST REGION**

*(Referred)*

THE PRESIDENT: Does anybody want to speak in opposition? *(No response)* In that case, can I ask Linda Carr-Pollock from the CEC to reply, please?

LINDA CARR-POLLOCK (CEC, GMB Scotland): President, Congress, responding on behalf of the CEC to Motions 61, 62, 64, and 65.

On Motion 61: Education for Power - Building Confident, Organised Young Workers, the CEC is supporting with a qualification. This is a strong and positive motion with real potential to support and empower young members across our union. Building confidence and organisational skills among young workers is essential to the future strength of GMB. Our qualification is a practical one. This type of work is most effectively delivered at a regional level, co-ordinated through the regional education officers. To deliver this successfully, we will need to consider the capacity and priorities of those officers and agree a realistic and deliverable timeline. Subject to that qualification, the CEC supports Motion 61.

On Motion 62: Equality for Retired Members, the CEC is asking that this motion be referred. We recognise the important issues raised, particularly for older workers who are continuing in employment beyond retirement age, often due to the rising cost of living, low lifetime earnings and limited pension provision. We also recognise the disproportionate impact this has on women workers. There are clear workplace issues relating to age, including health, capability, safety and discrimination. Age is a protected characteristic and older workers in employment must have a strong voice on these matters. However, the Equality Action Forum is focused on workplace issues and those who are fully retired do not have a workplace voice in the same way. Referral will allow us to carefully consider how representation is defined, such as qualifying age and employment status, and ensure that any proposals are, consistent, fair and aligned with existing structures. For these reasons, the CEC is asking Congress to refer Motion 62.

On Motion 64: Digital Technology Inclusion, the CEC is seeking referral. We support the principle of improving digital confidence and inclusion, particularly for retired members. Access to digital skills is increasingly important for staying connected and engaged in union life. However, this type of IT literacy training is best delivered locally through regional educational programmes. Regional delivery ensures training is tailored to need, paced appropriately and delivered by tutors experienced in community learning. It would not be appropriate for the central IT department to provide this training as the skills described relate to personal devices and consumer technology outside GMB-managed systems. Involvement at that level could create unnecessary risks and divert resources from critical functions such as cyber security and infrastructure. Referral will allow regions to consider how best to deliver this training

locally, while ensuring central support remains focused on its core role. For these reasons, the CEC is asking Congress to refer Motion 64.

On Motion 65: The Path to Inclusivity, the CEC is also asking that it be referred. This is a positive and creative proposal to build on the work around reasonable adjustments passports, and we support the intent to make this more accessible and effective for members. However, at this stage we do not know whether our current website and systems are capable of hosting the functionality described. This work will need to be scoped with our website developers and the national IT teams, particularly in the context of current and future membership systems. There may also be financial implications if significant development or alternative systems are required, which would need consideration by the Finance & General Purposes Committee. Referral will allow that detailed work to take place before any commitment is made. For these reasons, the CEC is asking Congress to refer Motion 65.

President, in conclusion, the CEC is supporting Motion 61 with a qualification and asking that Motions 62, 64 and 65 are referred. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Linda. Before I go the vote can I ask the movers and seconders of Composite 3 and Emergency Motion 5 and Emergency Motion 6 to come to the front, please. Does Midlands accept the qualification on Motion 61? (*Accepted*) Do you agree to refer on 62? (*Agreed*) I was hesitant to ask Midlands. North East, Yorkshire & Humber have said they are referring and so 65, Wales & South West, do you agree to refer? (*Agreed*) I will put 61 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Motion 61 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 62 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 64 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 65 was **REFERRED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Could I have the mover of Composite 3 please from Wales & South West?

## **NEURODIVERSITY COACHING, TRAINING AND OTHER TOOLKITS FOR GMB REPRESENTATIVES**

### **COMPOSITE 3**

#### **C3. NEURODIVERSITY COACHING, TRAINING AND OTHER TOOLKITS FOR GMB REPRESENTATIVES**

This Congress notes that many neurodivergent workers – including those with autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia and other cognitive differences – face barriers at work due to misunderstanding, lack of reasonable adjustments and stigma.

GMB Representatives are often the first point of contact for members seeking support yet currently receive limited training on neurodiversity.

Congress believes that recognising and supporting neurodiversity is vital to GMB's commitment to equality, inclusion and dignity at work.

This Congress is aware that the GMB produces a variety of toolkits to be used by reps and members and which are primarily published on the website, although it is noted that hard copies are available. Unfortunately, these need updating as a matter of priority, and despite having been raised previously, the website remains difficult to navigate or search to find these.

In particular, the Neurodiversity Toolkit has not been updated since it was first launched in 2018 and is using outdated language and references such as “superpower”. This does not reflect the scientifically and practically accepted reality and best practice of using language reflecting strengths and weaknesses, as are found in all individuals.

It also doesn't reflect the current definitions of Neurodivergence and Neurodivergent. A 2024 Neurodiversity in Business report states as part of its key findings for neurodivergent workers that wellbeing is at risk, challenges and strengths are perceived differently,

psychological safety affects work performance, and there is a distinct view regarding quality of neurodivergent support at work.

Additional, in March 2025, ACAS published a non-affiliated report which mentions in the executive summary “Embedding neuroinclusion proactively – rather than reactively – is key to sustainable workplace change” and goes on to make a number of practical recommendations.

This conference recognises that intersectionality is incredibly important and although this motion focuses on the Neurodiversity toolkit, this does not take away from the need to update the toolkit offering as a whole, across all strands.

Congress therefore calls upon the CEC to:

1. Develop and implement a national GMB neurodiversity awareness and coaching training programme for all Representatives and Officers.
2. Establish a network of GMB Neurodiversity Champions within branches and regions.
3. Work with neurodiversity coaches and people with lived experience to co-design the training.
4. Work with the disabled members strand to update the Neurodiversity toolkit with new best practice that is reflective of latest research and workplace practice, be realistic in language and recognise there are strengths and weaknesses in all people, including the importance of being able to express their true selves and individuality.
5. Update other toolkits as soon as possible, again working with the relevant strands to bring them into line with current legislation, best practice and research.
6. Update the GMB website to make the toolkits easy to find and download.
7. Campaign for employers to introduce neurodiversity training in all GMB recognised workplaces.
8. To continue to work against the stigma that neurodivergent members may face in the workplace.

By doing so, GMB will lead the way in creating fairer, more inclusive workplaces for all.

Supporting Statement:

This motion recognises the growing number of neurodivergent members in our workplaces who often face misunderstanding, stigma and barriers to fair treatment. Too many employers still fail to meet their legal duties for reasonable adjustments.

GMB can lead by example through dedicated neurodiversity training and coaching for our Representatives, ensuring they have the confidence and tools to support every member effectively. By creating a network of Neurodiversity Champions and working with lived experience trainers, we will build a more inclusive union and workplace culture where difference is understood, valued, and celebrated—not penalised.

**Moving Region:** Wales & South West

**Seconding Region:** Southern

*(Carried)*

SUSAN KELLY (Wales & South West): President, Vice-President, Congress, sorry, it is me again, moving Composite 3. Let's start with the scary bit, we will get it out the way early. Those of us who are neurodiverse, disabled, LGBT or in some way other than the general definition of typical (I am not going to use the word "normal" as I really do not know what your version of normal is and mine will be entirely different) walk among you. We are here. We are in your world. If you look around this room, there is a really high chance that you won't be able to see us because we are not normally that obvious. Terrifying, isn't it? It is a really scary thought? No? I didn't think so. But our employers seem to think we are, because we might be a bit different and we might need some changes in the workplace. They might only be tiny things such as needing a different keyboard, or needing a little bit of flexibility on when we start work because our conditions make us super tired and we might oversleep, or we might need some extra breaks. And a lot of things around that have a lot of stigma attached to them because our employers don't understand and because our employers don't understand, our colleagues don't understand.

Now, the first point of contact for our members is our reps. But we have got these great toolkits and we have got a passport. We are all in favour of self-advocacy, but we have to have tools to use that are up-to-date and fit for purpose. They are not at the moment. So, what we are asking for is to update them. In particular, if you look at our Neurodiversity Toolkit, we have not updated this since 2018. That is quite a long time. Education has moved on. The world has moved on. We use different terminology. We do not say that a neurodivergent condition is a superpower any more but our toolkit does. The reasonable adjustments passport, as far as I can see, hasn't been updated since it was written. That predates my time doing this and I have been around for quite

a long time. It does not meet the current legislation. But we also need training, lots of training. Not just for reps but for staff and it should not be on our regions to produce this training for us. It should be done nationally and it should be done in conjunction with the national disabled members' strands because we have the lived experience. And our motto as disabled members is you say nothing about us without us. We need to update it. We need to have a champion to say, "This is what we do and this is who we are and this is why we are the best at what we do." We need to have the website updated. We need to make things easy to find and easy to read. So let's stop being at the back of the queue. Let's lead the way. Our members are unique. Everyone has something to contribute and everyone should be valued for who they are. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Susan. Secunder.

CAROLINE SMITH (Southern): Supporting Composite 3. Madam President, Madam Vice-President, Congress, I rise to second this motion as a GMB rep and as a parent because neurodiversity at work is something I see both personally and professionally. My daughter is neurodiverse. She is a university student, highly academic, intelligent and fully capable of doing complex and demanding work. She also needs time to process information and that difference is too often misunderstood in the workplace as incompetence. What I have seen is not a lack of ability but a lack of understanding. Despite her skills and commitment, she has struggled to stay in work because workplace reps do not have the proper coaching or training to support neurodivergent staff properly when they are disciplined wrongly. If reps were trained to understand and support neurodivergent workers, then they would be more confident in holding

management accountable, making sure straightforward communication is clearer, instructions are structured, reasonable adjustments are made early, things like written guidance, predictable workloads and time to process information instead of workers being pushed into disciplinary or capability processes. As a trade union rep, I see these failures across our workplaces. Too often difference is treated as poor performance rather than something that can be supported with basic understanding.

This motion matters because it gives GMB reps the training to challenge poor practice, educate employers and secure real support for all our members, led from the shop floor, creating and building a more inclusive union and workplace culture. Congress, this is about dignity at work and fairness, where difference is understood, valued and celebrated, not penalised. I urge you to support this motion and carry it. I second.  
*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Caroline. Does anybody wish to speak in opposition to that motion? *(No response)* Then I ask Frances Dwum to respond, please, on behalf of the CEC.

FRANCES DWUM (CEC, Southern): President, Congress, Southern Region responding on behalf of the CEC to Composite 3, which we are supporting with qualification. This motion actually highlights the barriers and challenges faced by neurodivergent members in the workplace. The GMB is committed to supporting members to campaign for positive changes and to make workplaces more accessible, inclusive and fair. We already provide training for staff on neurodiversity, working with trusted specialist providers and, where possible, we aim to use resources developed

by those with lived experience. We agree that establishing neurodiversity champions is important and this work must continue to be led from the shopfloor, ensuring it reflects the real experiences of members. The motion also correctly identifies that a number of GMB toolkits require updating. These resources are vital in supporting workplace equality, providing credible guidance and equipping reps to challenge discrimination and improve conditions. We particularly welcome the emphasis on intersectionality recognising that our toolkit also must reflect the lived experience of all members and remain aligned with current legislation, best practice and language. Improving access to these areas, including making them easier to locate on the GMB website, is also an important practical step. Supporting this motion will allow GMB to work collaboratively with disabled members' strands, to modernise the Neurodiversity Toolkit, ensure updated resources reflect current research, workplace practice and inclusive language. Challenging stigma and promoting neuro-inclusivity across workplaces and improve the accessibility and character of our toolkit offer. Our qualification is simply to ensure that this work is delivered in line with available resources and integrated effectively within existing equality organising and training priorities. Therefore, Congress, the CEC is supporting with qualification Composite 3. Thank you, everyone. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Francis. Do Wales & South West Region and Southern Region accept the qualification on Composite 3? (*Accepted*) Thank you. I will put that to the vote. All those in favour of Composite 3 please show. All those against? That is carried.

*Composite 3 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, we now move to two more emergency motions, Emergency Motion 5: The Middle East Conflict - Impact on Aviation, and Emergency Motion 6: Government Adoption Policy, both from the Midlands Region. Can the speakers please be ready? Can I have the mover of Emergency Motion 5, please? Can the movers and seconders of Motions 91, 92 and 93 also come down to the front.

## **THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT - IMPACT ON AVIATION**

### **EMERGENCY MOTION 5**

#### **EM5: Middle East Conflict - Impact on Aviation**

Congress notes the ongoing instability in the Middle East since the start of the Iran conflict on 28th February 2026 and the disruption it is causing across aviation, including flight cancellations, rerouting, and reduced operations.

This is having a direct impact on ground handling workers in the UK, with reduced hours, unpredictable shifts, and growing concerns over job security and income.

Congress believes it is unacceptable for workers to carry the cost of global instability through loss of pay or insecure work.

Congress calls on GMB to:

- Lobby the Government and MP's to recognise aviation ground staff as essential workers and to introduce protections against sudden loss of earnings.

Congress also calls on GMB to:

- Push employers to protect jobs, pay, and contracted hours
- Push employers to ensure clear communication with staff during disruption
- Push employers to provide proper wellbeing support for affected workers

It is in our interest to protect our members as much as it is the interest of the aviation sector to keep Britain flying.

We stand in solidarity with all aviation workers affected by these ongoing events.

**Region:** Midlands

NATHAN KEIGHTLEY (Midlands): Hello, good morning all, President. I have been toying how to deliver this one. I think this is possibly the best way. Obviously, the Middle East, the media, the jet fuel shortage, all that malarky has been really prominent. Two months ago now I started fretting. I could see what was coming a mile off. Two weeks ago there was news that we are going to have to start prepping to instigate the layoff clause and, “We want you to work with us because if not, it is going to get messy” with our members, and obviously, employees of the company that I work for.

Ground handling is brutal, it is horrible. There are no rules to it. As soon as airlines start cancelling they lay staff off. We are a glorified agency at the end of the day. If we don’t move aircraft, we don’t do turns, we don’t get paid and members end up paying the price. This is the bit I am struggling with explaining. Apparently, in the first quarter of 2026, 61 million passengers travelled out of the UK, which is amazing. Post Covid that is the highest it has been. The problem is there were 13,000 flights cancelled, so 3.65 million passengers did not get on those planes. Every passenger that does not get on reduces the amount of money that ground handling and aviation companies receive. 3.5 million plus - you can imagine the revenue that been lost. There are so many cogs that go into moving a plane from A to B, so many different agencies and companies, it is unbelievable. It is having a massive effect on flights. This is where it changes so the summer, I think we are going to be safe, but come the winter with the amalgamated flights and the drop in passengers, people are going to start paying the price. There is no money in ground handling. In the UK, there is very, very little money in it. Admittedly companies are making big profits, but there is very little money in turning an aircraft.

This is where it is going to affect every single person in here in some way, shape or form. The cargo aircraft are being amalgamated and if those planes aren't coming or going they will start laying people like myself off. That is going to affect your orders coming in. If you purchase something from America, that is going to affect Rolls Royce sending their bits out and back in. That is going to affect the pot. It is going to affect every single person and bump the bills up as well. By hook or crook this has got to work. We need to start pressuring for some kind of furlough scheme. If not, if they start laying off, those people and those skills are never, ever going to come back.

I would like everyone's support when it come to the time to back us going to government demanding we need some help. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Nathan. Secunder.

JENS ALMQVIST (Midlands): President, Congress, first-time speaker. (*Applause*)  
Like Nathan said, the airport ground handling is looking at a bleak autumn and winter. Even though the summer looks all right, it is going to get messy. The crisis in the Middle East is hitting the aviation industry hard, and it will be the ground handling that will be facing the cuts to hours, and it will make it impossible for many of them to make ends meet. I think if we don't take this stand today, these short-term cuts will become long-term redundancies for sure, and we need to protect the livelihoods of front-line workers by keeping our airports alive. I second this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Mover of Emergency Motion 6, please.

## **GOVERNMENT ADOPTION POLICY**

### **EMERGENCY MOTION 6**

#### **EM6: GOVERNMENT ADOPTION APOLOGY**

Between 1949 until the early 1980's a quarter of a million women in THIS country forcibly had their babies removed.

All of these women have suffered with trauma, guilt and shame. The women's stories are simply harrowing.

Many of the adoptees also suffered with trauma, some because of their ethnicity and were deemed unadoptable!

This appalling historical practice affected OUR members and our retired GMB members.

On 10 March of this year mothers and adoptees gave evidence at a Parliamentary Education Select Committee.

In the published report of 27 March, Josh McAlister MP, Minister for Children, said the Government was actively seeking ways to apologise.

This apology has still NOT materialised. These brave women are sadly passing away taking the appalling shame to their graves. These women need and deserve an apology urgently.

Please support this emergency motion and the campaign for an adoption apology by urging the government to issue one without delay.

**Moving Region:** Midlands  
(Carried)

KATHRYN SALT MBE (Midlands): Congress, President, Vice-President, I am going to speak to historic forced adoption. Between 1949 and the early 1980s, a quarter of a million women in this country forcibly had their babies removed from them. Women who were forced into the mother and baby homes had to scrub floors on their knees right up until they gave birth. When they gave birth, many were left on the operating tables in acute pain because they had been told they had got to suffer as much pain as possible so they never ever have sexual experiences again out of wedlock. Once they had given birth, they were also given medication to dry up their milk. Many of these

mothers have now got breast cancer. We have studied the documents with Dr Michael Lambert and some of the signatures on these adoption papers are not the mothers' signatures. All of these mothers have suffered from trauma, guilt and shame. Some have taken their own lives. Many have gone to their graves suffering with shame. Some of the adoptees were deemed unadoptable because of their ethnicity or disabilities. All of these mothers continue to feel shame.

On 10 March this year they attended a Parliamentary Select Committee and the mothers and the adoptees gave evidence. It was the first time in this country the Government admitted that the state was culpable to this forced adoption practice. (*Applause*) In a report of 27<sup>th</sup> March, Josh MacAlister who is the Minister for Children said that an apology needs to come for these mothers. Some form of apology. In Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Australia the mothers have had an apology for this forced adoption practice but in this country, our mothers, have still not received an apology, and since March, some more of the mothers have sadly passed. Some of our GMB members have reached out to me and said that it has affected them.

So, would this Government, please, please, I am imploring you, give our mothers the apology that they deserve. Thank you. (*Applause and standing ovation*)

THE PRESIDENT: Kathryn, thank you for that really powerful speech. Secunder.

KAREN MORELL (Midlands) How do I follow that? I am seconding this motion. President, Congress, as a mother and a kinship foster mother attending a parliamentary round table with Kathryn and the mothers, to listen to the authentic, emotive, traumatic

and lived stories of the movement for historic forced adoption, was not only humbling but sincerely heartbreaking. These mothers - our mothers - historically endured shame and trauma without any support, counselling and compassion. Those mothers still live with that shame.

As Kathryn said, in Ireland, Scotland and Australia an apology has been given to the mothers for this appalling historic practice but it hasn't here in our country. Before I ask for your support, I just want you all to take a moment and think about, if you have got children, how you instantly fell in love with your child and, particularly if you are of grandparent age, how you would feel if you were robbed of your baby, if your baby had been taken away from you when you didn't want that, and you never experienced the joy of that child or grandchildren or great children how you would feel.

So, I urge you please to support this emergency motion for the Government to issue an apology for historic enforced adoption. Thank you, I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen. Does anybody wish to speak in opposition to either of those motions? (*No response*) The CEC are supporting both motions, so there is no speaker and I will put those straight to the vote. All those in favour of Emergency Motion 5 and Emergency Motion 6, please show. Anyone against? They are both carried. (*Applause*)

*Emergency Motion 5 was **CARRIED**.*

*Emergency Motion 6 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Can I have the mover of Motion 91?

## **HEAT STRIKE**

### **MOTION 91**

#### **91. HEAT STRIKE**

This Congress, every year, new temperature records are broken globally and in the UK. The health of the elderly, infants, pregnant women and disabled people is put at particular risk when it gets hotter more often, but also workers working outdoors with no protection.

We need workers and their trade unions as well as climate justice activists to unite in their struggle to build a mass movement, where the poorest don't pay the price for climate change. The climate crisis is a trade union issue in terms of creating a worker-led transition, defending jobs and defending workers' health and safety.

This Congress welcomes the motion passed by the TUC Congress 2024 calling for a Heat Strike on days when temperatures exceed 36°C, and the declaration of 2025 as a Year of Trade Union Climate Action. Global heating and the burning of fossil fuels are already driving a rise in deaths at work, occupational illnesses and employment disruption and this will only get worse as the climate crisis accelerates.

This Congress, therefore, agrees to campaign for the following demands:

- Set a national maximum working temperature since 2008, unions have been calling for a maximum working temperature, but the UK government still isn't listening. GMB demand that the UK government set a national maximum indoor working temperature of 30°C (27°C for those doing strenuous work).
- Put in place a heat wave furlough scheme heat waves in the UK are only set to get hotter and more frequent. Working people can't afford to bear the cost of climate breakdown, and they shouldn't have to. We demand that the government works with employers and Trade Unions to set up a heat wave furlough scheme for when they can't keep workplace temperatures below 30°C.
- Make a climate action plan The UK government's climate action plan has been ruled illegally inadequate.

People are feeling the heat right now.

We demand that the government make a plan to protect workers and vulnerable people and to avert the worst of climate collapse in the years to come.

This Congress welcomes the idea of organising a Heat Strike when temperatures hit 36°C or more, using the youth climate strikes model.

Heat Strike is not a legal union strike. It involves people taking ambitious workplace action to put pressure on the UK government to meet our demand, organised in collaboration with climate and community groups. Going on Heat Strike could mean people refusing to work when it becomes unsafe to do so. It could involve working less, working from home, or organising a lunchtime walk-out alongside actions organised by climate groups and communities.

This Congress therefore agrees to:

- Call on members to sign up for Heat Strike.
- Circulate and disseminate information about Heat Strike.
- Download, print and distribute the Heat Strike leaflet in your branches:
- Support campaigns to establish a heat furlough and maximum workplace temperature, including Heat Strike and Cool It.
- Support Health and Safety Reps and Green Reps to negotiate better working conditions in our workplaces during hot weather

**L45 LUTON BRANCH**  
**LONDON REGION**  
*(Carried)*

DAVID CHATTERTON (London): President, Congress, moving Motion 91: Heat Strike. GMB takes seriously the commitment to make sure we have the highest possible standards of health and safety practice in all of our workplaces. The UK currently has a legal minimum workplace temperature but no legal maximum temperature. Summers are getting hotter and heatwaves are becoming more extreme because of climate breakdown. We see events such as summer 2022 where UK temperatures hit 40 degrees Celsius for the first time and this year recent heatwaves shattering the temperature records. Rising temperatures mean that workers' productivity drops by 2-3% every degree above 20 degrees Celsius. Workers are at risk from heat stroke, dehydration, kidney dysfunction and neurological disorder, all of which hinder long-term health and economic security. Those working indoors can shield from the sun but anyone working outdoors faces added risk and need additional measure to protect them both from UV radiation and heat stress.

The CEC says that we have a long-standing policy of maximum working temperatures of 25 degrees, in line with that of the World Health Organization, but our policy guidelines quote a motion from 2015, over 10 years ago, on this, and a motion from 2024, which also refers to the 2015 motion. Our policy is based on the World Health Organization but they have updated their guidelines in 2025. As climate change results

in more frequent and intense heat, many outdoor and indoor workers are regularly exposed to dangerous heat conditions, and are already feeling the health impacts of rising temperatures. We need to change the GMB's policy, which is what Congress is all about. Our past motion called on the GMB to co-ordinate a campaign with the TUC and other organisations to introduce relevant legislation to protect workers from excessive heat exposure.

Our motion is asking for our policy to be increased in line with the TUC Heat Strike Campaign, advocating for safer working conditions during heatwaves. They are asking the unions to establish a maximum working temperature to protect workers from unsafe conditions, with a recommendation suggesting a minimum of 24 degrees Celsius and a maximum of 30 degrees Celsius. In addition, there should be an absolute maximum temperature of 30 degrees Celsius and 27 degrees Celsius for those doing strenuous work, at which point workers should not have to work.

If the CEC oppose our motion, please ignore this and vote in favour. Help us to update our policy and work with the TUC and other organised groups to put pressure on the Government to establish maximum work temperatures. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, David. Could I have a seconder, please?

WARREN FOX (London): Madam President, Madam Vice-President and General Secretary, Congress, all, my name is Warren Fox, proudly representing London. I am a first-time delegate and first-time speaker. (*Applause*)

In Luton, the loaders, drivers and street cleaners are the heartbeat of the town's hygiene but, as we sit here, the climate isn't just changing, it is becoming a workplace killer. Last summer we saw temperatures hit 36 degrees. To most people that is a day in the garden or a day on the beach. For a Luton waster collector that is a three-round fight with heat exhaustion in a high-vis cage. Let's be clear about what we are asking for. These workers aren't just sitting in air-conditioned offices, they are walking ten to 15 miles per day, lifting tonnes of waste, trailing behind a diesel engine that pumps out even more heat. When it is 36 degrees in the shade, it is closer to 45 degrees behind that hopper. We have all seen the results - dizziness, fainting and that terrifying onset of heat stroke. This is not part of the job. This is a failure of health and safety.

Currently, the law protects a snowball better than a refuse worker. In the UK, there are currently no minimum or maximum legal temperature limits for outdoor work, and this is a disgrace. We are calling for more than just water and hats. We need a "too hot to work" threshold: a clear national limit where the job stops for the safety of the human being doing it. Our members in Luton are not asking for the world. They are asking to come home to their families without being carried off their shift in an ambulance. The Luton spirit is about hard work and resilience, but resilience shouldn't mean risking heart attacks for a recycle bin. It is time the employers and the Government treated heat as the industrial hazard that it is. Congress, please support this motion which I second, and let's protect our workforce. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Warren, perfect timing. The mover of Motion 92, please.

## **PROTECTION FOR LONE AND NIGHT WORKERS**

### **MOTION 92**

#### **92. PROTECTION FOR LONE AND NIGHT WORKERS**

This Congress recognises the heightened risks faced by members who work alone or during night-time hours, including increased exposure to violence, harassment, and unsafe travel. These risks are often compounded by inadequate staffing levels and insufficient employer safeguards.

This motion instructs the union to campaign for robust protections for lone and night workers, including mandatory and regularly reviewed risk assessments, the provision of reliable panic alarms or other emergency response systems, and clear procedures to ensure workers can access safe transport home where risks are identified.

No member should be expected to put their safety at risk simply to do their job and commits GMB to holding employers accountable for their duty of care to protect all workers, particularly those in vulnerable roles or working unsocial hours.

#### **I35 ISLINGTON & HARINGEY BRANCH LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*

PATRICK SPENCE (London): Madam President, Madam Vice-President, Congress, this is my first-time. *(Applause)* My name is Patrick Spence, I am a London Region first-time delegate, first-time speaker and I am a bit dyslexic, so please bear with me. *(Applause)* Also I am an Arsenal fan and we have won the Championship League! *(Boos and cheers)* Moving Motion 92: Protection For Lone and Night Workers. This Congress recognises the heightened risk faced by members who work alone and during night working hours and those risks are not false, they are real, daily, and too often ignored. Across our union, members are locking up workplaces alone late at night and staffing wards and care settings on skeleton crews. Drivers are driving buses and taxis through the early nights and workers are working in security, retail, cleaning and warehouses when most people are asleep. For many of them, violence, harassment and abuse are not rare incidents, they are part of their jobs. And too often, Congress, these risks are made worse by employers' choices with chronic understaffing, poor lighting,

broken or non-existent security systems, risk assessments that exist only on paper if at all. Employers are cutting costs while our members pay the price for their safety.

This motion is about saying clearly and collectively that it is not acceptable. No worker should feel afraid when working. No worker should be left isolated, unsupported and vulnerable, simply because they are working unsociable hours and no member should be expected to put their safety at risk just to make a living. That is why this motion instructs the union to campaign for robust, enforceable protection for lone and night workers. Firstly, mandatory and reliable reviews and assessments, not just box-ticking exercises but meaningful assessment that reflects the real risk of working on the ground and updating staff level roles or working pattern changes. Secondly, reliable panic and alarm emergency response systems. Not outdated equipment, not systems that no one responds to but protection that automatically works when a member needs it the most.

Thirdly, a clear response to ensuring safe transport home where risks are identified, because the working day does not end when a shift is finished. Getting home safely is part of any employer's duty of care, especially when a member finishes late at night, in isolated areas or after dealing with traumatic incidents.

Congress, this motion is also about accountability. Too often employers tell workers to be safe and instead of putting proper protection in place, too often the burden is placed on the individuals rather than the organisation that profits from their labour.

The GMB has to challenge that imbalance, to stand up for members against employers cutting corners, to say that safety is not optional and it is not a luxury. In supporting

the motion, Congress is sending a strong message that lone and night workers matter, that their safety matters and the GMB will not accept a race to the bottom when it comes to workplace protection. I urge Congress to support this motion and commit our union to fighting for the safety, dignity and wellbeing of every member, no matter the hours they work. Thank you. I move. (*Applause and standing ovation*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done Patrick, and you are the tenth first-time speaker this morning. (*Applause*)

CORAL GOSLING (London): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*)  
Seconding Motion 92. Congress, this motion reflects a reality that far too many of our members face every single day and night. Working alone or during night time hours is not just part of the job, it comes with real and increased risks: violence, harassment, abuse and the very real fear of getting home safely. This is not theoretical, it is personal. My own daughter, at aged just 19, worked in security during the 2012 London Olympics. She was regularly placed in situations where she worked alone, vulnerable, exposed and subjected to unacceptable behaviour, including inappropriate attention from colleagues. No young worker - no worker at all - should ever be put in that position. Let us be absolutely clear: no one should have to trade their safety for a wage. That is why this motion matters. We are not asking for the impossible. We are calling for the basics: proper mandatory risk assessments, reliable working panic alarms and safe transport home for those working late or alone. These are not luxuries. These are fundamental protections every worker deserves.

Congress, supporting this motion is about drawing a line. It is about saying that safety is not optional. It is about standing in solidarity with those who work whilst others work sleep, often alone, often unseen and often keeping our workplaces running. Let us raise the standard. Let us protect our members. Let us ensure that no one is left vulnerable simply for doing their job. I ask Congress to support Motion 932. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Coral, perfect.

## **MANDATORY COMPANY VAN WEIGHT CHECKS**

### **MOTION 93**

#### **93. MANDATORY COMPANY VAN WEIGHT CHECKS**

This Congress is calling for compulsory, employer-led vehicle weight checks for all company vans, with consideration for electric vehicles, which are heavier by design.

Employees are often required to complete routine vehicle checks, we are asking that the responsibility for ensuring vehicles are safe, legal and not overloaded must remain with the employer.

We need to improve safety, ensure legal compliance and protect workers from enforcement penalties and licence points incurred while carrying out their duties.

#### **G20 ENERGY GENERAL BRANCH LONDON REGION**

(*Carried*)

GERMAINE SMART (London): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*)

President, Congress, I am proud to move Motion 93: Mandatory Company Van Weight Checks. This motion addresses a serious issue affecting the safety of commercial drivers, the public and every other road user. Commercial vans are the backbone of our economy across the UK. More than 3.6 million vans are used by businesses every day to transport tools, materials and goods, but too often drivers are expected to take

responsibility for vehicles they have no practical means of checking. Most employers require daily or weekly vehicle inspections. Drivers are expected to check tyres, brakes and lights, and report any defects, but yet when it comes to one of the most critical safety issues of all, whether the vehicle is overloaded, many workers are given no access to a weighbridge or any other way of knowing whether a van is legal to drive.

Congress, this is unacceptable. An overloaded van is more difficult to stop, harder to steer and more likely to suffer tyre failure or loss of control, particularly in wet windy conditions. Overloading puts the driver, their passengers and every other user at risk. DVLA data shows that overloading is one of the most common offences involving vans. Recent analysis found that around 60% of light goods vehicle prosecutions in England and Wales relate to overloading, with a conviction rate of nearly 97%. Nearly half of UK van drivers admit they have overloaded their vans in the past year. Van drivers can face fixed penalties on their licence, invalid insurance and, in the most serious cases, prosecution in court, yet it is often the individual driver who bears the legal consequences even when the employer has failed to provide any means of checking the vehicle's weight. That is unfair. These are company vehicles carrying company equipment for company profit. Employers must take responsibility for ensuring their workers can operate them safely and legally.

The issue has become even more urgent as companies switch to electric vans. Electric vans are typically several hundred kilos heavier than their diesel equivalents because of their batteries. Although regulations allow some additional gross weight for alternatively fuelled vehicles, the heavier-based vehicle can significantly reduce the payload available for tools, materials and equipment. In practice, drivers can exceed

the legal limit much more easily than they realise. Without access to regular weight checks, workers are being set up to fail.

Motion 93 calls for a simple practical solution: a legal duty on employers to provide access to weighbridges or other approved vehicle-weighing facilities. It is a basic safety measure. It protects workers from unfair penalties. It protects the public from avoidable accidents and it ensures employers take responsibility for the vehicles they own and the vehicles they require their staff to carry. Congress, overloaded vans are accidents waiting to happen. Let us stand up for safer roads, fairer treatment for drivers and greater accountability for employers. Please support Motion 93, thank you.  
*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Germaine, another perfect timing. The seconder, please.

GAVIN DUDLEY (London): I am here to second Motion 93: Mandatory Company Van Weight Checks. Congress, this issue goes right to the heart of fairness, safety and accountability in our workplaces. I forgot to mention I am a first-time delegate and first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I need the encouragement, thank you! Let's be absolutely clear, workers are not the cause of vehicle overloading. The idea that an individual worker could somehow add enough personal weight to push a van over its legal limit is nonsense. Overloading happens because of employer decisions, the loads they set, the schedules they demand and the pressures they place on our members.

Congress, the law has already moved on. The UK now allows electric vans up to 4.25 tonnes up from 3.5 tonnes to account for heavier batteries. Employers have been given the flexibility they need, so let's say it plainly - there is no excuse for overloaded vehicles. If a vehicle is overweight, that is a management failure, not a worker failure. Employers control the vehicle, the loading and the operational demands placed on its drivers. They must take responsibility when things go wrong.

But here is the reality our members face. In the last financial year alone, there were 270 convictions for overloaded or unsafely loaded vans, effectively, one every working day. Those cases resulted in nearly £450,000 in fines paid by the drivers. And who is being penalised? Too often, it is the driver, the worker, the very person with no access to weight checks, no control over loading and no ability to verify compliance. Congress, even a small amount over the maximum authorised weight, the legal weight limit, including cargo, fuel and tools, can lead to instant fines, licence points and court action. I can see the red light is coming on, I will move to the end.

Congress, this is about justice, it is about safety and it is about standing up for workers who are too often blamed first and protected last. Accountability belongs with the employer, not the worker. I urge Congress to support Motion 93, thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gavin. Does anybody wish to speak opposition. (*No response*) Can I ask Ian Clarke from the CEC to respond, please.

IAN CLARKE (CEC, Midlands): President, Congress, responding on behalf of the CEC on Motion 91. The CEC is asking that this motion is withdrawn. The GMB has

a long-established clear policy of maximum working temperatures set at 25 degrees Celsius, as outlined in our Feeling the Heat guide. This position has been in place for more than 20 years and reflects our commitment to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of our workers. Whilst we recognise that the Heat Strike campaign has been adopted as TUC policy, the proposed maximum working temperature is within that framework and is significantly higher than GMB's own long-standing position. The CEC does not believe it would be appropriate to adopt a position which weakens our existing demands and protections for workers. For these reasons, Congress, the CEC asks that this motion is withdrawn. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, Ian. Does London Region agree to withdraw Motion 91? *(Not agreed)* That does mean the CEC will change its position to oppose this motion. I will put the other two first. The CEC are supporting 92 and 93, so all those in favour of Motions 92 and 93, please show. Anyone against? That is carried. Going back to Motion 91 the CEC are opposing this motion. All those in favour of Motion 91, please show. Put your hands really clearly up, please. All those against? That motion is carried. *(Applause)*

*Motion 91 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 92 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 93 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: That is the end of the motions, but before dinner can I please invite Jan Smith to the rostrum to address Congress with the Report of the Retired Members' Association from 2025 to 2026. It is has been a year I know of great activity for the

RMA, as I am sure we will all hear. Here she comes. While we are waiting for Jan to arrive to the rostrum, I can announce the draw has taken place to win one of three £100 Love to Shop vouchers. Thanks to the seven participating exhibition stands for running this prize draw. The winners are Andy Humphries from Midlands and East Coast Region, Funmi Nwagagbo from London Region and Lorna Gale from London Region. Congratulations to those three winners. You can go to the information desk at the main entrance to collect your vouchers.

JAN SMITH (RMA, London): It is nearly afternoon colleagues, so it is good morning and good afternoon. Jan Smith, National RMA Secretary. It is with pride and pleasure to present to you, Congress, and colleagues and friends, the 2026 National RMA Report. On behalf of Kevan Hensby and myself, we give sincere thanks for taking part in the Banner Parade on Sunday. And also, it was led in by Margi Clarke waving an RMA banner flag. Well done, Margi, and it was nice to see you after your hospitalisation. You are doing very well and keep up the good spirits! (*Applause*)

Colleagues, since last year's RMA rule change history, sadly, we have not received or heard anything from the National Equalities Forum. I say to you we are not racist or discriminative in any shape or form, plus in equalities we need each other as one day you will also become a retired member, and from that we can learn from each other. Secondly, colleagues, after a successful motion for two members of the RMA to sit on the CEC, we are told this cannot take place until 2028. That is not good enough. Through our national co-ordinator it has been asked if two members of our Committee can attend as observers and, again, sadly, we have not had a reply. So, Gary, please

can we sit with two member as observers so we are ready for 2028? (*Cheers and applause*)

Informing you of the sad parts, the National RMA sends our sincere condolences on the passing of Roger Balsdon. A lot of you know that he used to work with John Stephenson on our stall. We also extend condolences from all our colleagues, family members, and may they all rest in peace in their heavenly homes.

Now for what has happened since March last year. Derrick Baker MBE retired as our President. I am pleased to say that he is here for our fringe meeting today. From this Kevan Hensby was elected as our President, Margi Clarke became Vice-President (*Cheers*) and Helen Davies, our Treasurer, to replace Brian Baker. We give our sincere thanks for all the help and support from Derrick and Brian.

President, Derrick has been made at our last National Conference as our now honorary President. He has replaced the late Monica Smith.

As to the Conference which was held in October 2025, that was very, very successful, and we are going to have another one this year on 20 October, which will be at Mary Turner House. Can I remind you that all motions, delegates and visitors need to notified to myself or to Pat Gannon no later than 4 pm on 1 August of this year. After that date they will be refused.

Colleagues, we have continued to strive by working through the Rule Book. Our first national RMA motion was presented to Congress on Monday and also today was our

very first fringe meeting, another history point for the RMA. Thanks to Kevan, wherever you might be sitting, Kevan, we have produced a newsletter and a booklet. These can be found if you haven't already seen them, on the information stall.

I would like to give thanks to John Stephenson and Leila Kassam, who have manned our stall, which so far, as I was told this morning, has raised an estimated £800 and it is probably now a lot more. (*Applause*) Many thanks to all of you who have bought raffle tickets and provided prizes. I understand that the tickets ready for the draw of the raffle will take place this afternoon. I give sincere thanks to Vaughan West, our national co-ordinator, for your support and guidance. Can I please ask if Pat Gannon and Ida Clemo can please come up and join me. Pat was aware that I needed her this lunch time so if she is not here at the moment, if someone can get her, I would appreciate it.

Till Pat comes up I will just continue. Colleagues, friends, I can continue but much of what else I could say you will hear at the fringe meeting, so I hope as many of you as possible can attend. Our national pensions officer will be one of our speakers. Pat has now arrived so if Pat and Ida can join me, please. Gary and Barbara, if you can come this side, please.

Colleagues, on behalf of myself, I have known and worked closely with Pat and Ida over many, many years and they have become very great friends. Some of you may not know but Pat is retiring at the end of this year. She will be sadly missed and a hard act to follow. And I saw Ida come from the National Office which was their loss to London Region's gain. Ida has been a great stalwart to London region. (*Applause*) I

personally have given a small thank you token and a card, one to Barbara and one to Gary, so if they could present it from myself to say thank you for all your hard work and friendship over the years. (*Applause and standing ovation*)

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: I've got nae money.

JAN SMITH: Gary has just told me he has got no money. Who's he kidding? Colleagues, I commend this report to you. Have a safe journey home and God bless you all. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jan, for that report. What a lovely way to finish just before lunch. Please go to the fringes. Enjoy your lunch and be back in the hall by 2 pm. Thank you.

*Congress adjourned for lunch.*

## **AFTERNOON SESSION**

*Congress assembled at 2.00 p.m.*

THE PRESIDENT: I now call Congress to order. I hope you all had a nice lunch break and are ready for this afternoon's March and Rally for School Support Staff!

This afternoon we are going to carry on with our planned business and then have a rally in the hall where we will have speakers on the platform who are school support staff who will share their lived experiences with the hall.

Your Regional Secretaries have been told how we are going to assemble for the rally, but I will repeat it here. After the speakers, we will assemble at the Victoria Street exit of the Winter Gardens, which is at the rear of the building. This is a large area that is inside the building and is accessed through the signposted walkway, which is next to the Winter Gardens Bistro. There will be a banner at the front of the march that we will follow, with our flags and placards. We will then walk along Victoria Street (which is pedestrianised) and then cross the road to the seafront, with the Blackpool Tower behind us, where we will then gather for a big photo shoot.

So, before that happens can I call on Karen Dudley to move SOC Report No. 8.

### **Standing Orders Committee Report No. 8**

KAREN DUDLEY: Moving SOC Report No. 8.

### **Withdrawn motions**

There have been no further withdrawn motions.

### **Emergency motions**

The SOC has accepted three further emergency motions so far as being in order for debate. From North West & Irish Region: Stop Reform Councils Abandoning Pride and from Scotland: Stop Reform Councils - Our Pride. The SOC recommends that these two motions are composited. Further from Scotland: Fascist Riot Threats and from North West & Irish Region: Riots in Northern Ireland. Again, the SOC recommends that these two motions are also composited.

The Congress timetable will be updated and the SOC will consider further requests for emergency motions. The SOC will update Congress accordingly. President, Congress, I formally move SOC Report No. 8.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you Karen. Does anybody wish to challenge that report? All those in favour, please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

*SOC Report No. 8 was **ADOPTED**.*

## **EMPLOYMENT POLICY: HEALTH, SAFETY & ENVIRONMENT**

THE PRESIDENT: Moving on to Employment Policy: Health, Safety & Environment, could the movers and seconders for Motions 84, 85, 87 and 88 please come down to the front and the mover of Motion 84 to the rostrum, please.

### **AGE IS JUST A NUMBER**

#### **MOTION 84**

##### **84. AGE IS JUST A NUMBER**

In an ever changing working environment we need to recognise the critical importance of safeguarding every employee young or old, & those with already established health problems. Yet, a startling statistic has emerged from the latest Health & Safety Executive (HSE) report.

The data, drawn from the HSE's Work Related Fatal Injuries in Great Britain 2024 report, indicates that despite making up a small fraction of the workforce, older workers are significantly more likely to have a fatal accident. With a staggering 45 fatal injuries to workers aged 60 & above, compared to 89 fatal injuries to workers aged 16 - 59, it's clear that age is more than just a number when it comes to workplace hazards. Even more concerning is that for those aged 65 & above, the rate quadruples compared to the overall rate.

But why is this the case? Are older workers being subjected to more dangerous tasks? Or is there a lack of targeted safety protocols that consider the unique vulnerabilities of this age group.

It is accepted that some industries are more hazardous than others, working in the construction, transport & agricultural sectors would be more dangerous than working in manufacturing or commercial industry.

Any incidents that occur in the workplace points towards a potential gap in safety measures that are suppose to prevent such tragedies. We need to ask ourselves are current safety standards adequately accommodating the diverse range of physical capabilities present in our aging workforce?

Therefore, it is evident that this is an area that demands our focus. The value of experience that older workers bring into a workplace is irreplaceable & should not come at the cost of their lives or serious injuries. When it comes to workplace injuries older workers are more likely to experience longer recover times or permanent disability.

Therefore colleagues It is time for employers, policy makers, safety professionals & trade unions alike to collectively re evaluate workplace safety through the eyes of the workforce. Ensuring that all workers, regardless of age, can rely on a safe working environment & look ahead towards a healthier retirement whenever that time comes.

Congress please support this motion

**Z48 RMA BRANCH**  
**NORTH EAST, YORKSHIRE & HUMBER REGION**  
*(Carried)*

KEVAN HENSBY (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Madam President, Vice-President, Gary, members of the top table, Congress, may I just say we had an absolutely brilliant fringe meeting where 32 people turned up to listen to information related not only to pensions but retired members as well. It was great so thank you to those who attended.

Right, so, Kevan Hensby, North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region. (*Applause*) National Retired Members' President but also as well humble to the fact that I am the first lay GMB member to be appointed to the board of directors for the National Pensioners Convention (*Applause*) which is a group of people who work hard for the benefit of our pensioners but also retired members as well. Because I now do sit on that board of directors, and I am a GMB member, I shall be banging that drum for GMB retired members and others as well. Trust me. We have already had meeting and they know where I am coming from.

Right, to the point, age is just a number, retirement is just a word, but I think we are all agreed, colleagues, more and more people now are tending to work longer for various reason. One of them could be poverty, two, because you want companionship, or another one where you get a pittance of government pension considering how many years you have contributed or the pension you get with an employer is not worth having. I am sure that resonates with some of us. I know people contact me that have been in that situation. Anyway, so when we talk about age is just a number, retirement is just a word, we have more and more people out there who are now working beyond, shall we call it, the retirement age.

There are statistics from the Health & Safety Executive that show it is only a small percentage of the people now in work - some people work part time, some people work full time - but the figures I am going to give you now, colleagues, are quite eyebrow raising. And one of them is in 2024/25, 45 fatal injuries occurred to people in the workplace aged above 60. That increased by another 10% for those above 67.

Horrendous figures and these are just fatalities. We are not talking about people here that have got other disabilities. It is telling me something as a safety officer that the protocols that should be in place by employers exploiting our workers are not working. They cannot be if they are having people off work seriously injured. The worst part about it, colleagues, is the fact that when we get to a certain age and we sustain an injury, it takes longer for us to recover. We might never ever get back to work again if that injury we have sustained is so bad. It has got to be stopped.

How do we do that? Like I say, in my position now I will be banging the drum for the GMB and retired members and pensioners. What can other people do? The politicians for starters, and safety professionals, your councillors, local government, we can start knocking on their doors and telling them this is unacceptable. These figures that we have, colleagues, that have been published by the HSC every single year have got to come down, without a doubt. Until they come down, every life that is lost at work is a life that they cannot share when they do finally retire and spend a little bit of time with their children, their grandchildren and anybody else for that matter.

Colleagues, please support this motion because it is something I am passionate about, being a retired member. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Kevan. Secunder.

IAN KEMP (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Seconding Motion 84 and wishing I had Kevan's sartorial elegance! President, Congress, when I started work at 16, the plan was to take early retirement at 55, yet here I am at 62 still toting that barge, still

lifting that bale. Whilst I have the knowledge and experience and whilst I can and have made lifestyle changes, I am not a Time Lord from the Planet Gallifrey in the constellation of Kasterborous and I can't stop Anno Domini and the consequences of ageing.

At work, being the most experienced member of the team means that the most challenging jobs get put on to me and therein lies the problem. We no longer have that turnover of older workers being replaced by younger workers. Instead of passing on all that skill, knowledge and experience, all too often, older workers are having to do that work themselves. Whilst we don't want to be wrapped up in cotton wool neither do we want to be treated like that willing horse and get clobbered. It needs to be recognised that older workers are valuable assets and need protection. As someone who works on risk and COSHH assessments at work, I am as guilty as anyone for failing to take into account the risks to older workers. We automatically recognise the risk to young workers, visitors to the department and female workers, but take for granted older workers, failing to recognise the specific risk.

Congress, this motion is not about getting rid of older workers out of the workplace but how best we can protect them, both at a human level and as a valuable asset to employers. Please support. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ian. Mover of Motion 85.

## **TIMELY INVESTIGATIONS INTO WORKPLACE FATALITIES**

### **MOTION 85**

## **85. TIMELY INVESTIGATIONS INTO WORKPLACE FATALITIES**

This Congress notes that in December 2020, we lost a member and three colleagues in an explosion at Avonmouth near Bristol. It has been 5 years and 6 months and still there has been no conclusion to the HSE's investigations.

Investigations by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) into workplace fatalities often take more than several years to conclude. Extended delays cause unnecessary distress to families, hinder justice, and prevent timely lessons being learned to protect other workers. Every worker deserves a safe workplace, and when a fatality occurs, swift and thorough investigation should be the least that families and colleagues deserve.

I ask Congress to support our motion for The GMB to campaign for the Health and Safety Executive to complete investigations into workplace fatalities within a maximum of three years. To lobby government to provide adequate resources and staffing to the HSE to ensure timely investigations. Also to raise public awareness of the impact of delayed investigations on workers' families and workplace safety.

As always, we remember our colleagues who died on the 20th of December 2020 and the loved ones who are still waiting for answers.

Brian, Luke, Mike and Ray forever in our thoughts

**X45 BRANCH**  
**WALES & SOUTH WEST REGION**  
*(Carried)*

CHRISTOPHER MARSH (Wales & South West): Good afternoon, Congress, this is an emotional subject for me forgive me if I falter. President, Congress, moving Motion 85. Congress, five and a half years ago on, 20 December 2020, we lost a member and three colleagues in an explosion at Avonmouth near Bristol. Four lives were cut short. One of those was Luke Wheaton, who was an apprentice and he was 16 years of age. Four families were devastated and today we stand here and those families are still waiting for answers. Five years, six months and still there is no conclusion to the inspections. Just pause on that for a moment, because while grief does not fade, the silence from the system should never last that long. Congress, this is not just about one tragedy. It speaks to a wider and deeply troubling pattern. Investigations by the Health and Safety Executive into workplace fatalities are taking far too long, years in many cases, and every delay matters. Every delay has a human cost. It is a cost paid by

families left in limbo, unable to begin to rebuild their lives because they still do not know the full truth. It is a cost paid by workmates, returning to the very same workplaces, carrying the unanswered question, “Could this happen again?” And it is a cost paid by workers everywhere because the lessons that could prevent future deaths are not being learnt quickly enough.

Justice delayed is justice denied and when it comes to workplace safety, the delay does something even worse, it prolongs risk. It leaves danger unchallenged. Every worker has a right to go to work and to come home safely. That is non-negotiable. And when the worst happens and a life is lost at work at the very least those families deserve a system that work with urgency, with transparency and with accountability.

Congress, we cannot accept a system where answers take years. We cannot accept a system where lessons come too late. This is why this motions matters. I stand here today to ask Congress to take a clear stand: for workers, for safety and for justice.

Brian, Luke, Mike and Ray, you are forever in our thoughts. Please support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Chris. Secunder.

LEON JONES (Wales & South West): Congress, I second this deeply important and profoundly moving motion. As Chris described emotively there, five and a half years on from the tragedy at Avonmouth, families are still waiting: waiting for answers, waiting for accountability and waiting for justice. Colleagues, that isn’t right. No

family should be left in limbo for years after losing a loved one at work. Every delay prolongs the pain. Every unanswered question grows heavier with time. But this is not about what has already happened, it is about what is happening now and what could happen next. Because while investigations drag on lessons are not learnt, risks remain unaddressed. And that means other workers, who are our members, our friends, our families may still be exposed to the very same dangers. That is simply unacceptable. You all with passion and eloquence have shown this week you would never tolerate a serious hazard being left unresolved in the workplace for years. We would all demand action: immediate, decisive action. So why should we accept delay when it comes to investigating workplace deaths?

This motion sets out a clear and reasonable standard: a maximum of three years, not rushed, not compromised, but not endless either. A time-line that respects grieving families, delivers vital lessons and helps prevent future tragedies. If the HSE cannot reach that standard then the Government must step in, providing the resources, the staffing and the urgency required to get the job done. Colleagues, this is about fairness and it is about dignity. Above all, it is about making sure that no family has to endure this kind of waiting ever again. We honour those we have lost not just with words, but with action, by demanding better: by refusing to accept delay as the norm. I urge you to support this motion. I move. (*Applause and cheers*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Mover of Motion 87, please.

## **RIDDOR REPORTING OF NHS WORK RELATED STRESS AS A WORKPLACE INJURY**

## **MOTION 87**

### **87. RIDDOR REPORTING OF NHS WORK RELATED STRESS AS A WORKPLACE INJURY**

This Congress notes that work-related stress, sometimes known as occupational stress, is a major issue for the UK economy and the wellbeing of the workforce.

When the demands in the workplace make you feel pressured and unable to cope the stress could become unbearable. It's estimated that in the UK alone nearly 18 million working days are lost each year because of stress at work.

Stress, anxiety or depression is now the number 1 cause of work-place illness. When that stress contributes to a mental stress injury, you may need more support to recover. A work-related mental stress injury is a psychological injury or illness caused by one or more substantial sources of stress at a person's work or by one or more work-related traumatic events.

In the NHS, as I am sure across other organisations and industries, work related stress is the biggest cause of absence and is affecting recruitment, retention, delivery of services and ultimately patient care. The impact of work-related stress is not taken seriously enough, with workplaces constantly under pressure to deliver for the public.

Currently, if you have an injury at work, the protections in place are different to if off work due to general illness, extended protections on pay, protections from absence trigger points due to the injury, protections from loss of leave and more.

Injury at work currently tends to be thought of as physical injury such as broken limb, amputation, exposure etc cases of reportable occupational disease such as carpal tunnel syndrome, occupational asthma, occupational dermatitis etc which also have physical presentation, all recognised by the health and safety executive and RIDDOR.

Mental stress injury caused by injury at work is also an injury reportable under RIDDOR, but few people know how to record what is required and what constitutes a reportable injury. To be able to accurately recognise, evidence and report work related stress injuries we need to know what is required and how to effectively report.

Whilst GMB has done excellent work in supporting reps and members around work related stress, more needs to be done when it comes to being able to report this as an injury. Whilst as reps in our organisations we can try to influence policy changes to protect this, we don't necessarily have the knowledge and skills for reporting this type of injury in the same way we might for a physical injury.

This motion calls for GMB to:

- Develop a toolkit to support reps in the workplace around how work-related stress is recognised, recorded, supported and managed through occupational policies and RIDDOR reported, in the same way physical injury at work is.
- Develop and deliver rep learning to ensure reps know what and how to RIDDOR report work-related stress resulting in workplace injury

**S77 PUBLIC HEALTH SCOTLAND BRANCH  
GMB SCOTLAND**

*(Carried)*

PAULINE WARD ( GMB Scotland): Moving Motion 87: RIDDOR Reporting of NHS Work Related Stress as a Workplace Injury stress at work is not new, but what many workers now face is more than pressure. It is harm caused by unsafe workload, bullying, trauma and a culture that expects people to keep going whatever the cost. The Health and Safety Executive defines work-related stress as the “adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them”.

In 2025, the HSE reported that stress, depression and anxiety led to 29.2 million working days lost across Great Britain. I am sure many of us in this hall have lived through and witnessed the stress caused by workplace bullying. It is one of the biggest health hazards and work-related stress is one of the biggest workplace health issues of our time.

In NHS Scotland we have a new work-related stress policy, but it does not even mention the recording of work-related stress. Absence recording systems do not name it for what it is. Absence is logged in a system that groups categories such as anxiety, stress, depression and other psychiatric illnesses together. That tells us someone is unwell but it does not tell us whether work caused or contributed to that illness, and when the cause is hidden, accountability is lost.

Post Covid there is greater awareness of the impact work has on mental health. We now speak more openly about burn-out and psychological safety, but awareness on its own is not enough. If absence recording systems cannot distinguish between general mental ill health and harm caused by work then those systems are failing workers and that has to change. With RIDDOR many here today would say that work-related stress

is RIDDOR reportable. However, work-related stress on its own is not automatically reportable. And conditions such as PTSD are not on the reportable list. The RIDDOR system was never designed for psychological injury. It relies on clear incidents, clear diagnoses and clear categories, and work-related stress does not fit neatly into the thresholds. That is why it is very often invisible, unrecorded and unreported. These systems need to change. There is a RIDDOR review currently live, closing on 30 June; however, even with a full national review of RIDDOR under way, work-related stress remains excluded, reinforcing just how invisible this workplace injury actually is.

Apparently, we are told, work-related stress is difficult to define and hard to attribute consistently. That is not good enough, Congress. If we do not speak up on work-related stress now, it will remain invisible for another decade. If a worker has a physical injury at work, there is a process. It is recorded, investigated and recognised as something that happened because of work, but when the injury is psychological caused by work, the same seriousness is a too often missing. GMB reps are often the first people members turn to when they are at breaking point, but reps need the right tools. They need to know how to identify work-related stress, how to evidence it, how to challenge poor recording and how to push employers to treat this as a workplace issue. That is why we need GMB to develop a work-related stress toolkit. We in GMB need a system to ensure our own reps are equipped to deal with the potential tsunami coming our way on this, equipped to be able to have the confidence and awareness to ensure work-related stress is recognised, recorded and acted upon as a workplace injury. That is why we need GMB to develop and deliver rep learning on this.

This motion calls for GMB to develop a toolkit to support reps in the workplace around how work-related stress is recognised, recorded, supported and managed through occupational policies and RIDDOR reported in the same way as physical injury at work is, and, also, to develop and deliver rep learning to ensure that reps know what to RIDDOR report and how to RIDDOR report work-related stress resulting in workplace injury. Congress, if we do not name it, we cannot fight it: if we do not record it, employers can continue to deny ---

THE PRESIDENT: Pauline, can you finish up.

PAULINE WARD: Don't let these injuries remain invisible. Please support the motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Pauline. Secunder? (*Formally seconded*) Thank you.  
Mover of Motion 88.

## **HOW CAN WE PROVIDE A SAFE NHS WITH UNSAFE BUILDINGS**

### **MOTION 88**

#### **88. RAAC, HOW CAN WE PROVIDE A SAFE NHS WITH UNSAFE BUILDINGS**

This Congress notes that Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) is a lightweight and cost-effective building material used for roofs, walls, and floors. It was employed in the UK from the 1950s to the 1990s

The dangers of RAAC were not outlined until 1994-1996 by the Building Research Establishment. However, it was not until 2018, after a section of a classroom roof collapsed, that inspections began.

Initially, the Government focused on schools, investing millions in assessments and remedial work. Yet, many NHS buildings contain the same RAAC issues. With increasingly wet and windy winter months, the risk of structural failure rises, posing serious health and safety hazards.

This situation endangers patients and staff, leading to disruption, partial closures, or even demolition of buildings—often at increasing costs. Currently, many NHS facilities are in use despite these risks.

We call on congress:

To involve Trade Union Health and Safety representatives in decision-making related to these risks, and to urge the Government to be more transparent about the extent of the problem.

To lobby politicians to commission a comprehensive, nationwide inspection of NHS buildings for RAAC. A clear plan must be developed to remove RAAC urgently.

Also to urge the Government to be more transparent about the extent of the problem.

#### **G89 GLASGOW NE & SW HEALTH SERVICE BRANCH**

#### **GMB SCOTLAND**

*(Carried)*

TERESA WILL (GMB Scotland): Moving Motion 88: RAAC, How Can We Provide a Safe NHS With Unsafe Buildings? Congress, as we know, the NHS has a statutory duty to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of patients, staff and the public across all sites and services. However, a number of our facilities continue to present significant infrastructure and estate risks. These include ageing building fabrics, water ingress, asbestos, fire safety deficiencies, ventilation failures and wider structure deterioration. These risks are not new. They have been repeatedly identified through incident reports, staff feedback, estate risk registers and inspections findings and yet in some locations remain unsolved. Clinical safety cannot be separated from environmental safety. Unsafe or degraded buildings directly increase the risk of harm, disrupt service delivery, and negativity impacts staff morale and recruitment and retention. Continued reliance on unsafe infrastructure represents a material risk to the NHS's ability to deliver safe, effective and person-centred care. It also exposes attempts to avoid governance, legal and reputation risk. RAAC formally acknowledges that unsafe buildings represent a critical and ongoing risk to both patient and staff safety within the NHS.

We ask that the GMB encourage the Government to seek assurances that all known estate and infrastructure risks are firmly reflected at board level with clear ownership, defined mitigation plans, realistic timescales. We also ask for a comprehensive and transparent update on the current condition of high risk buildings and interim safety measures are in place to ensure that, where safety cannot be adequately mitigated, services are relocated, reduced or paused, in line with patient and safety obligations.

We also ask that you confirm that staff can raise concerns about unsafe buildings without fear of detriment. RAAC is asked to consider whether the NHS can credibly assure a safe NHS while we continue to allow care to be delivered from unsafe buildings, and to take decisive action where such assurance cannot be given. I move.  
*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Teresa. Secunder. *(Formally seconded)* Thank you very much. Does anybody wish to speak in opposition to any of those motions? *(No response)* In that case, can I ask the CEC speaker to come and Lyubomir Marinov to come and respond

LYUBOMIR MARINOV (CEC, London): President, Congress, responding on behalf of the CEC on Motion 85: Timely Investigations into Workplace Fatalities, which we are supporting with qualifications.

The tragic incidents at Avonmouth, Didcot and elsewhere highlight the devastating impact of workplace fatalities not only on workers but their families, friends and

colleagues. The delays in investigation that follow such events are unacceptable and only add to the distress of seeking justice and closure. GMB has always acted as a critical friend to the Health and Safety Executive. We recognise the important role the HSE plays as a regulator, but that doesn't place it beyond criticism, particularly where investigations take an unreasonably long time to conclude.

Our qualification is to recognise that the HSE is not the only body involved in the process. The police and the Crown Prosecution Service both play a vital role in determining whether a prosecution should proceed. In many cases delays arise before investigations are formally transferred to the HSE, contributing to the overall timeframe. That said, our expectations remain clear. Investigations into workplace fatalities should be completed within three years of incidents wherever possible, to ensure accountability and timely justice to those affected. Subject to that qualification, the CEC supports Motion 85, thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Before I go to the vote can I ask movers and seconders of Motions 96, 98, Composite 5 and 100 to come down to the front, please. Does Wales & South West accept the qualification? (*Accepted*) I will put all those to the vote because the CEC are supporting 84, 87 and 88. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against? They are all carried.

*Motion 84 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 87 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 88 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Could I have the mover of Motion 96 then to the rostrum?

## **PENSION AWARENESS TRAINING FOR REPRESENTATIVES TO SUPPORT MEMBERS AT CRITICAL EMPLOYMENT TRANSITIONS**

### **MOTION 96**

#### **96. PENSION AWARENESS TRAINING FOR REPRESENTATIVES TO SUPPORT MEMBERS AT CRITICAL EMPLOYMENT TRANSITIONS**

This Congress recognises that pension-related questions frequently arise when members are facing redundancy, ill-health, reduced hours, flexible retirement, or other significant changes to their employment.

Congress notes that a significant proportion of GMB members are employed in local government, schools, and related sectors, and are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), which is complex and often poorly understood.

Congress further notes that workplace representatives are frequently the first point of contact for members seeking reassurance and guidance at these critical moments, yet many representatives do not receive structured training on how occupational pension schemes operate or how best to support members in understanding their options.

Congress believes that:

- representatives should not be expected to provide financial or actuarial advice,
- but should be equipped with sufficient knowledge to understand pension frameworks, explain available options at a high level, and signpost members appropriately,
- and that improved pension awareness can support better decision-making and reduce anxiety for members during periods of change.

This Congress therefore calls on the CEC to:

1. Develop and provide pension awareness training for workplace representatives, with an initial focus on the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), reflecting the profile of the union's membership.
2. Ensure such training is focused on understanding scheme structures, common member scenarios, and available options at key employment transition points, rather than on providing individual financial advice or benefit calculations.
3. Include clear guidance on professional boundaries, liability, and appropriate signposting to LGPS administrators and regulated financial advisers where required.
4. Ensure that this training is accessible, regularly updated, and aligned with the union's broader commitment to representative development and member support.

#### **M27 LB MERTON BRANCH SOUTHERN REGION**

*(Carried)*

KIM MARSHALL (Southern): Madam, President, Vice-President, Congress, moving

Motion 96: Pension Awareness Training For Representatives to Support Members At

Critical Employment Transitions. This motion comes from a simple reality that many representatives will recognise. Some of the most difficult conversations we have with members happen when they are facing major changes in their working lives: redundancy, ill-health retirement, flexible retirement, reduced hours, restructures. At these moment members are often worried not only about their job but also about their future financial security. One of the first questions many members ask is, “What will happen to my pension?” As representatives, we are often the first people they turn to for help, yet many of us have received little or no training on how occupational pension schemes operate. Many of us have supported members facing redundancy or ill-health retirement only to discover that pension questions become the biggest source of anxiety and uncertainty. In our own branch alone, we currently have two cases before the Pensions Ombudsman. The representative supporting these members has had to rely almost entirely on self-learning, independent research and personal commitment rather than structured union training. That representative is doing an excellent job but they should not have to navigate such complex issues without access to proper support and learning opportunities.

This motion is not asking representatives to become financial advisers. It is not asking representatives to calculate pension benefits, provide investment advice or replace pensions administrators. What it is asking for is something much more practical. It asking that representatives are given sufficient awareness and understanding to explain pension processes at a basic level, recognise common scenarios and confidently signpost members to the appropriate sources of specialist advice.

For many of our members in local government, schools and related services, the Local Government Pension Scheme is a vital part of their employment package, yet it is often misunderstood, particularly at times of change. A member considering redundancy may need to understand the difference between redundancy and retirement options. A member considering flexible retirement may need to understand the process before making life-changing decisions. A member facing ill-health may need to understand where to seek information and support. Representatives should not be expected to provide financial advice but neither should we be left without the knowledge needed to support members through their conversations. This motion promotes better-informed representatives and better-informed members and better outcomes for both.

Congress, pension awareness is not a luxury. For many members it can make a significant difference to the decisions they make at some of the most important moments of their working lives. I ask Congress to support Motion 96. Congress, I move. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kim. Secunder.

HELENA PILCHER (Southern): Madam President, Congress, supporting Motion 96. I speak today from my own experience of navigating my pension through the Local Government Pension Scheme. I retired on 4 January this year and I am still waiting for my first pension payment. It is now due on 30 June. When it comes to applying for your pension, it can be a long-winded process. My application was submitted in December. Because of the complexity of the system, the various options on top of the yearly pension statements which have different formats every year, it is a daunting time.

Each scenario for obtaining your pension is handled differently. Early retirement or retirement through ill-health produces different forecasts and the outcomes can vary greatly. If all reps were trained to support members at this critical time, which can be stressful, it would only be a positive move. This is, after all, an important crossroads in life. As a school support staff rep I have been asked by members how they would fare pension wise if a disciplinary process did not go their way; if a member has to retire early through ill health, will they get the full pension or is it dependent on their illness or a particular diagnosis? With the training to signpost and reassure members, reps would have the knowledge on how the pension system works, and members would feel better supported, and have even more confidence in their reps. I second this motion.

*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Mover of Motion 98.

## **CLOSING THE PENSION CONTRIBUTION GAP**

### **MOTION 98**

#### **98. CLOSING THE PENSION CONTRIBUTION GAP**

This Congress acknowledges that significant pension contribution inequalities exist between lower-paid and part-time workers and higher earners, and that these inequalities disproportionately affect women.

Congress recognises that current pension scheme rules prevent many lower-paid workers from contributing at the same percentage rates via the tax efficient salary sacrifice route as higher earners because increasing their contributions would take their wages below the National Minimum or Living Wage.

This builds on the longstanding trade union commitment to addressing gender inequality in pay, terms, and retirement outcomes.

This Congress believes that:

- structural factors such as the gender pay gap, occupational segregation and caring responsibilities mean women are more likely to be in roles where pension contribution limits apply

This Congress notes that:

- the UK gender pension gap is estimated at 30-40%, considerably higher than the gender pay gap
- women are twice as likely to work part-time as men (ONS)
- lower-paid staff are most likely to face contribution caps because employers cannot make deductions that reduce pay below minimum wage
- these systemic constraints leave many women unable to save adequately for retirement despite wanting to contribute more

This Congress resolves:

- to campaign for employers to review and change pension scheme rules that restrict lower-paid and part-time workers
- to lobby government to amend pension and minimum-wage regulations so workers can increase contributions without breaching wage thresholds
- to press employers to provide employer-funded pension top-ups where employee contributions are restricted
- to adopt as GMB policy the goal of fair and equitable pension contribution mechanisms for all workers, regardless of income or gender
- to work with employers and pension providers to develop alternative contribution models that do not disadvantage lower-paid staff

### **B33 GMB@BMA/BMJ BRANCH**

#### **LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*

MOHAMMAD ALI (London): Afternoon, President, Vice-President, Congress, first-time delegate, third-time speaker. *(Applause)* Moving Motion 98: Closing the Pension Contribution Gap. Obviously, we have just heard quite a lot about pensions and I think we can all agree here that every worker deserves the opportunity to save for their future and have the right to a happy, safe and stress-free retirement. However, as with many things in life, this is harder for workers on lower incomes to achieve, especially due to a quirk of the current system which prevents staff from contributing to salary sacrifice pensions if it takes their incomes below the minimum wage. This prevents many lower-paid workers from contributing the same proportion of their income as others, disproportionately affecting women and part-time workers. As mentioned in the motion, the UK's gender pension gap is estimated to be 30 to 40%. That is substantially higher than the gender pay gap. These rules entrench life-long

inequality and can make the hard-won commitment of a National Minimum Wage into a barrier to prosperity and equality, rather than a driver of it.

I am delighted this issue is already being acted upon by the GMB in its role as an employer and now its push for it to be tackled nationwide. With the rising uncertainty around whether the triple-lock guarantee on state pensions will be maintained, it is more important than ever that we support workers to save for their retirements and ensure they are able to maximise their use of tax incentives and employer-matching contributions. Thank you for your time. Congress. Please support Motion 98.  
*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Mohammad. Secunder please.

TONY CHOLERTON (London): Seconding Motion 98: Closing the Pension Contribution Gap. Congress, GMB has fought long and hard for equal rights for workers. It is now time to address the disparity between the pensions of the poor and the well off. Well-off people are able to take advantage by contributing more to their workplace pension and benefiting from the increased contribution from the employer. Yet those on minimum wage lose out because if they increase their contribution, it could result in their salary dropping below the legal minimum wage. Not only can the low-paid not increase their contributions to the workplace pension but they then lose out through not getting the increased employer contributions.

Congress, this needs to change to protect the low-paid. And Congress notes that yet again it is women that lose out the most. The Office for National Statistics report that

women are twice as likely to work-time as men. As my colleague pointed out, the gender pension gap is greater by quite a way than the gender pay gap. This motion calls on GMB to adopt a policy with the goal of fair and equitable pension contribution mechanisms for all workers regardless of income or gender. This will require employers to change their pension scheme rules so that the restrictions on lower paid and part-time employees are removed. The motion also calls on GMB to lobby the Government so that necessary changes to the minimum wage and pension legislation can be made. Congress, please support this motion. I second.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tony. Mover of Composite 5, please.

## **MAKE STATE PENSION AND OCCUPATIONAL PENSION TAX-FREE, NOT UNFAIRLY TAXING PENSIONERS**

### **COMPOSITE 5**

#### **C5: MAKE STATE PENSION AND OCCUPATIONAL PENSION TAX-FREE, NOT UNFAIRLY TAXING PENSIONERS**

This Congress notes that due to the combination of the triple lock in raising the state pension payment and the freezing of the personal allowance, this has caused the state pension to exceed the tax-free threshold of £12,570 until 2031. This means that most pensioners will fall into the payment net which is burdensome to everyone on a state pension, not to even talk of exorbitant rising of energy bills payment on pensioners.

Who says that the state pension does not tax people with no other income? they are required to deal with tax assessment demands, leading to confusion and potential penalties if they fail to understand the requirement.

Unexpected tax bills will cause financial difficulties for pensioners who rely solely on state and occupational pensions without alternative means.

This Congress notes and welcomes that Chancellor Rachel Reeves has said that people whose only income comes from the state pension will not have to pay tax. The state pension is set to rise above the normal level for paying tax in April 2027, due to increases in payments and tax thresholds being frozen.

But Reeves has confirmed that anyone who receives the state pension, but no other income will not have to pay income tax before 2030.

The announcement has raised questions over the fairness of such a policy. Some pensioners have other pension payments or savings which means they already unfairly have to pay tax.

The GMB believe that after years of paying tax on their earnings the government should be doing more to protect pensioners hard earned savings and personal pensions from the tax man.

For this reason, GMB demand that the Labour party commits to reforming pensions tax relief that ensures that Pensioners with modest savings and personal pensions will not be disadvantaged and taxed for saving for their retirement.

We ask the government to waive single income tax on pensions and give unique substantial energy discount rate to elderly people and relieve their anxiety.

**Moving Region:** London  
(*Carried*)

PAUL McCARNEY (London): Good afternoon, President, Congress, first-time delegate but speaking for the third time (*Applause*) Moving Motion 213: Unfairly Taxing Pensioners. This Congress notes and welcomes that Chancellor Rachel Reeves has said that people whose only income comes from the state pension will not have to pay tax. The state pension is set to rise above the normal level for paying tax in April 2027 due to increases in payments and tax thresholds being frozen, but Rachel Reeves confirmed that anyone who receives the state pension but no other income will not have to pay income tax before 2030. The announcement has raised questions over the fairness of such a policy. Some pensioners have other pension payments or savings which means they already unfairly must pay tax. Why should pensioners be re-taxed on earnings they have already paid tax on? My father who is nearly 85 years old, and who has been my role model for many years, worked for 30 years in the Fire Service, he did 12 years in social services driving and he also worked a further 12 years at various jobs that suited his needs. So 54 years of employment paying tax only to be retaxed on a pension that he saved into to avoid claiming benefits. People who claim state benefits do not pay tax but now at the age of 85, my father will have to pay more

tax. The GMB believes that after years of paying tax on other earnings, the Government should be doing more to protect pensioners' hard-earned savings and personal pensions from the taxman. For this reason the GMB should demand that the Labour Party commits to reforming pension tax relief and ensures that pensioners with modest savings and personal pensions will not be disadvantaged and taxed for their retirement. Please support this motion. I move. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Chris. Secunder.

ALASTAIR BLUNDELL (London): Seconding Composite Motion 5, 99 and 213: Unfairly Taxing Pensioners and Make State Pensions and Occupational Pensions Tax-Free. Let's not kid ourselves, last year, Rachel Reeves came to Congress, and she is a GMB member, she is one of us, and she banged on the drum about all these jobs that they were going to create. But that was after she had taxed the old age pensioners which, hopefully, I am going to be one. Touch wood. She taxed them with their heating. She removed it only to realise she had made a mistake and Joe Public had decided enough was enough. As was said earlier on, if you earn over £12,500, you are going to be taxed on it. You have already paid your taxes. Most of us in this room have probably worked since we were at least 16 for some of us. I know that I have. I quickly worked it out and by time I retire I will have paid about £120,000. We were all told by political parties that we had to get a private pension because our state pension wasn't going to be enough. We done it. We were taxed on it. I move that this union we fight for having either your state pension or your private pension and your £12,500 that they have decided they are going to tax you on stopped. (*Applause*) I second this motion.

THE PRESIDENT: That was a good word to end on. I was about to say “Stop” to you!

Thank you, Ally. Mover of Motion 100, please.

## **MINIMUM EMPLOYERS PENSION CONTRIBUTION**

### **MOTION 100**

#### **100. MINIMUM EMPLOYERS PENSION CONTRIBUTION**

This Congress we call upon the GMB to campaign for all employers to make a minimum Company Pension contributions of 5%.

#### **A13 ASDA NORTH BRANCH NORTH EAST, YORKSHIRE & HUMBER REGION**

*(Carried)*

JULIE SHAW (North East Yorkshire & Humber:): Julie Shaw, moving Motion 100: Minimum Employers’ Pension Contribution. Proud member of the North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region. *(Applause)* Good afternoon, comrades. I am a working-class lass from Hull. I am one of the millions of low-paid workers who work for Asda. I know that pensions can be a heavy subject, particularly straight after lunch on a Wednesday afternoon, but the whole country is walking into a pension crisis, and we must do something to change the dial on this issue. Too many of us across the country have pitiful contributions from our employers into our pension pot. As Asda workers we receive just 3% from our bosses, despite them being international global capital players. Pension poverty is already very real but it is only set to get worse, less and less, and what people are paying in simply isn’t enough. If we don’t act now then we will never recover. This motion is simply a start in pushing for the needed changes to make pensions fair. Of course we would all want more from an employer, and some of

you are already lucky enough to receive much more than that, but for millions of low-paid workers like me in the private sector, 5% would be life changing. Congress, let's push to improve pensions now - improve them before it is too late. I move.

*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Julie. Secunder. Could I have the movers and seconders of 281, 282 and 283 down to the front, please.

AITHAN COOPER (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): I will make this quick because I need the toilet! *(Laughter)* President, Vice-President, Congress, I am from the Doncaster Branch, North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region, seconding Motion 100 to call for an absolute baseline of employer pension contributions.

Congress, this country is facing down the barrel of a pensions crisis. The cost of living, the burdening of young people with mountains of student debt, wage stagnation, the rise of AI and the fact we are all living longer are all combining into a perfect storm that is likely to see the next generation pensioners heading into poverty. It cannot be right that in one of the richest countries in the world, our pension pots are going backwards. This motion is not an attempt to solve the crisis but it is to start a debate and a discussion to make sure pension poverty is part of our national conversation. Let's not forget most of those who receive the least from their employers are overwhelmingly low-paid women. We have a duty as a movement to tackle the crisis head on. A 5% contribution is not enough. *(Sings)* We've gotta fight for the right for pensions! *(Applause)* Thank you. Please support the motion. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Off you go. Does anybody want to speak in opposition to any of those motions? (*No response*) In that case, can I ask Colin Gunter from the CEC -- you do want to speak in opposition? Please come up.

MARK BOWLER (Wales & South West): Speaking against Motion 96. It is a credible motion on training for representatives regarding pensions. It is something I have asked for myself having been seconded for 20 years to full-time union representation in my workplace. But I have long come to understand that it is a difficult area, one where we should not be putting our reps under pressure. Pensions are personal, they are fluid and they are very difficult. A wrong word in the best of intentions can be held against you. I have learned from experience do not go there without really sure training regarding what you are speaking about when you are talking about members' money because they will hold it against you if you say something wrong. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mark. Kim, you do have the right of reply if you wish to use it. She has gone as well. Helena, do you want to speak, the seconder, do you want to come back with a right of reply?

HELENA PILCHER: Madam President, Congress, yes, we did understand all that but what we stated in our motion was we were actually given the correct training, the proper training, and that is what we are asking for. We will not make rash decisions. We would obviously put it through the correct channels first and make sure we got it right, so we would like it to stand. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. I will now ask Colin Gunter from the CEC to respond, please.

COLIN GUNTER (CEC, Midlands) President, Congress, responding on behalf of CEC to Composite 5 and Motion 100. On Composite 5, the CEC is supporting with a qualification. We support the principle behind this motion. It is right that pensioners, particularly those relying solely on the state pension or modest private pensions, should be supported and not be unfairly burdened by taxation. Ensuring dignity and financial security in retirement is fully aligned with GMB values and long-standing policy. However, our qualification relates to the scope of the proposal. Extending tax relief to all pension income, including large private pensions, would represent a significant shift in government tax and economic policy. Such a change would require a major reconsideration of public finances and is unlikely to be adopted in the current context. Therefore we support targeted tax fairness for pensioners on lower incomes, but we must be realistic about the broader implications of a universal approach. Subject to that qualification, the CEC supports Composite 5.

On Motion 100, the CEC is supporting with a qualification. We strongly support the thrust of this motion. Too many workers are not saving enough for retirement. The current minimum employer contribution under auto-enrolment set at 3% is simply not sufficient. Many employers already exceed this level but the lowest contributions are often found among those paying the lowest wages. This creates significant inequality in retirement outcomes. GMB has long campaigned for higher employer contributions. Alongside other trade unions, we are actively lobbying for a phased increase in employer contributions under auto enrolment to at least 5%, with our preferred position

being closer to 8%. This would move total pension contributions towards 13%, bringing them in line with the recommended saving levels of between 12% and 15% for a secure retirement. Our qualification is that any changes must be implemented in a phased and deliverable way, taking account of wider economic conditions and the need to bring employers along with the reform. Subject to that qualification, the CEC supports Motion 100.

President, in conclusion, the CEC is supporting Composite 5 and Motion 100, both with the stated qualifications. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you Colin. The CEC is supporting 96 and 98. Does London Region accept the qualification on Composite 5? (*Accepted*) And does North East, Yorkshire & Humber accept the qualification on Motion 100. (*Accepted*) I will put all those to the vote. All those in favour of 96, 98, Composite 5 and Motion 100, please show. Any against? They are all carried,

*Motion 96 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 98 was **CARRIED**.*

*Composite 5 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 100 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Could I have the mover of Motion 281? Could I say thank you again to those speakers who were expecting to speak tomorrow but have now been brought forward. That is really appreciated you are ready. Mover of 281? (*Formally*

*moved from the floor*) Thank you, does that mean you are formally seconding it?

*(Formally seconded)*

## **KEEP PROFIT OUT OF CARE IN WALES**

### **MOTION 281**

#### **281. KEEP PROFIT OUT OF CARE IN WALES**

This Congress notes that social care in Wales is overwhelmingly funded through public money but is increasingly delivered by private, for profit providers. That significant sums of public funding intended for care are extracted as profit and, in many cases, leave Wales entirely through complex ownership structures. That care work is predominantly carried out by women, migrant workers and racially minoritised workers, many of whom face low pay, insecure contracts and poor terms and conditions.

That profit driven care provision has been linked to high staff turnover, workforce instability and reduced continuity of care for service users. That Wales has committed to principles of social partnership, fair work and the well being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, all of which are undermined by profit extraction from publicly funded care.

Congress believes that care is a public good and a fundamental human right, not a commodity. That public money for care should be used to improve care quality, workforce pay, training and conditions — not to generate profit for shareholders. That profit extraction from care exacerbates gender, race and disability inequality. That not for profit publicly owned, and community based models of care are better aligned with the values and policy direction of Wales. That transparency and accountability are essential wherever public money is used.

Congress calls on GMB to campaign for a clear commitment from the Welsh Government to end the use of public funding for for profit care provision over time and prioritise public, not for profit and co operative models. Lobby for full financial transparency requirements for all care providers receiving public funds, including ownership structures and profit extraction. Work with sister unions, community organisations, older people's groups and the voluntary sector to build a broad coalition for care not for profit.

Support GMB members in the care sector by campaigning for secure contracts, fair pay, adequate staffing levels, meaningful social partnership in care commissioning decisions, use GMB's political and industrial influence to ensure that public care money stays in care, is reinvested locally, and improves outcomes for workers and service users.

#### **M18 BRANCH**

#### **WALES & SOUTH WEST REGION**

*(Referred)*

THE PRESIDENT: The mover of Motion 282.

## **CARE HOMES**

### **MOTION 282**

#### **282. CARE HOMES**

Congress deplores:

The selloff of 20 care homes with elderly and vulnerable residents to a private health provider by Norfolk County Council agreed by their Cabinet below the line Monday 26th January 2026

This is a sale of the County funded Norse Care Company, which the Norfolk public have paid for.

This is a fire sale to cover up gross failures in oversight and investment and is simply asset stripping to reduce debts.

This is sale to a US healthcare conglomerate (CGEN) with a network of care and property companies in the UK

This Company is structured like a private equity company that will cherry pick and increase costs to “successful “properties; and sell off those they decide not to fund where work needed or sell off for redevelopment

Congress is concerned :

- At how standards and care quality is prioritised over profit
- How will risks be identified, managed and escalated should staffing or quality concerns arise
- How reinvestment in staffing, training, buildings and residents outcomes will be safeguarded
- At how any consultation has or will take place with affected staff and trade unions and as required under TUPE

These actions can be mirrored anywhere in the UK

In Norfolk there will be no in-house capacity left and such care will be left entirely at the mercy of the market

Congress also notes:

the national scandals in some homes involving poor care and abuse

Congress notes that this decision just at the start of Local Government Reorganisation takes away any options for new Unitary Authorities

Congress believes:

- that the market has no place in health and social care
- that the market model has failed and run its course
- that the Government should work towards a return to in-house models of care, properly funded and with genuine oversight and accountability, including involving patient and advocacy groups

Congress recognises the steps Government has made a start on pay of care staff in the sector but must go faster

Congress resolves:

- to ask Government (Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government MHLG ) to ensure that at least until any Unitary Authorities are established that there will be a moratorium nationally on any disposal of Council Care Homes
- to ask Government to ensure that no contracts are placed with any private provider of care homes unless there is a union recognition agreement in place
- recognising the part time and fragmented nature of the work force Congress also asks that such union recognition is not by exception dependent on the usual qualifying criteria by percentage of workforce, either by Care home or by Company Group
- to ask Government to urgently bring FORWARD their reviews of Social Care and not wait until 2028, and to drive forward the proper integration of Health and Social Care (MHLG and DHSC) Department of Health & Social Care.

**E12 EAST DEREHAM BRANCH  
LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*

JAN SMITH (RMA, London): Moving Motion 282 on saving our care homes. Colleagues, at the beginning of this year it was suddenly announced that 20 council-run care homes within our area were going to be sold off. Norfolk County Council, who are the owners decided, that Norse Care Group, which provides the care within the care homes, would be also be sold off. This affects not only the residents but the carers, the cleaners, everybody. And not only that, those residents - our mothers, grandmothers, aunts, brothers, sisters, you name it - it affects their mental health not knowing what is going to happen to them. Norfolk County Council was a Tory-run council, and can I say it has now been taken over, sadly, by Reform, so who knows what is going to happen with them. They are going to sell it to a private company Stowe Healthcare Group. We know what these people are like. They will come in and asset strip it and these residents will be moved on, not knowing where they are going to go. Some of them can be suffering with mental health issues and this causes further stress to the residents. So, I urge you to support this motion and that we organise a campaign to help to save our care homes. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jan. Secunder.

CATHY HOLLAND (London): President, Congress, seconding Motion 282. In the 1980s I worked in care homes run by the council. We did our best to look after our residents. After a few years it was decided to sell off the care homes. That is when standards started to slip. The council would purchase beds from individual care homes who would leave beds empty so they could use less staff, PPE would be substandard and cheap, very often not fit for purpose. In one care home residents were given their dinner on a tea plate. I was also around when Southern Cross Care Homes ceased operation in 2012 because they front-loaded their profit, leading to not enough money to look after the residents. GMB did fight this but to no avail. Southern Cross should be held accountable. Care homes should never be for profit at the expense of our older population. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Cathy. Mover of Motion 283.

## **LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO ACT AS GUARANTORS FOR CARE-EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE**

### **MOTION 283**

#### **283. LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO ACT AS GUARANTORS FOR CARE-EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE**

This Congress notes that care-experienced young people face significant and unfair barriers when attempting to secure safe, stable and appropriate housing. Many private landlords require a financial guarantor or substantial deposit, something that most young people would normally receive from a parent or close family member. For care-experienced young people, who have been raised by the state, this form of parental safety net is too often missing.

Congress further recognises that local authorities frequently refer to themselves as corporate parents, yet in practice this often results in a narrow, procedural, administrative approach rather than the warm, protective, unconditional and aspirational approach that a

caring parent would naturally provide. A good parent does not leave their child unsupported when entering adulthood or searching for a secure home. A caring parent would step in, provide reassurance and act as guarantor where needed.

Congress believes that local authorities must treat care-experienced young people with the same love, concern, and commitment that any responsible parent would give their own child. This includes meeting emotional, social, financial and practical needs — not just statutory minimums. A true caring-parent approach means ensuring that a young person is never left at risk of homelessness, exploitation or exclusion simply because they were brought up by the state.

Therefore, this Congress calls on GMB to:

1. Campaign for all UK local authorities to formally adopt a caring-parent standard, committing to act as guarantor — or fund an equivalent guarantor scheme — for care-experienced young people up to at least age 25, or beyond where required.
2. Lobby national and devolved governments to provide statutory guidance, duties and ring-fenced funding to make this national policy, not a postcode lottery.
3. Ensure that housing departments, children's services and leaving-care teams are fully resourced and trained to deliver this responsibility safely, compassionately and consistently.
4. Promote a culture shift where care-experienced young people are treated not as service users, but as sons and daughters of the state — people who deserve support, dignity, equality and the protection any loving parent would provide.

Congress asserts that to claim the title of corporate parent is not enough; local authorities must act as caring parents — guiding, supporting and standing beside care-experienced young people into adulthood, not walking away when they turn 18.

**P18 BRANCH**  
**WALES & SOUTH WEST REGION**  
*(Carried)*

JANE HUNT (Wales & South West): Moving Motion 283: Local Authorities To Act As Guarantors For Care-Experienced Young People. Congress, for most young people moving into housing comes with support from family. Someone signs the paperwork, someone provides reassurance and someone acts as a guarantor if needed. But for care-experienced young people that support is too often missing. Many landlords now require a guarantor before offering you accommodation and if you don't have parents or family able to help, you are immediately disadvantaged. That leaves many care-experienced young people locked out of housing before they even begin. We talk a lot about corporate parenting and local authorities proudly describe themselves as

corporate parents. But being a parent is not about titles or policies, it is about actions. A caring parent does not stand back when their child faces homelessness. A caring parent does not say, “You’re 18, good luck, on your bike.” A caring parent steps in, offers support, provides security and stands beside their child through difficult transitions. This is exactly what this motion demands. Too often care-experienced young people are treated as service use years rather than sons and daughters of the state. They are expected to survive adulthood with fewer resources, fewer opportunities and fewer opportunities than their peers.

Congress, we cannot continue allowing young people who have already experienced instability and trauma to face exploitation, homelessness and unsafe housing simply because the state refuses to provide the support any decent parent would offer automatically. Acting as a guarantor is not radical: it is responsible, it is compassionate and it could be life changing. This motion also recognises the need for proper funding, training and national consistency so support is not dependent on postcode lotteries. If local authorities want to claim the role of the corporate parent, then they must be prepared to take on the role of a caring parent in practice, not just in principle.

Congress, please support this motion. I move. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jane. The seconder. Could the movers and seconders of 287, 286 and 285 also be ready and come down the front, please?

JO SMALL (Wales & South West): Seconding motion 283. First-time delegate and second-time speaker and thank goodness the broken-down tram let me off so I could be

here! (*Applause*) And thank you, Jane, for a brilliant speech. Congress, this motion is about fairness, dignity and what it truly means to be a parent. Because that is what the state claims to be for care-experienced young people. Yet too many step into adulthood without the support others take for granted. Most young people have someone to stand behind them when they move into their first home; a parent to reassure them, to act as guarantor. But for those who grew up in care that safety net is often missing. That is not just unfortunate, it is unjust. If councils are serious about being corporate parents, they must act like one. A real parent does not step back at 18, they step forward. Acting as a guarantor is not radical, like Jane said: it is practical, it prevents homelessness, reduces risk and creates stability. This is about more than housing; it is about belonging. Let's move from words to action. I urge you to support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Joanne. Does anybody want to speak in opposition to any of those motions? (*No response*) In that case, could ask CEC speaker Ruth Pitchford to respond.

RUTH PITCHFORD (CEC): Responding on behalf of the CEC to Motions 281 and 282. On Motion 281: Keep Profit Out of Care in Wales, the CEC is seeking to refer. We recognise and support the principles set out in this motion. GMB has been clear in its campaigning for high quality care services that put the needs of service users and workers first. The Care Commissioning Charter already advances many of the aims outlined, particularly in driving up standards and accountability in care provision. However, this motion relates specifically to Wales and given the fact that health and social care is devolved to Senedd Cymru and the distinct policy and legislative

framework in Wales, it is appropriate that this work is led at the relevant regional level. Therefore, the CEC is asking Congress to refer this motion to the Wales & South West Region where it can be addressed in line with devolved responsibilities and ongoing campaigning work.

On Motion 282: Care Homes, the CEC is supporting with qualification. We support the principles and concerns raised in this motion. The standards of care in this sector, the treatment of workers and the role of collective bargaining are all critical issues for GMB and our members. However, our qualification is a practical one relating to the feasibility of some of the motion's calls. The motion proposes that no public contract should be awarded to private care providers unless a union recognition agreement is in place. While we understand and support the aim and of strengthening union presence and worker voice, current government procurement reforms do not include mandatory recognition as a requirement. Instead union recognition is expected to form part of the broader social values criteria which can strengthen a provider's bid but is not a legal condition of contract award. Similarly, the motion raises the issue of union recognition thresholds in what is a highly fragmented sector. At present recognition is based on established qualifying criteria related to workforce percentages whether at care home or company level. It is not clear how the proposed changes to the system would operate in practice or what alternative framework is being suggested. These are important issues but they require careful consideration to ensure that our policy is both effective and deliverable. Subject to that qualification, the CEC supports Motion 282.

President, in conclusion the CEC asks that Motion 281 be referred and that Motion 282 be supported with our stated qualification, thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ruth. Does Wales & South West accept reference back? (*Accepted*) There is no vote on that then. Does London Region accept the qualification on Motion 282? (*Accepted*) I think that was a yes. Then CEC are supporting Motion 283. I will put those together, 282 and 283, all those in favour, please show. Anyone against? They are all carried.

*Motion 281 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 282 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 283 was **CARRIED**.*

**The Vice President took the Chair.**

## **SOCIAL POLICY: EDUCATION & TRAINING**

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Moving to motions relating to Social Policy: Education & Training, can the mover for Motion 287 please come to the rostrum.

### **EXPANDING SCHOOL BASED APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING ALONGSIDE A LEVELS**

#### **MOTION 287**

##### **287. EXPANDING SCHOOL BASED APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING ALONGSIDE A LEVELS**

This Congress notes that too many young people who are not naturally academic are being failed by a post 16 education system that forces them to choose between A levels or vocational training. This rigid divide leaves many students disengaged, under supported, and without a clear pathway into skilled, secure employment.

Congress further notes that employers across the UK continue to report shortages of work ready young people, while schools struggle to provide meaningful vocational options that combine practical experience with academic progression.

Congress believes that a blended model — enabling schools to act as accredited training providers for apprenticeships while students also study A levels — would create a fairer, more flexible system. Such a model would allow young people who are not suited to purely academic study to gain real work experience, industry relevant skills, and recognised qualifications without being pushed out of mainstream education.

Congress recognises that this approach would:

- Support students who learn best through practical, hands on experience
- Strengthen links between schools, employers, and local communities
- Improve access to skilled careers for working class young people
- Reduce dropout rates and disengagement
- Help address national skills shortages
- Ensure that vocational learners are not treated as second class students

Congress calls on the GMB to campaign for:

1. Government investment to allow schools to become registered apprenticeship training providers.
2. A national framework enabling students to combine A levels with structured, high quality work placements.
3. Stronger partnerships between schools, employers, and unions to guarantee fair treatment, proper safeguarding, and high quality training for young people.
4. A review of post 16 pathways to ensure that non academic learners have equal access to opportunity, progression, and decent work.
5. Recognition that vocational and academic routes should complement each other, not compete.

Congress instructs the CEC to lobby government, engage with education bodies, and work with GMB regions to promote this blended apprenticeship and A level model as a key part of building a fairer, more inclusive skills system.

#### **A55 BRANCH**

#### **WALES & SOUTH WEST REGION**

*(Carried)*

SHARON HALLETT (Wales & South West): Moving Motion 287. First-time delegate and first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Conference, I am proud to move this motion. Every year thousands of young people leave school believing that they have already failed, not because they lack talent, not because they lack potential, but because our education test system tells them if they are not academic they are second best; that their only options are low-level courses, dead-end jobs or dropping out altogether. Congress, we know this is not good enough and we know it is not true.

The UK has a skills crisis. Employers are crying out for young people with practical ability, real-world experience and confidence to step into skilled work. Meanwhile schools are full of young people who could be those workers, if only the system gave them the actual route that fits how they learn. This motion calls for exactly that. We want a blended model where schools can train apprentices while students also take A levels. A system where young people who aren't naturally academic can still gain proper qualifications, real-world experience and a path into skilled secure employment. This isn't about lowering standards; it is about raising opportunities. It means schools become certified training providers. It means employers working with local schools to offer structured placements. It means students learning by doing, not being written off because they don't thrive in exam halls.

Congress, this is how we support working-class kids, this is how we tackle the skills shortage. This is how we build a fairer, more inclusive education system that values every young person, not just the ones who can memorise textbooks. I urge Congress to support this motion and give our young people the future they deserve. Thank you. I move. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Well done, Sharon. Can we have the seconder, please.

SUZANNE WILLIAMS (Wales & South West): Vice-President, Congress, seconding Motion 287. Congress, we all know someone - a son, a daughter, a neighbour, a member in our workplace - who struggled in a purely academic system but flourished the moment they were given something to practical to do, the moment they were trusted

with real responsibility, the moment someone believed in them. This motion is about building an education system that believes in those young people from day one. Right now too many students are pushed down narrow pathways that don't suit them. They are told to choose between A levels and vocational training as if the world of work is divided into academic people and practical people. It isn't and never has been. A blended apprenticeship and A level model gives young people the best of both worlds. It keeps doors open, it builds confidence, it gives them the skills employers actually need and it stops non-academic learners being treated as second-class citizens.

Congress, this is also about fairness. Working-class young people are the ones most likely to be pushed out of academic routes and least likely to access high-quality apprenticeships. This motion challenges that inequality head on. By enabling schools to deliver apprenticeship training, we bring opportunities closer to home. We give students structured support and a clear path into decent work and we strengthen the links between schools, employers and unions, exactly what a modern skills system should look like.

Congress, this is a practical, achievable and urgently needed reform. Let's back it. Let's stand up for the young people who learn differently and let's build a system that works for all young persons. Congress, please support this motion. I second.  
*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Suzanne. Can we have the mover of Motion 286, please?

## **REFORM UK'S THREAT TO SEND PROVISION IN SCHOOLS**

### **MOTION 286**

#### **287. EXPANDING SCHOOL BASED APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING ALONGSIDE A LEVELS**

This Congress notes that too many young people who are not naturally academic are being failed by a post 16 education system that forces them to choose between A levels or vocational training. This rigid divide leaves many students disengaged, under supported, and without a clear pathway into skilled, secure employment.

Congress further notes that employers across the UK continue to report shortages of work ready young people, while schools struggle to provide meaningful vocational options that combine practical experience with academic progression.

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4. A review of post 16 pathways to ensure that non academic learners have equal access to opportunity, progression, and decent work.
5. Recognition that vocational and academic routes should complement each other, not compete.

Congress instructs the CEC to lobby government, engage with education bodies, and work with GMB regions to promote this blended apprenticeship and A level model as a key part of building a fairer, more inclusive skills system.

#### **A55 BRANCH**

#### **WALES & SOUTH WEST REGION**

*(Carried)*

LYNN POLLARD (Southern): Congress, President, still no miracle, still very dyslexic. I move Motion 286: Reform UK's Threat to SEND Provision In Schools. This motion comes at a critical time for children with special educational needs and disabilities, their families and the school support staff who work tirelessly to support them. Since the Children and Families Act 2014, the number of children identified with SEND has risen dramatically. We now have over 1.7 million children requiring additional support and with half a million educational health and care plans in place and these numbers continue to grow year after year. Behind every statistic is a child who deserves the opportunity to learn, develop and thrive. Behind every EHCP is a family fighting to secure the support their child needs. And behind much of that support are GMB members working in schools every day. Teaching assistants, learning assistants, pastoral staff and specialist support workers are often the people who make inclusion possible. They manage complex needs, de-escalate challenging situations, provide personal care, support and communication and ensure that some of our most vulnerable children can access education, yet too often these same workers are expected to do this with less. School budgets are stretched to breaking point. Support staff are facing increasing workloads, rising levels of violence and aggression and growing pressures, created by a system that everyone agrees needs reform. Even the parliamentary Education Select Committee has described the current SEND system as broken and unsustainable.

But when a system is under pressure, we must be very careful about whose voices are heard when solutions are proposed. That is why this motion highlights the deeply concerning comments and proposals coming from Reform UK. When politicians describe the SEND system as being "out of control", or suggest that the problem is

widespread over-diagnosis, they risk creating a narrative that blames children and parents instead of addressing the real causes. The problem is not too many children need support - the problem is that support has not kept up with the need. The problem is chronic under-funding, stretched local authority budgets, shortages of specialist services and years of pressure on schools.

Congress, we know from our members that the reality on the ground is very different from the political soundbites. Our members see children waiting months and years for assessments. They see families battling for support. They see exhausted staff trying to provide the best possible education with insufficient resources. If reform is to happen, and reform is needed, it must be informed by those who live the experience. That means listening to school support staff who deliver SEND provision every day. It means listening to the workers who understand what works and what doesn't and what children actually need. It means ensuring that any future changes about the safety, welfare and educational outcomes of vulnerable children come first. This is why this motion calls for a special report to Congress gathering evidence directly from school support staff and ensuring that the GMB is at the forefront of shaping the debate on SEND reform.

Congress, we must not allow future SEND provision to be dictated by political rhetoric and misinformation. We must champion evidence, fairness and inclusion. Most importantly, we must stand up for the children who depend on those services and for GMB members who deliver it to them every day. I ask Congress to support this motion. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Can we have the seconder, please?

HELENA PILCHER (Southern): Supporting Motion 286. I quote, Richard Tice, Reform UK's Deputy Leader: "It sounds like a little bit of a generalisation but if you are really courageous about it you'd say, unless you can sort of really sense or see some form of different ability, then you should just assume that we are all different. So what? You have got the mad situation there where children who don't have any form of label are starting to feel left out."

Yes, Mr Tice, we are all unique. Many parents and children do not want a label: they need help and support. This is why we at Congress implore Bridget Phillipson, our Education Secretary, to step up now and make the positive changes and get the right agenda in place for support staff and schools to ensure that Reform UK's proposed policies for SEND provision are not given a chance to be implemented. Their comments and attitude regarding SEND are insulting, arrogant, and only stigmatise autistic children and will make their and their family's lives harder than they already are. Reform UK, you are looking at SEND provision through the wrong end of the telescope. I have seen first-hand the problems and the distress these families and children face. Perhaps before making these sweeping statements, Mr Tice should walk a day in their shoes.

We need to ensure vulnerable children are safeguarded and their needs met. We need consultation with GMB school support members who are on the front-line every day, often experiencing negative behaviours. They are at risk of physical violence, verbal abuse or worse. Reform UK intend providing more alternative provision units which would segregate children and are not inclusive. Yes, the SEND system and conditions

for support staff do need reforming, but certainly not under Reform UK's proposals, which over-simplify complex medical and developmental needs, writing them off as naughty children.

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Helena, can you finish up, please.

HELENA PILCHER: Mr Tice, you send your child to a private boarding school. Perhaps you should go to a modern primary or secondary school and see how the support staff and parents who work day in and day out with SEND children feel about Reform UK's proposals. I second. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Can I have the mover for Motion 285, please.

## **EARLY YEARS MATTER!**

### **MOTION 285**

#### **285. EARLY YEARS MATTER!**

This Congress is asked to support a national campaign for Early Years/Nursery recognition within the union and within the wider education work force.

The Nursery/Early years Sector is chronically underfunded, undervalued and overlooked despite its vital role in children's development and family support.

The government funded childcare hours are delivered on a term-time basis whilst Nursery settings are open all year round. This is creating funding shortfalls and hidden costs for parents.

There is no automatic SEND funding within the Early Years Foundation Stage which leaves settings to fight for basic support for children with additional needs.

Staffing pressures are severe, with burnout, high agency costs, and a growing recruitment and retention crisis across the sector.

Early intervention services have been cut back which include children's centres, speech and language support, and access resources such as Makaton Training.

These services have been significantly reduced.

Early years workers within GMB are often grouped with school staff such as TA'S who solely work within school and we are inaccurately coded, limiting effective representation and organisation.

Early education is skilled, professional work that lays the foundations for every child's future. That children with SEND deserve early, properly funded support.

Early years staff deserve fair pay, recognition, and incentives to remain in the sector.

Early Years members require clear visibility and distinct representation within the GMB.

This Motion calls for Congress to:

Establish a dedicated Early Years members' forum within GMB.

Correct membership coding and systems to accurately identify Early Years Workers.

Actively support recruitment, organising, and campaigning across the Early Years staff.

**L10 LEEDS SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF BRANCH  
NORTH EAST, YORKSHIRE & HUMBER REGION**  
(Carried)

HAYLEY DOYLE (North East, Yorkshire & Humber) (*Applause*). I stand before you as a voice for the early years workforce that is exhausted, overlooked, and still showing up every single day. Early years workers are the foundation of education yet too often we are treated like an afterthought. Families are told they get 30 hours of funded childcare but the reality is different. It is term-time only while many settings operate all year round. That leaves parents paying hidden costs for extra hours, meals, nappies and wipes: costs many simply cannot afford. Settings do not want to charge more but underfunding pushes us into impossible choices and working families carry the burden. The greatest injustice is for the children, especially those with SEND. In early years there is no automatic SEND funding. We fight every day for basic support for children who deserve far better. When children struggle it is not because staff are failing them, it is because the system is failing all of us. Too many decisions about SEND are being made without listening to the people doing the job on the ground. Meanwhile, staff are

at breaking point. Experienced workers are leaving a sector they love because they cannot afford to stay and we are expected to fill gaps with agency staff costing twice as much who often refuse to carry out basic duties. This is not sustainable, fair or safe.

We are told the Early Years White Paper will improve things, but on the front-line, it often means more expectations, more paperwork and more pressure without the staff or support to deliver it. There is also a clear gap between policy and reality. We see incentives to attract new recruits but nothing for the current early years staff holding the system together through dedication and goodwill. That is why our union must be louder, stronger and more visible for the forgotten early years sector. *(Applause)* We are not babysitters. We are highly skilled professionals shaping children's lives and futures and it is long overdue that we are recognised and valued as such. *(Applause)* So today we call on Congress to act: create a dedicated early years forum; fix the systems that fail to recognise us and campaign, organise and fight for our sector because early years is not an add-on to education; it is a foundation. Congress, stand with us and please support this motion. *(Applause and cheers)*

THE PRESIDENT: Can I have a seconder, please?

MELANIE PHEASBY (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Good afternoon, President, good afternoon, Congress. I am seconding Motion 285: Early Years Matters! First time at Congress, first-time delegate, first time speaking. *(Applause)* I rise to second this motion because everything you have just heard is not exaggerated; it is reality. Early years staff are not just stretched, they are holding a broken system together. Every day they fill the gaps left by underfunding, unclear policies, decisions made far

away from the front-line. We see it in the hidden costs pushed on to families. We see it in the fight for basic SEND support and we see it in a workforce that is exhausted, undervalued and walking away. This is not sustainable. It is not fair and it is not safe.

Congress, early years is not an add-on. It is a foundation of education and right now that foundation is cracking. If we do not act, we are just failing staff, we are failing children and families, too. Today let's be clear, we stand with early years workers, we stand for proper funding, real support and recognition. You are going to hear me say this again: march with us to improve our tomorrow! Congress, please support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Well done, Mel. Is there anyone wishing to oppose any of these motions? (*No response*) Can we have the report back from Gwylan Brinkworth for the CEC, please?

GWYLAN BRINKWORTH (CEC): Vice President, Congress, speaking on behalf of the CEC in response to Motion 286. The CEC is supporting this motion with a qualification. We recognise the serious concerns raised in this motion regarding SEND provision in schools and the potential impact of what Reform UK have put forward. This is a critical issue for many of our members working in education, and for the children and families they support every day. GMB has already undertaken significant work in this area, including our Schools Special Report in 2024, which set out our position and priorities for education and support staff. There is a clear and immediate opportunity to influence policy. The Government launched a consultation on SEND reform and we are submitting a comprehensive response. GMB will be actively

engaging with this process. We have consulted our members, ensuring that their voices and experience are central to our response. We will also look to organise a political campaign to amplify those voices and press for the changes our members and the children they support need to see. This work will include publishing the views of GMB members and engaging with the media to raise awareness of the issues facing SEND provision.

Our qualification is therefore a practical one. Rather than committing to additional structures beyond our current capacity, we would be focusing on meaningful impact through the work of the consultation process and our ongoing campaigning work. Therefore, Congress, the CEC supports Motion 286 with this qualification, thank you.  
*(Applause)*

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gwylan. The CEC is supporting Motion 285 from North East, Yorkshire & Humber and Motion 287 from Wales & South West. Does Southern Region accept the qualification on Motion 286? *(Accepted)* Thank you. We will take a vote on all of the motions 285, 286 and 287. All those in favour, can you please raise your hands. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Motion 285 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 286 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 287 was **CARRIED**.*

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Congress, that concludes our afternoon business, and thank you very much for being flexible with the timetable, it will certainly help us tomorrow.

We have some speakers prior to our pre-demo rally and I am delighted to invite our National President to speak regarding the pre-demo rally. Please give her a round of applause. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, Vice-President, it really does give me great pleasure to open this section of business, to explain the purpose of this afternoon's demo and introduce three school activists who will tell you about the reality of their working lives. As a former teaching assistant, I know that school support staff are overworked, undervalued and underpaid. (*Applause*) Staff are expected to go beyond their job descriptions and contracted hours; expected to use specialist skills to support pupils with additional needs; expected to take on more responsibility without any increase in pay. Of course, school support staff want children to have the best possible education and schools have always relied on the goodwill of their staff. But goodwill doesn't pay bills or put food on the table.

In 2009, I had the privilege of being on the School Support Staff Negotiating Body when it was first established by the then Labour Government. Hopes were high. Within its first year we produced more than 100 job profiles and developed a job evaluation scheme. It was due to be tested in several local authorities when Labour lost the 2010 election and Tory Michael Gove became Education Secretary. He quickly disbanded the SSSNB, dismissing it as a "quango" and describing teaching assistants as "a Mum's Army". The arrogance of that man! I am sure he saw us as bored housewives, earning a little pin money while our husbands were the real breadwinners. GMB campaigned hard to bring the SSSNB back and it was a manifesto pledge by the Labour Party that they would if they were elected. Their election in 2024 was the opportunity GMB and

school support staff had waited so long for. Once again school support staff were hoping for proper recognition and reward from this body.

Back in 2009 there were a little over 200 academies but now we have over 10,000; more academies than local authority maintained schools. It is these multi-academy trusts who seem to have been able to exert a real level of control over the Government, so instead of job profiles and a job evaluation scheme, as we expected from the SSSNB, the Government suddenly through legislation introduced a floor and no ceiling model for pay. This means academies retain their freedom to pay staff whatever they wish without proper evaluation and proper job descriptions. The pay of CEOs in academies continues to rise while, every day, support staff are made redundant. The Government have shown the side they are on and it is not the side of the workers. It is a further disappointment that the recent government White Paper: Every Child Achieving and Thriving, encourages all schools to join an academy trust. This will be the biggest privatisation since Thatcher. Not only this, but the Government has also failed to address the issue of equal pay when school support staff move over to the new body.

The demo this afternoon will be sending a loud and clear message to the Government that they need to listen to school support staff. Our message is simple: Labour don't betray school staff. GMB has lobbied consistently about the lack of a pay framework, raised it in every meeting, had motions at TUC Congress and Labour Party Conference. We have written letters and recently had a meeting with the Secretary of State in which all these concerns were laid bare. Only this week the three General Secretaries of the NJC unions wrote a joint letter to Bridget Phillipson to show that this is a joint union issue, urging government to work with the unions, to restore confidence that the SSSNB will deliver for school support staff.

The demo today is part of that escalated action. No longer will school support staff be overlooked. No longer will school support staff be ignored. No longer will school support staff be exploited. It has brought me so much pride to see low-paid women increasingly take strike action over issues such as equal pay, Inner London Weighting Allowance and, as we heard this week from Debbie, over health and safety. School support staff have found their voice. Please raise your voices this afternoon in solidarity with them. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Can Coral come up to speak, please.

CORAL GOSLING (London): Good afternoon, Congress. I have worked in a large SEND school in Barking & Dagenham as a teaching assistant and GMB rep for over 20 years. During those years, I have seen enormous changes in our schools and services. I have dedicated my career to supporting children and young people with special educational needs, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, autism and complex behavioural needs. I care deeply about this work, as do all support staff. What concerns me is that the demands placed on staff continue to grow while the support available to us continues to shrink.

I want to share my own experience. In the past, we had nursing support available within schools. Today, much of that provision has been reduced or shared across boroughs, yet we are still expected to carry out increasingly complex responsibilities including administering medication, involving controlled drugs, epilepsy diabetic testing, tube feeding, suctioning and administering oxygen - all highly skilled medical interventions.

We are not nurses. Our training consists of an afternoon watching a video and a competency test if we are lucky once a year. How would parents feel if they realised we are supporting their children's medical needs with so little training? We are also regularly exposed to significant levels of risk. We work with children and young people who can display violent or challenging behaviours that require specialist support.

Despite this, staff are often expected to manage these situations with limited resources. Many of us have suffered injuries at work yet there can be an expectation that people simply return to work immediately or after a cup of tea and carry on as normal. No other job where staff are physically assaulted would be expected to return to work: school support staff are. The physical and emotional toll of this work is often underestimated. When you return to work the management will refuse to accept that it is an industrial injury. As support staff we are expected to provide personal care to children and young adults, administer first aid, respond to emergencies and protect vulnerable children, in some cases with little or no appropriate personal protective equipment. Having hair pulled, being spat on, pinched, bit and kicked are daily occurrences. Safety should always come first. There are situations where best practice requires two adults to support a pupil safely. However, because of staffing shortages, these situations are sometimes managed by one member of staff alone. That places the staff member at risk and creates an environment where safeguarding can be compromised for both staff and children.

There are serious responsibilities yet too often the recognition, training, staffing levels and compensation do not reflect what is actually being asked of us on the lowest-paid wage. We also see inconsistencies around additional responsibilities such as first aid

duties. In some settings these responsibilities are recognised and compensated, while in others they are effectively treated as voluntary, despite the significant responsibility involved. The reality is that staff are being asked to do more and more with less and less. This is not just about staff welfare. It is about the quality of education and care that our pupils receive. When staff are overstretched, under-resourced and unsupported, everyone loses. That is why we are standing together. When we have gone on strike, we have closed the schools. We don't do this lightly as we care for the children and we know how this can disrupt them.

We want:

- Safer staffing levels
- Proper training and support
- Job evaluations that reflect what we do
- A working environment where staff are protected
- A national pay framework and SEND allowance.

After more than 20 years of service I believe that these are reasonable requests. I believe that school support staff deserve better and together, by standing united, we can make that case clearly and powerfully. Thank you. (*Applause*)

KIM MARSHALL (Southern): Sisters and brothers, I stand today to speak about something that I and many school support staff find deeply insulting and disrespectful. On the surface it sounds like a pay issue but for thousands of school support staff it is about respect, it is about recognition and, above all, it is about equality. London Weighting is an uplift to workers' pay in London boroughs. There are two levels: Inner

London Weighting, which is the higher rate, and Outer London Weighting, which is the lower rate. In both Greenwich and Merton Boroughs there is a two-tier workforce. Teachers, who are already paid well, receive the higher inner London rate, yet for reasons we won't go into as they are really not relevant, school support staff (predominantly low-paid women workers) receive the much lower rate of outer London Weighting, even though we work in the same schools, walk through the same gates, sit in the same classroom and support the same children. And guess what? Face the same cost of living as teachers. Is it because our work matters less, our contribution matters less, our financial struggles matter less?

Congress, school support staff are the people who keep our schools running. We are teaching assistants supporting children with special educational needs. We are pastoral workers helping children through family breakdown, bereavement and mental health crises. We are administrators, site staff, lunch time supervisors and cleaners. We are often the first person a frightened child speaks to and the last person a vulnerable child sees before going home. Yet year after year we have been overlooked. Year after year we have been told there is no money. Year after year we have watched others receive recognition while we are expected to simply carry on. Many of these workers are women. Many work part time because of their caring responsibilities. And many are now facing impossible choices between paying the rent, heating their homes, putting food on the table or clothes on their kids' backs. I have spoken to members who have skipped meals so their children can eat, members who work second jobs in the evenings, members who love their work but are seriously considering leaving because they simply cannot afford to stay. We are not people asking for special treatment. We are asking for equal treatment. For years we have been patient, for years we have written letters

attended meetings and raised concerns through the proper channels: and for years we have felt unheard.

But something has changed. We have found our voice. Hundreds came together, hundreds signed grievances, hundreds stood up and said, “Enough is enough!” (*Applause and cheers*) In Greenwich and Merton we came in our hundreds and took industrial action. More than 25 schools and nearly 1,000 school support staff across both boroughs walked out, closed schools for the day on 1 May, International Workers’ Day. We marched through the streets of Greenwich and Merton. We were not fighting for an allowance. We were fighting for dignity. We were fighting to be seen and we were fighting for every school support staff worker who has ever felt invisible. I spoke to members who had never taken part in union activity before, people who were nervous, people who didn’t think anyone would listen, yet there they were standing together because they knew this issue mattered, and that solidarity has been one of the most inspiring things I have ever witnessed. Sorry. (*Applause*)

Congress, London Weighting is not a luxury, it is not a bonus. It is recognition of the reality of living and working in London. If a teacher working in a Greenwich or Merton school deserves Inner London Weighting then so does the teaching assistant working beside them, so does the administrator supporting the school office, so does the cleaner opening the building at dawn. So does every support worker who helps our schools function every single day. This campaign is about challenging a longstanding injustice. It about saying that support staff are not second-class workers. It is about saying that equal value deserves equal recognition and it is about ensuring that the people who care for our children are treated with the dignity they deserve.

Congress, our members have waited long enough and we have been patient long enough and we have been ignored long enough. Today I ask you to stand with us. Stand with the teaching assistants, stand with the administrators, stand with the cleaners, caretakers and support workers. Stand with the workers who have spent years being underpaid, undervalued and unheard. Because when support staff stand together and when our union stands with us, changes become possible. More schools are being balloted, with another day of action being planned for the autumn term. Our members have said enough is enough. We want the same payment and won't give up until we get it. So let us shout it clearly and with one voice: London Weighting Needs Inflating! (*Shouts of "London Weighting Needs Inflating!"*) Louder! (*Shouts of "London Weighting Needs Inflating!"*) Thank you. (*Applause*)

MEL PHEASBY (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Congress, can I ask if you are support staff, please stand. Please stand now. Look around everybody! (*Applause*) Look properly! Thank you. Did you notice that there are very few of us here today and yet we are the largest membership in GMB. We are the backbone of schools, we are the ones who keep everything going, but we are too busy, too stretched, too under pressure to even be in rooms like this. I am only standing here today because GMB paid for someone to come and cover me. Think about that. Because funding in education is being cut again and again and again. So being here and having this opportunity means everything to me.

Where do I begin? Do I begin with the cost of living crisis? Do I begin with the constant exhaustion, anxiety, or a choice I have every single week - do I fill the fridge,

top up my gas, top up my electric? Do I begin with guilt for reducing my working hours for my own health and paying the price for it every single day. Less money, more worry, more stress, more anxiety. You sit there and ask yourself over and over again, “Is there a way out of this?”

For a brief moment we thought there was hope because Leeds City Council admitted something. They admitted they owed us wages. They admitted it. And just for a moment I believed things might change. But then you get told something else. You told you are only worth 25 pence in every pound that you are owed. 25 pence. Just like that, the glimmer of hope had gone. Gone, and I mean gone, replaced with something heavier: debts, doubt, struggle, sacrifice. This isn't just numbers, this isn't figures on paper. This is my life. I thought finally I might be able to pay my parents back every single penny that I owe them for feeding me and my children, picking me up when I hit breaking point and when enough was enough. Let me ask you this: Leeds City Council, are you going to accept 25 pence in every pound that I owe you? That is we are being told to accept. Money, money, money. Worry, worry, worry. It is constant, it is relentless.

So what helps? What actually changes things for people like me and people like us? The answer is simple and it is fair. As school support staff we are paid term time only, not in the holidays, not a salary. We are paid 39 weeks and then that 39 weeks is divided into 12 monthly payments. Reduced pay. It is a pittance. Then that pay disappears during your school holidays yet your work doesn't disappear and your responsibilities do not stop.

So, what do we need? It is simple. A salary, a year round pay structure that recognises the reality of our work, that gives us the financial stability that we deserve, because we are the cleaners, we are the caretakers, we are the catering staff, we are the teaching assistants, we are the nursery assistants, we are the office admin and we are the school patrol officers. We are not part time in value and we are not taking 25 p. We are essential.

Congress, this is about respect. It is about fairness. It is about being valued properly. So I am asking you stand with us and stand with the people who hold schools together every single day. I have said this once, I will say it again - march with us today and improve our tomorrow! (*Applause and standing ovation*)

DONNA SPICER (Chair, GMB National Schools Committee): Congress, I am speaking as the Chair of GMB National Schools Committee on behalf of every GMB school support staff member across our regions. Please put your hands together. (*Applause*) You heard from Barbara at the beginning about the SSSNB and just before I start, I really want to say a big, big thank you to Stacey Booth, our National Schools Officer, who works tirelessly and endlessly to get the Government to deliver what they were supposed to deliver. Please read the article on the front page of the “Morning Star” because it gives you a little bit more detail. We are not going to let them shaft us, right? That is probably not the right word but there we go.

You just heard three very personal, very powerful stories from three school members yet their stories are the stories of most school support staff up and down the country. Stories from every day working in a school: Injury in unsafe working conditions, low

pay, inequality and undervalued. That is what school support staff are. Congress, this is the story of school support staff in our schools. Stories of being poorly treated after an injury, first to be let go when the budgets are cut. School support staff are the GMB's largest membership yet they are often overlooked. This must stop. (*Applause and cheers*) We must stand together and stand and unite them. It is often said that school support staff won't strike, but this is changing. Greenwich and Merton staff out over London Weighting, school staff in The Orchard School in Sandwell over unsafe working conditions, school support staff in Birmingham and Leeds over equal pay. Congress, the tide is turning! (*Applause*) When school support staff strike, they often close their schools. Why? Sorry, I am getting a bit emotional. Teachers are the cogs, school support staff are the oil. Without that oil, the cogs grind to a halt. Because school support staff are just as important if not more important than teachers.

Congress, we must get behind our schools members, stand with them to fight for better pay, for equality, for fair treatment, and, most importantly, to be recognised for the professional staff they are. (*Applause*) Congress, let's get behind our 100,000 schools members and show them by marching on the streets of Blackpool and letting them know "GMB is the one for me!" (*Applause and cheers*) I call upon you to march with us. Let's get this demo started! Hooray! (*Applause and standing ovation*)

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, please make your way into the back of the hall with your delegation leads for the march.

*Congress adjourned.*