

Delegates from Northern Ireland Black and Migrant Workers group attended the Black Members Conference in Brighton, 20-22nd January. The delegation was there to represent UNISON Black Members from our region. They have put together some feedback from conference to share their experience with the rest of our members in the region.

UNISON NI Black and Migrant Workers in Northern Ireland also receive bi-monthly e-bulletins after each of our group's meetings. These include the date of the next meeting and information about forthcoming campaigns and events. If you have not been receiving these bulletins, it means that we do not have the right email address for you, so please email Nathalie n.donnelly@unison.co.uk or contact membership: Deirdre (d.graham@unison.co.uk / 02890270190).

New members are always welcome to our bi-monthly meetings. Please come along!



Please join us on **UNISON NI Migrant Workers page** on facebook

UNISON 😊 Your friend at work
 😊 Twój przyjaciel w pracy
 😊 Ο φίλος σας στην εργασία
 😊 Su amigo en el trabajo 😊



The **record of decisions** for the 2017 National Black Members conference can be found [on our website](#). / The latest edition of Black Action can be [downloaded as a pdf](#) from the UNISON website as well.

Our motion was adopted by conference:

M07. Access to Immigration advice and representation

For Black members who are not fully settled in the UK or do not have British Citizenship, immigration is a major issue.

Immigration rules come and go and change overnight (as our European migrant worker colleagues are finding out!). A change in a shortage occupation list; a new salary threshold; a new English test requirement and your right to work and live here can be jeopardised.

In the workplace you can find yourself suspended because your employer starts to doubt your entitlement to work and does not recognise the evidence you are providing. There is no doubt that in the post EU referendum scenario, Black European migrants will be the first ones to be asked to justify their entitlement and to be targeted.

Black members who are here on the basis of their European partner's status will also have reasons to start worrying. New nurses from the Philippines have also been recruited recently in Northern Ireland and elsewhere in the UK.

All this means that the most important membership service that can be provided for our Black migrant workers is access to immigration advice.

Currently the only provision is done through a helpline where advice is given on the phone and on a Tuesday only. In Northern Ireland we have also organised our own face-to-face immigration clinic. Again, this is a once a month fixed service with little flexibility and with no representation.

Black migrant workers need immigration advice more than they need discount in certain shops; special rates on car insurance or glasses; or access to a free will from our solicitors.

Conference calls on the National Black Members' Committee (NBMC) to:

1) use their influence with all UNISON structures to give access to a more comprehensive immigration advice and representation service to its members.

 An amendment was added to our motion by the Black Members Committee to emphasise the importance of the existing service currently provided by JCWI:

Amendment M07.1 In paragraph 6, at the end of the first sentence ending "Tuesday only", insert a "," after "only" and add the text "although this is a vital and important service provided by UNISON, details need to be more widely spread".

Add a new bullet point 2 "Publish the helpline in Black Action and other UNISON media"

NATALIE - My first experience of the NBMC 2017 has been amazing. To say it was a life changing experience would not be an exaggeration. It was delving into a new world that I had not experienced before. The opportunities to attend the fringe meeting on nursing and funding, gave an insight into campaign to save NHS bursaries and the IELTS. I also attended the workshop on lack of black senior representation in the workplace. This was very thought provoking and highlighted the truth that we need to work towards making significant changes because at the moment, not enough is being done. Things must change.



The Northern Ireland Region Motion 7, Access to immigration advice and representation was moved by myself. This was a great opportunity as a first time speaker, it gave me the confidence to seek further opportunities within UNISON.. Further motions 4 and 19 were moved by Flor and motion 16 by Ligaya. It was great to see the passion in fellow UNISON members as they all delivered their motions. It was so encouraging to hear all the positive steps UNISON are taking to make a difference for Black members.

On a social aspect it was great to spend time with the Northern Ireland members and also get to know members from all over the country.

One of the closing songs was by Margaret Greer and some the words really stuck with me "What have we done today to make us feel proud, it's time to make a change" It got me thinking about what I can do to make a change in people's lives.

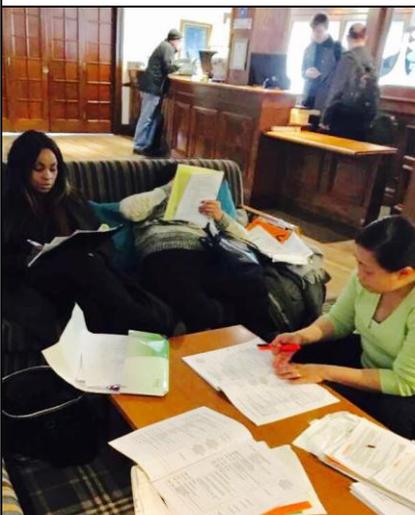
I had such a great time, left feeling very inspired and can't wait for the next NBMC!



JOHN - I want to thank Belfast Education for financing me to attend conference again this year. The conference started on time but unfortunately did not have enough time to debate all the 28 motions. I intended to speak in support to motion 24 "Career progression of Black Workers". Conference only managed to debate motion 1 to motion 23.

One of the guest speakers was the Lord Mayor of Brighton (His wife is actually from Northern Ireland, County Fermanagh) who spoke very well, praising Black members and migrants workers (with a special mention Filipinos who he said were good / hard working people) for their contribution to Brighton. I really enjoyed when Chair Margaret Greer sung a very inspirational song that made everybody sing along with her and dance at the same time.

It was a very good conference. It was livelier than previous years and delegates from Northern Ireland received a warm welcome. They wanted to see more delegations from Northern Ireland.



UNISON contacts 📞 If you have a problem at work you need to contact your union representative. For contact details ring 02890270190 or call UNISON Direct on 0800 0 857 857 📞 **Please encourage your colleagues to join if they are not already UNISON members!** www.joinunison.org

UNISON NI Black and Migrant Workers Free Confidential Immigration Clinics – Every first Friday of the month.

English classes (IELTS preparation) – Every Wednesday.

Please contact Nathalie 07554433958 /n.donnelly@unison.co.uk to book an appointment

Feedback from fringe events and meetings

Health Service group meeting. The speaker was Christina McAnea (UNISON National Secretary for Health). As per notes distributed at the meeting: UNISON has been making the case for a better pay structure for Agenda for Change. UNISON's Health service group want to see simpler and fairer pay structure in which there is less overlap between bands and where staff take less time to reach the full rate for the job.

UNISON Young Members. Gary William talked about the Young Members' Weekend (Newcastle 12-14 May). This event will bring together well over 100 UNISON young members from across the UK to find out more about UNISON and, more importantly, how they can play a part in the union's campaigning to defend public services and jobs.



Women's Caucus: Women members had raised the issue of the difficulty of convincing colleagues in the workplace to join and of getting members to participate actively. Members shared experiences / problems they encountered, as well as tips on where to find right and convincing information or where to get extra support or resources.



Health and Safety reps - Speaker: Tracey Ayton Harding, UNISON, Head of Health and Safety. UNISON aims to shape Health and Safety policy to benefit the members and improve their working lives around Health and Safety issues. Health and Safety Reps are trained to address issues such as Fair Pay
 *Negotiating favourable Terms and Conditions
 *Managed H & S * Stress * Bullying and harassment. *Violence and aggression * Musculoskeletal issues * Sickness absence, etc.
 There are only 7% Black members who trained as Safety Reps in comparison to about 10 % overall members. UNISON posed the challenge to members to become Safety Reps and be more empowered to make a change for the better and to support those who may be disadvantaged.

FLORA – “I want to thank my Branch (Craigavon Hospital) for financing me to attend the National Black Members Conference. I really appreciate all the support from my Branch. The conference started promptly and I got up to support Motion 4 Recruiting and organising Black Members in the fragmented workforce. This motion reminded me of my situation when I was still working in a Private Nursing Home.

During all that time, I had to use my Annual Leave and days off to be able to attend UNISON meetings and conferences.

Now that I am working in the Trust, the difference is huge.

Motion 4 was debated and everyone voted in favour of the motion. I had good feedback and praise for speaking in support of motion 4 but what I want to see is more support from branches to our existing members in this sector. We need to organise and encourage them to become active in our union UNISON.

There were a lot of **motions on the issue of immigration** (Immigration and austerity, Immigration and the effects of the EU referendum, etc). Our own motion, 'Access to immigration advice and representation' was moved by Natalie Muir and had 5 supporting speakers; conference voted in favour of our motion.

Over all the conference went smoothly, motion 1 to motion 23 were debated and once again there was not enough time to debate the last motions (24 to 28). People from the conference seemed delighted to see us. There is always a warm welcome given to delegates from Northern Ireland and we always get approached by committee members saying they hope to see more delegates representing Northern Ireland.

Fringe meeting on Nursing and Funding for Education (Speaker Gail Adams, UNISON Head of nursing). It is sad to know that the Bursary is being scrapped and the impact this will have : *Students: minimum £51K debt; * Reduction in nursing application; * Fewer Nurses = Risks to patient safety UNISON's Objectives are to save the NHS Bursary and campaign for HSC students to be paid or living Bursary. UNISON also wants to encourage HSC student members to join and support and develop students' activism.



Dealing with Bullying and Harassment: Post Brexit: a resurgence in racism?"

Dr. Wanda Wyporska, Executive Director of the Equality Trust went through key topics that have been affecting the country in the post Brexit context

** Racism and Hate Crime. Racism has escalated in post Brexit UK. It was, and it is still, rising. A hate crime is defined as: "Any incident, which may or may not constitute a criminal offence, which is perceived by the victim or any person as being motivated by prejudice or hate." Perpetrator should be made accountable and we have to be united to stand beside each other.*

** Divided Communities. Communities are also more divided as a result of the election. Not all of the UK Regions supported Brexit; Scotland and Northern Ireland opted 'NO'.*

** Lack of Confidence in Key Institutions
Inequality (the United Kingdom still remain the 6th highest country in terms of inequality!)

UNISON speakers reaffirmed UNISON's unequivocal condemnation of any form of behaviour that is racist, xenophobic, incites to hatred, discriminates against or harm members of our society. UNISON also recognise that the UK is home to people from many parts of the world, of many faiths and none, and that we all continue to come out in force standing shoulder to shoulder with every citizen. Speakers also detailed UNISON's influence on legislation on Race Equality, etc.

The follow up questions and debates highlighted the difficulty and isolation for members working in the private sector. Most of the support networks are centred around members in the NHS. Yet members in the private sector often bear the brunt of racism and discrimination. The workshop endorsed the call for UNISON to give the Private sector members more support in terms of inequality, bullying, and/or safety in the workplace, etc

ANNIE AND LIGAYA - The practical arrangements and travel to and back from conference went smoothly. The Old Ship Hotel was comfortable, with extremely helpful and accommodating staff. Situated in very convenient way, short distance to the venue. Lovely and sumptuous breakfast.

The Conference was organised and conducted in an orderly manner, commenced and ended at scheduled time. We met old and new familiar, friendly faces of UNISON Black Members from all over UK.

We attended some fringe meetings and met Margaret Greer at the Women's Caucus. We had some interesting discussions with a UNISON Black member from Zimbabwe who expressed his concerns about the Philippines and Pres. R. Duterte's War on Drugs. We shared more information about the actual situation, not only as portrayed by media.

We also met, shook hands with the men and women of the NBMC. Secretary General David Prentis welcomed the Conference, expressed a very enthusiastic outlook of the overall UNISON activities, assured the members of his all out support, encouraged more efforts for Working Together, expressed his appreciation and gratefulness for members who stood by and supported UNISON all these years. He is looking forward to more success.

The Chair of the NBMC, Margaret Greer truly moved us. She shared her experiences good and bad, with great enthusiasm, positive younger outlook which were all very encouraged by. She strikes as a very inspiring person and amazed us with beautiful Singing voice! We all loved Margaret Greer! She said: "My Work has just Begun..." and to quote her further: " to whatever is the outcome, we are redirected to something better. So as you start and end the day, be thankful for every little thing in your life and you still come to realize how blessed you really are!"



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