STRONGER RIGHTS STRONG UNIONS GOOD JOBS!

REPORT
OF THE NI COMMITTEE



STRONGER TOGETHER
CONGRESS
Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Northern Ireland Committee

GUILDHALL
DERRY/L'DERRY
25-26 NOVEMBER 2026

BIENNIAL DELEGATE CONFERENCE 2026

REPORT
OF THE NI COMMITTEE



MEMBERSHIP OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND COMMITTEE 2024-26

Chairperson	J White	UTU
Vice-Chairperson	JP Clayton	Unison
Members	S Fitzgerald	UNITE
	G Horgan	Derry Trades Union Council
	C Gates	NIPSA
	E Massey*	CWU
	G Matthews	PCS
	D Walker	GMB
	JP Clayton	UNISON
	P McKeown	UNISON
	N McNally	SIPTU
	M McTaggart	INTO
	J McCamphill	NASUWT
	L English	USDAW
	D Thompson	UNITE
	A Perry	GMB
	J Quinn*	FBU
	D Crilly	NIPSA
Ex-Officio	O Reidy	General Secretary
	G Murphy	Asst. General Secretary
Observers	M Galloway	Retired Workers Committee
	B Eaton	Youth Committee

*Stepped down and replaced by observers B Weatherall and P Millar.

ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

At the time of preparing this report 19 meetings were held during the 2024-26 period. The following is the attendance record of the NIC members:

J White	15	JP Clayton	17	C Gates	15	M McNally	14
P Mackel	16	G Horgan	12	A Perry	15	J Quinn	12
J McCamphill	16	G Mathews	18	S Fitzgerald	13	M McTaggart	16
T Killen	11	D Thompson	16	P McKeown	15	L English	14
D Walker	11	E Massey	12	M Galloway	16	B Eaton	6

CONTENTS

Membership of the Northern Ireland Committee 2024-26		iv
Attendance At Meetings		iv
Code of Conduct		2
Timetable		6
Introduction		10
Obituaries		12
B1	Resolutions	16
C1	Officers of the Northern Ireland Committee 2024-26	30
C2	Staff	30
C3	Women's Committee	31
C4	Retired Workers' Committee	32
C5	Congress Youth Committee	35
C6	Trades Councils	37
C7	Global Solidarity	39
C8	Trade Union Friends of Palestine	43
C9	Health and Safety	47
C10	Arts and Culture Committee	50
C11	Belfast May Day Festival	52
D1	The Trade Union Education Programme	56
D2	Union Learning Fund	63
E1	Developing and lobbying for Good Jobs	68
E2	Democracy at work Participation, lobbying, legislation	80
E3	What is in the 'good jobs' employment rights bill?	84
E4	Challenging Racism and the Far Right	85
E5	Health Committee	90
E6	Education Trade Union Group	94
E7	Private Sector Committee	97
E8	Council of the Isles	99
E9	Uni Europa conference	100
F1	Equality Coalition	104
F2	Women's Committee	105
F3	Disability Committee	112
F4	LGBT	113
F5	BAME and Migrant Workers	114
G1	Democracy at work: participation, lobbying, legislation	122
G2	Better in a Trade Union	122
G3	Implementing the Good Jobs Bill	123
G4	Supporting Industrial Action	130
Appendix 1: Standing Orders		134
Appendix 2: Motions by Sector		138

Most images by Kevin Cooper and Paula Geraghty

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEETINGS EVENTS AND COURSES

Adopted by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions Executive Council on 16 October 2024

Introduction

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions has zero tolerance for any violence and any type of harassment including sexual harassment.

Violence and harassment in the world of work deprives people of their dignity and is incompatible with decent work. It is a threat to equality and equal opportunities and to safe, healthy, and productive working environments.

Violence, harassment and sexual harassment are contrary to trade union values and may prevent people, particularly women, from participating and advancing in the labour movement.

As part of our ongoing commitment to create working environments that are free from violence, harassment and sexual harassment, Congress has adopted the following Code of Conduct. This Code of Conduct applies to all Congress events, meetings and courses, regardless of venue.

Aim

The ultimate goal of this policy is to prevent incidences of violence, harassment and sexual harassment.

Congress is committed to organising events and other activities at which everyone can participate in an inclusive, respectful and safe environment.

All members and participants at Congress conferences, events committee meetings or training courses are expected to uphold this approach.

Applicability

The Congress Code of Conduct applies to all Congress meetings, events and activities, including Biennial Delegates Conferences, other conferences/seminar or events, Executive Council and Committee meetings, assemblies, receptions, expert meetings, courses, workshops,- fringe and side event, social events and any other type of event hosted,sponsored or organised in whole or in part by Congress wherever it may take place. The code of conduct applies to everyone participating in Congress events and other Congress activities. The Congress code of conduct also applies in case an event or an activity is co-organised or co- sponsored together with another organisation.

Interaction with Affiliates Code of Conduct

Affiliates will have their own code of conduct and those attending at Congress meetings, events and activities will continue to benefit from their own organisations Code, policy and procedure, for example access to their person of confidence, representation by their union etc. This Code of Conduct does not replace the affiliates Codes rather it provides a bridge between affiliates codes, practices and procedures.

Expected Conduct

Congress expects all those involved in Congress activities and events to uphold our trade union values and to work to achieve an environment that is free from violence, harassment and sexual harassment.

Prohibited Conduct

Harassment constitutes unacceptable behaviour by one or more individuals and can take many different forms, some of which may be more easily identified than others. It can be a range of unacceptable behaviours and practices, or threats thereof, whether a single occurrence or repeated, that aim at,result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm, and includes gender-based violence and harassment.

Harassment because of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, race, national origin, political affiliation, age, religion, class, and any other reason is unacceptable.

Sexual harassment is a particular form of harassment. It denotes any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature. Such conduct may be of a verbal, non-verbal or physical nature, including written and electronic communications, and may occur between persons of the different and the same gender. Some examples include unwanted physical contact, suggestive texts or images, unwelcome sexually-charged comments or propositions.

Complaint Process

It is in the interest of all parties to proceed with the necessary discretion to protect the dignity and privacy of all. Complaints should be made in the first instance as follows:

Irish Congress of Trade Unions Biennial Delegate Conference, Executive Council meetings and associated events to the General Secretary or to a person nominated by the General Secretary (this person will be sufficient standing and experience to deal with the matters).

Complaints relating to the NIC ICTU Delegate Conference or the NIC ICTU meetings should be made to the Assistant General Secretary, or to a person nominated by the AGS (this person will be of sufficient standing and experience to deal with these matters).

Congress Committee meetings or events to the member of the Secretariat with responsibility for the Committee or event; or to a person nominated by the member of the Secretariat (this person will be of sufficient standing and experience to deal with the matters),

Complaints will be dealt with in a timely manner and in agreement with the parties and according to the guiding principles below. If necessary and agreed, external assistance or a 'person of confidence' may help. If it is established that harassment or sexual harassment has occurred, appropriate measures will be taken. This may include measures up to and including excluding persons who do not respect this policy from Congress meetings and events.

Guiding Principles for the Procedure

The procedure is by agreement and is carried out in a manner that respects fair procedures and the principles of natural justice.

Confidentiality will be assured in so far as it is reasonably practicable.

The terms of reference will be agreed and will set out the issues, objectives and scope of the procedure, its interaction with the affiliates own procedures and the languages and the relevant law that applies. The Terms of Reference should be clear and concise and not legalistic. It should be designed to fit the allegation and should include time frame, deadlines and the method of report.

Conciliation between the persons concerned is promoted but not required. Everyone can be represented by their union during the process.

The procedure needs to strike a balance between involving the complainant and at the same time not expecting or making the complainant responsible for deciding the process, recommendations or outcomes.

The person undertaking the procedure will aim for agreement and will produce a report to the parties and the GS/AGS or Secretariat member detailing the recommendations and outcome.

Dispute about facts

If there is a dispute about facts, the Secretariat may also choose to establish an up to five- person Commission of inquiry. The members must be of sufficient authority and unrelated to the organisations to which the person involved belongs and will undertake actions necessary to determine the facts such as:

- interview the parties directly involved separately;
- interview other relevant third parties separately;
- produce a report detailing the inquiry, findings and any recommendations;
- determine on balance of probabilities whether or not the incident(s) of harassment or sexual harassment took place;
- if the inquiry cannot determine, on the balance of probabilities, whether the harassment took place, recommendations can still be made.

Outcomes and Remedies

Appropriate remedies to be recommended can include for example an apology in the context of a consultation, training for the person in breach of this Code of Conduct, recommendation for discipline of the person by their union/ affiliate, prohibition on attending at Congress meetings and events, or other appropriate remedies. Recommendations can also be made to Congress that aim to secure an environment free of violence, harassment and sexual harassment.

There will be follow up by the GS with the affiliates to ensure that the recommendations are implemented.

Appeal

Any appeal is to the Steering Committee who will deal with the matter in a confidential manner, this may include the establishment of an up to five-person committee for consideration of the appeal and their decision is final.

Final points

This policy does not replace legal responsibilities of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, it may be that these responsibilities change according to the relevant jurisdiction. Congress will report serious incidents to the appropriate authorities.

This Code of Conduct does not replace the right of a person to refer the matter to a criminal or other authority.

This Code of Conduct does not replace the responsibilities or obligations on employers to ensure that their workers are protected from violence, harassment and sexual harassment at work and to manage their workers.

This policy will be interpreted and applied in a manner that supports our staff and their policy and procedures relating to the prevent of violence, harassment and sexual harassment at work.

Irish Congress of Trade Unions
October 2024

TIMETABLE

Wed 25 November

Session 1: 10.30am - 1pm

Fraternal Greetings Derry Trade Union Council
(Damien Doherty)

Conference Opening
Deputy Mayor of Derry & Strabane Council

Conference Arrangements
Committee Report no 1. Report no 2
(to be circulated if appropriate).

Appointment of tellers and scrutineers

Chair of the Northern Ireland Committee, ICTU
Address to conference

Guest Speaker from NI Executive (TBC)

Sections A and B of the report

Assistant General Secretary's Address

Motions 1-2 - Good Jobs

Guest Speakers
Paul Mac Flynn, Lisa Wilson, NERI

Motions 3-8 Future of work/AI

Sections E and G

Lunch: 1pm - 2.15pm

Fringe Meetings
1. Ending Violence against Women and Girls: role of trade unions.
The Main Hall

2. Equity
Green Room

Session 2: 2.15pm - 5.00pm

Equality

Guest Speaker
Tahnee McCorry White Ribbon NI

Equality Motions 9-15
(Includes RWC and Youth speakers)

Section F

Address ICTU President

Motions on Far-Right 16-21

Close of Conference - 5.00pm

5.15 - 7.00pm

Fringe Meeting
Trade Union Friends of Palestine
Main Hall

Thursday 26 November

Session 3: 9.30am - 1.00pm

Motions on Public Services 22-25

Fraternal Greetings
Kate Bell TUC

Motions 26-30

Section C

ICTU General Secretary's Address

Motions on Education 31-33

Section D

Fraternal Greetings
Jenny Douglas President STUC

Lunch: 1.00 - 2.15pm

Session 4: 2.15pm - 5.30pm

Motions on Health 34-38

Motion on TU Organisation 39

Close of Conference

SECTION A
~ INTRODUCTION AND OBITUARIES



INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the work of the Northern Ireland Committee of the ICTU from our last conference in November 2024 right through to October 2026. The period in question was dominated by the campaign to deliver the Good Jobs Bill.

The details of the campaign are chronologically outlined in this report. Also outlined are the contents of the legislation. The former is a narrative of progress dashed on the rock of a business-political relationship which seems impervious to arguments based on evidence and experience from the United Kingdom government and that of other advanced economies. It is bitterly ironic that political parties most keen to maintain the link with London are content to deprive workers in every community here of the same rights as workers in England, Scotland and Wales.

The section which outlines the contents of the Good Jobs Bill makes clear that the vast bulk of the legislation is simply 'catch-up' with protections passed already by Westminster. This is not any comment on the constitutional status of NI, which is another conversation to be settled under the terms of the Belfast Agreement. It is, however, a grim reflection on our devolved settlement.

If Stormont is not working for workers and their families, then it needs to see significant change.

Devolution was restored almost three years ago after an unprecedented series of strikes which had as a central demand the functioning of accountable government departments and ministers who were answerable to their constituents. Devolved minsters must work harder to make the case for a needs-based budget. One which will deliver quality public services and decent salaries rewarding public servants whilst creating broader economic stability to allow our economy to grow for the benefit of all. The mismatch between the wages for workers doing the same jobs in GB and NI was a major reason for the overwhelming popular support for the strike wave of 2023-24, and we are facing the same scenario again over the budget stand-off with HM Treasury.



Gerry Murphy with BBC's Jayne McCormack

Shortly after the restoration, MLAs and ministers attended the launch of our paper 'Democracy at Work', which argued the case for another restoration required to deepen a shared democratic culture across our society. Since then, there has been some progress, but nowhere near enough to meet our call for a tripartite approach to public bodies and policy making.

This lack of delivery for a swathe of issues threatens the very institutions established on the back of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. It is in that absence that a political vacuum can be filled with the toxic rhetoric of the far right, who have assaulted migrants literally (and our democracy metaphorically) for three summers.

Another urgent policy issue is that of Artificial Intelligence. Both of these areas will be debated during the conference via motions submitted by affiliates. Put simply, where all this comes together is if there is no room in Stormont for the largest civil society organisation to influence policy on workers rights, then what say will we have in the necessary public debate on AI?

And if the voices of over 200,000 trade union members, and the overwhelming support of the public for the Good Jobs Bill, (as expressed in opinion polls), can be swept aside at the behest of a handful of business lobbyists, then what space is being opened for those who already despise democracy and equality for everyone who lives here?

For this movement, Stormont is Too Big To Fail. We have 39 motions to consider and discuss. All fall within the remit of the NI Executive. We still need accountable local politicians in leading positions in the agencies and services which serve all of the people.

We are in a more difficult space than two years ago. But we have faced bigger challenges in the past years. We will leave this conference with a programme of work, and we will complete the agenda we agree, together as a unified movement. This will be even more so after the 2027 NI Assembly elections. We will get across the line the laws workers require for fairness and basic safety.

Finally, I wish to thank all affiliate unions, trades councils, all NIC members and Chair Jacquie White and Vice Chair John Patrick Clayton and all of the NIC-ICTU staff for their work and commitment over what has been an incredibly challenging time. It is important that we keep focused and achieve a prize which eluded generations of trade unionists – real, radical and tangible gains for working people across our society. This generation's hard work can produce Good Work for theirs and future generations.

Gerry Murphy
Assistant General Secretary
ICTU

OBITUARIES

Naomi Connor



Naomi passed away in March 2026, after many years of activism and education with trade unions, feminism and abortion rights. She was a NIPSA official and later a trade union tutor with ICTU's Education Department. Naomi also served on the ICTU Women's Committee and was a guest speaker at many Women's Conferences and Seminars.

Elaine Crory, from Belfast's Women's Resource and Development Agency, described Naomi as "obviously a committed feminist" and "an active trade unionist," but stressed that her activism could never be confined to a single cause.

"She never really saw issues as totally separate from each other," she told the Belfast Telegraph, noting that while Naomi was widely recognised for her pro-choice work, "she never separated herself from everything else".

Despite the scale of her impact, Elaine believes that her friend never fully realised how many lives she touched.

"She was not the kind of person to have an ego," she said. "I doubt she really had a grasp of just how much she changed so many people's lives."

Elaine further highlighted Naomi's efforts within trade unions, including organising workshops on menopause in the workplace to help women advocate for themselves.

The long-term impact of such work, she noted, will continue to be felt for years to come.

"Even after she's gone, these women will be using these skills and they'll be teaching them to other women," she said, describing "a million ways" in which Naomi's influence will endure, and emphasising her inclusivity and generosity, saying she treated everyone equally "whether you were a person who had just volunteered for the first time yesterday, or a person who had been at it for years".

Our sincere Condolences to Ryan, Maedhbh and Aoibhínn.

Pearse McKenna



Pearse McKenna passed in 2025. Past President of Belfast & District Trades Council. In a tribute, past ICTU President Brian Campfield wrote:

"In 1976 he took part in a walk-out at the Peter Pan Bakery (formerly Barney Hughes's), protesting against the Provisional IRA killing of a senior manager. Fifteeen years later his efforts as a shop steward at Belfast's Ormeau Bakery, seeking the removal of loyalist flags and emblems from the shop floor, led to a gun attack by the Ulster Freedom Fighters which left Pearse seriously wounded. He narrowly escaped death when one of the bullets grazed his head as he dived for cover beneath a bakery lorry.

"Despite the attempt on his life, Pearse continued his work in defence of workers through his involvement with Counteract, an organisation established by trade unions to combat sectarianism and intimidation in the workplace. It was via the trade union movement that Pearse was able to supplement his education by completing courses at both the University of Ulster and Ruskin College, Oxford. He sat on industrial and fair employment tribunals, using his extensive knowledge of the workplace to deliver justice to ordinary workers who were forced to lodge cases against their employers.

"We owe him a great debt and we extend our deep condolences to his wife Margaret, sons James, Gerard and Michael, daughters Louise and Jennifer and to all his grandchildren and wider family circle."

Jack McGinley



Jack passed away in November 2024, and will be remembered by all delegates to ICTU BDCs as chair of the Standing Orders Committee.

He was a very important labour historian, and Trinity College librarian. He ran Umiskin Press and was prominent member of the Irish Labour History Society and organised a major conference on labour history in Dublin in 2023, "Visions of Labour and Class in Ireland and Europe".

He was a strong supporter of Cuba, and a few months before his sudden passing, Jack was delighted to be awarded a medal by the Cuban government.

SECTION B
~ CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS



CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS



Guests at BDC First Minister Michelle O'Neill and TEO Junior Minister Pam Cameron

B1 RESOLUTIONS

The NI BDC was held in November 2024 in Derry/L'Derry....

As in previous years, the NIC-ICTU has pursued a wide range of actions in relation to the Resolutions. The following provides a broad outline of the actions taken. More detail is contained in the body of the Report.

1 Tackling Violent Extremism

NIC-ICTU

Conference also seeks to reinvigorate our long-standing demands for the NI Executive, its devolved ministries and statutory agencies to:

- Deepen the impact of existing initiatives such as the Joint Declaration of Protection;
- Revitalise and deliver the long-promised Racial Equality Strategy as well as other social inclusion strategies;
- Develop and enforce effective Hate Crime legislation.

Ongoing work of the NIC.

See below for details.



NIC Chair Paddy Mackel opens BDC

2 Challenging racism and all forms of hatred and promoting rights and equality for all

UNISON

Conference calls on the Northern Ireland Committee to progress a campaign, working directly with affiliates, their own Black and Migrant Workers' membership structures and allied organisations to ensure effective 'zero-tolerance' policies exist in the workplace and to ensure that the right supports are in place for workers affected by racism and discrimination.

In particular, conference calls on the Northern Ireland Committee to prioritise the widespread adoption and implementation of the Joint Declaration of Protection for Dignity at Work and Inclusive Working Environments by employers.

Conference further calls on the Northern Ireland Committee, working with wider civic society, to progress a campaign for strong hate crimes legislation and a renewed, effective Racial Equality strategy.

The Joint Declaration of Protection has been promoted by the NIC and other sub-committees with Executive ministers, media, statutory agencies such as the Education Authority, civil society allies and with employers at the Engagement Forum.

3 A Trade Union Response To Racism And The Far Right

NIPSA

Conference calls on Northern Committee of ICTU to establish a trade union member based stewarding group to provide support and protection, where needed, for meetings, protests, picket lines and demonstrations.

ICTU Steward training at events organised by ICTU.

4 Tackling the use of social media to promote extremist ideologies.

NASUWT

1. Lobby for tighter regulation, transparency and accountability for social media platforms and websites that enable extremist content;
2. Advocate for social media platforms to implement and promote educational tools that help users identify and report extremist content, while also protecting freedom of expression.

Raised with Education Authority, and developed with allies such as the Equality Coalition, the Far-Right Monitoring Group and Hope Not Hate. Social media platforms called out during racist attacks.

5 Abuse of journalists

NUJ

To promote awareness of the need to protect media workers from arrack while covering public events and demonstrations.

Ongoing work with NUJ, as well as support expressed for front line emergency workers.



Israel Equaogie from Belfast City of Sanctuary

6 Freedom From Intimidation And Harassment

UTU

Congress, therefore, calls upon NIC/ ICTU to support the education workers in a campaign to ensure that:

1. The Declaration is displayed in schools as agreed, and measures are taken to raise awareness of workers and school communities regarding its implications.
2. Significant protections are introduced to the education sector, as exist in other sectors, promoting zero tolerance of abuse.
3. Robust accountability measures are established and implemented at all levels to respond appropriately to such behaviour wherever and whenever it occurs.

Declaration promoted at EANI and DoE, as well as in evidence to NI Assembly Education Committee, especially on misogyny in schools.

7 Support for internationally educated health and social care staff

CSP

Work with the health unions to ensure that all aspects of the code of practice are put into practice irrespective of how the internationally educated staff member applies for work.

Raised on media and with Health Trusts and other HSC employers during and after racist attacks.

8 Violence Against Women & Girls

B&DTC & GMB

Work with affiliates to demand that employers deliver mandatory workshops and training in every workplace with a view to challenging and eradicating misogyny campaign for robust policies to tackle sexual harassment and gender-based abuse within every place of employment.

Demand a 'Statutory Code of Practice' (policy & procedures) for employers to prevent and respond to misogyny, for measures to prevent violence against women and girls, including resources and support for schools to address harmful sexual behaviour.

This continues to be a priority for the ICTU Women's Committee and the NIC. Congress has campaigned for the realisation of the Safe Leave Act and is represented on the working group to advise on employer guidelines. In addition, Congress works with a number of organisations incl. Raise Your Voice and more recently White Ribbon to organise training.

9 Equality legislation and pay gaps

PCS

Maintain and escalate campaign efforts, ensuring that these issues remain at the forefront of political discussion and that the forthcoming legislation delivers real progress for workers and marginalised groups.

Congress continues to make representation to the Department for Communities and the Department for the Economy on the gaps in employment and equality law. This includes working with civil society organisations in relation to the Pay Transparency Directive triggering article 2 commitments.

10 Age Discrimination

RWC

NIC to work with other older peoples' organisations and campaign vigorously to bring this legislation to belated fruition so that older citizens may get justice.

Raised with Commissioner for Older People, at Pensioners Parliament and with All Party Group on older people. Support expressed for Private Members Bill in progress.

11 Neurodiversity Inclusion In The Workplace

GMB & RCM

Trade union movement must encourage people from a range of backgrounds, including neurodivergent people, into healthcare and other professions, making accommodations and improving the working conditions for neurodivergent workers will bring benefits to the entire workforce.

Congress developed and launched a Neurodiversity in the Workplace guidance document and runs training courses on supporting neurodivergence in the workplace.

12 Dealing with the legacy of the past

UNISON

To continue working alongside victims and survivors' groups, and our allies across civic society, to engage with the new UK Government to implement measures within the Stormont House Agreement.

Concerns about Westminster legislation raised with NIO and directly with Secretary of State.

13 Good Jobs Employment Bill

NIC ICTU

Endorses the contents of 'The Good Employment Plan' and affirms its intention to ensure the delivery of the full potential of this legislation.

Core work of NIC.

See Section E1.

14 Employment legislation

FSU

Conference to work with and support ICTU in its work on this new Employment Bill especially prioritising those elements of which will make it easier for workers to access and join trade unions, provide greater facilities and protections for shop stewards, disincentives on union busting and simplification of the collective bargaining and recognition process.

Core work of NIC.

See Section E1.

15 Abuse is not part of the job

USDAW

1. Support Usdaw's 'Freedom From Fear' Campaign.
2. Lobby the Northern Ireland Executive to bring forward a Bill, based on the provisions already passed in Scotland, to give retail workers the protection they deserve.
3. Make the case to employers.

Featured in evidence to NI Assembly Justice Committee on Criminal Justice Bill, as well as in media.

16 Ban upfront fees charged to performers by casting directories

EQUITY

Support the repeal of this unfair exemption for the performing arts and entertainment industries.

Carried forward by Arts & Culture Committee.



GMB's Denise Walker

17 Pay Promptly!

EQUITY

Create a campaign which demands prompt payment to workers.

Carried forward by Arts & Culture Committee.

18 Flexible affordable childcare

RCM

Campaign for increased access and reduced or supported costs for safe and flexible childcare.

Raised at various fora.

19 Strengthen Seafarer Employment Rights

RMT

Supports a strong set of mandatory employment conditions for seafarers on all ferry services and asks that ICTU works with maritime affiliates.

Endorsement utilised by RMT.

20 Gender Pay Gap

FSU

Campaign for the effective legislation of the Employment Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, in particular section 19 which provides for gender pay regulation to the introduced in Northern Ireland.

Congress continues to make representation to the Department for Communities and the Department for the Economy on the gaps in employment and equality law. This includes working with civil society organisations in relation to the Pay Transparency Directive triggering article 2 commitments.

21 Fair Funding and addressing priorities in a Programme for Government

UNISON

Coordinate a comprehensive programme of engagement across the Executive, further to the Executive's new Programme for Government, engaging across all Executive Departments in seeking commitments to take action on the priority issues.

Core work of NIC.

22 Regional Disparities

Derry TC

Develop a comprehensive, fully funded regional development plan for the North West of the island to include:

- expansion of Magee to 15,000 students by 2030;
- incentives to attract students to Derry until 2030, including reduced cost of accommodation;
- an urgent programme of mass social and affordable house-building in response to chronic housing scarcity in Derry and the North West where the housing crisis is exacerbated by defective cement blocks;
- improved public transport links into the city from across the North.

Met with and supported Private Members Bill as well as Magee campaigning of UCU/DTUC.

23 Bank branches and bank hubs

FSU

To campaign with the FSU seeking the Minister for Finance to seek from the banks a moratorium on branch closures for a period of five years.

Endorsement carried forward by FSU.

24 Just Transition

Craigavon TC

Congress to increase its engagement with DAERA and The Executive Office on these issues to ensure worker representation and to engage all Stormont Ministers prioritise work on a Just Transition within their areas of responsibility.

Conference also calls on NI Committee to establish a formal Climate Committee that will bring trade union climate activists together.

Extensive engagement with DAERA and Trade Union seat on Just Transition Commission appointed. Climate Committee from various sectors being established to support TU representative.

25 Safe Home Supporting the Night-Time Economy

Equity

Lobby for safe, extensive and later night public transport links to be provided throughout Northern Ireland so workers can get home safe.

Raised by affiliates in context of cuts to public transport.

26 Renew our fire and rescue service

FBU

Support our Campaign to ensure a fit for purpose Fire and Rescue Service for firefighters and the public alike.

Endorsement carried forward by FBU.

27 Universal Postal Service

Fermanagh TC

Launch a campaign demanding that the Stormont Assembly legislate to ensure, that regardless of ownership, the Royal Mail's universal service obligation guaranteeing deliveries to all UK addresses.

Long term policy of NIC, reiterated during recent disputes in Royal Mail.

28 Social Housing

NIPSA

Conference calls for the adoption of the recommendations contained within the Spectre of Privatisation Report as NIC ICTU Policy and also calls for the NI Executive to ensure that the NIHE has access to a funding package based upon need so that it can maintain and grow all the housing services so badly needed to help those most vulnerable in our society.

Endorsement carried forward by NIPSA.

29 Housing

BDTC

As above.



Unite Delegates

30 Housing For All

UNITE

Conference mandates the incoming Northern Ireland Executive to work with affiliates to launch a campaign demanding the Stormont Executive adopts a twin-track approach to address the housing crisis. For public investment to allow the Housing Executive to build the public housing needed, with functions and services in-sourced from the private sector. And the introduction of rent caps and tenants-rights legislation to end the exploitation by rack-renting landlords.

Endorsement carried forward by Unite.

31 Opposing Privatisation and Campaigning for In-Housing in the Public Sector

PCS

As above.

32 Winter fuel payments

CWU AND PCS

Conference calls for a unified campaign to lobby our elected representatives both in Stormont and Westminster to lobby this Labour Govt to "change their minds" and reverse the introduction of means-testing for the Winter Fuel Allowance.

Extensive lobbying from affiliates and retired members sections crucial to gaining political support, as well as successful Judicial Review brought by Unite in NI and GB.



SIPTU delegates voting

33 Industrial policy for jobs and a future

UNITE & GMB

Conference calls on the Northern Ireland Executive to bring forward an active industrial policy, in particular for the threatened aerospace and shipbuilding sectors.

Endorsement carried forward by affiliates.

34 Lack Of Inclusion Is Active Exclusion

PDA

Congress supports PDA Union's campaigns to make this no more.

Endorsement carried forward by PDA, who are active with NIC's Health committee.

35 Health Inequalities

CSP

We therefore call on the NIC ICTU health committee and the executive committee of NIC ICTU to use all avenues open to them to encourage the re-establishment of the health partnership forum. This forum should play a key role in developing and supporting ways to reduce health inequalities and improve the public health.

We also urge all unions to consider how in their communication with members they can continue to spread messages around health improvement – encouraging and supporting members to take part in health screening and vaccination and looking at the opportunities they have as a unions to provide nutritional advice and to encourage activity. We would like to see the ICTU conference brochure include helpful advice such as stretches or local walking routes to combat the amount of time delegates spend sitting.

Health inequalities raised directly at NI Assembly Health Committee, with Minister and at DoH Partnership Forum.

See this BDC report for helpful advice from CSP.

36 NHS Waiting Lists

SIPTU

This motion calls on ICTU to lead an active campaign to highlight and address the devastating social and economic impact of NHS waiting lists on working people and their families in Northern Ireland.

Ongoing work of Health Services Committee and affiliates.

37 Adequate Sick Pay Provision

SIPTU

We call on Conference to endorse the following:

- Increase statutory sick pay provision to £444 per week to represent the equivalent of a week's pay at the Real Living Wage.
- Remove the waiting period currently in operation and replace with payment on the first day of absence. Universal coverage for all workers.
- Abolish the earnings threshold for statutory sick pay provision to ensure everyone is entitled to SSP.
- The State should provide additional funds to ensure that employers can afford to pay sick pay and that all workers can be assured of coverage.

Endorsement carried forward in context of Good Jobs Bill

38 Expansion Of The Ulster University Magee Campus In Derry

UCU & GMB

Conference calls on the incoming NIC to use its significant influence to support the ongoing work of the Taskforce in delivering significant change through the expansion of Magee campus. The NIC should also add its voice to the growing demand that this time the people of Derry will finally witness the change they have been rightfully seeking for more than half a century.

Ongoing work of NIC



FBU's Phil Millar



CWU delegates

39 Disability

UTU

Congress, calls upon NIC/ ICTU to challenge the Department of Education and the Employing Authorities on this issue and support the aims and efforts of the education workers and their unions to establish:

- robust workplace policies, practices and procedures which remove the barriers to the inclusion of disabled teachers and support staff.
- professional development programmes to inform and educate school leaders and Governors regarding their duties and responsibilities under the legislation.
- A long-term policy for accommodating disabilities within the education sector which creates and fosters an inclusive workplace culture and environment.

Congress continues to provide Disability in the Workplace training programmes; the Disability and ETUG committees work together to highlight the particular issues in the education sector. Congress works with civil society organisations and statutory bodies, including the Equality Commission to run advisory sessions on duties under the DDA, including reasonable adjustment.

40 SEN

INTO

SEN review from DoE raised with NI Assembly Education Committee.

Early Years INTO

Conference calls on NIC ICTU to;

1. Lobby the Minister for Education to urgently action the standardisation of full time Nursery places for all 3 year olds, and abolish the practice

for dual day provision, thus delivering 22.5 hours provision per week.

2. Lobby the NI Executive to provide further subsidies to working parents for childcare to enable them to continue to work and support the NI economy.

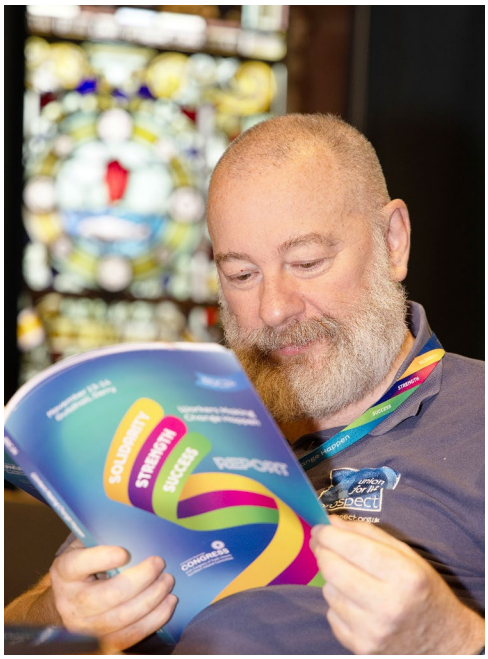
Raised with minister and NI Assembly Education Committee.

41 Professional Regulation of Teachers

NASUWT

Conference calls on the ICTU to work with affiliated teacher unions to ensure that any replacement body complies with the following principles:

- Any replacement body must be genuinely independent and not be subject to veto by the Department of Education.
- Teacher representatives should be restricted to those elected from the profession and appointed from the recognised trade unions.



Prospect's Richard Hardy

Independent members of the new body should be independent of the profession and employing authorities.

Raised by ETUG and NITC regarding qualifications of teachers and classroom assistants.

42 Education

Derry TC

- Campaign and lobby the Department of Education, CCEA and any other organisation as they see fit, to ensure that the teaching of workers rights and employment law is included as part of the mandatory curriculum to be taught to all children in schools across Northern Ireland.
- Liaise with Education Unions and other interested parties to develop clear and detailed guidance for content that they would like to see included in the Northern Ireland Curriculum, with the purpose of increasing awareness and understanding for children on the positive role that unions play in society and in their future lives.

Being raised with DoE review of school curriculum.

43 Inter Union Relations

NIPSA

Ongoing work of NIC.

44 Organising for the Future

USDAW

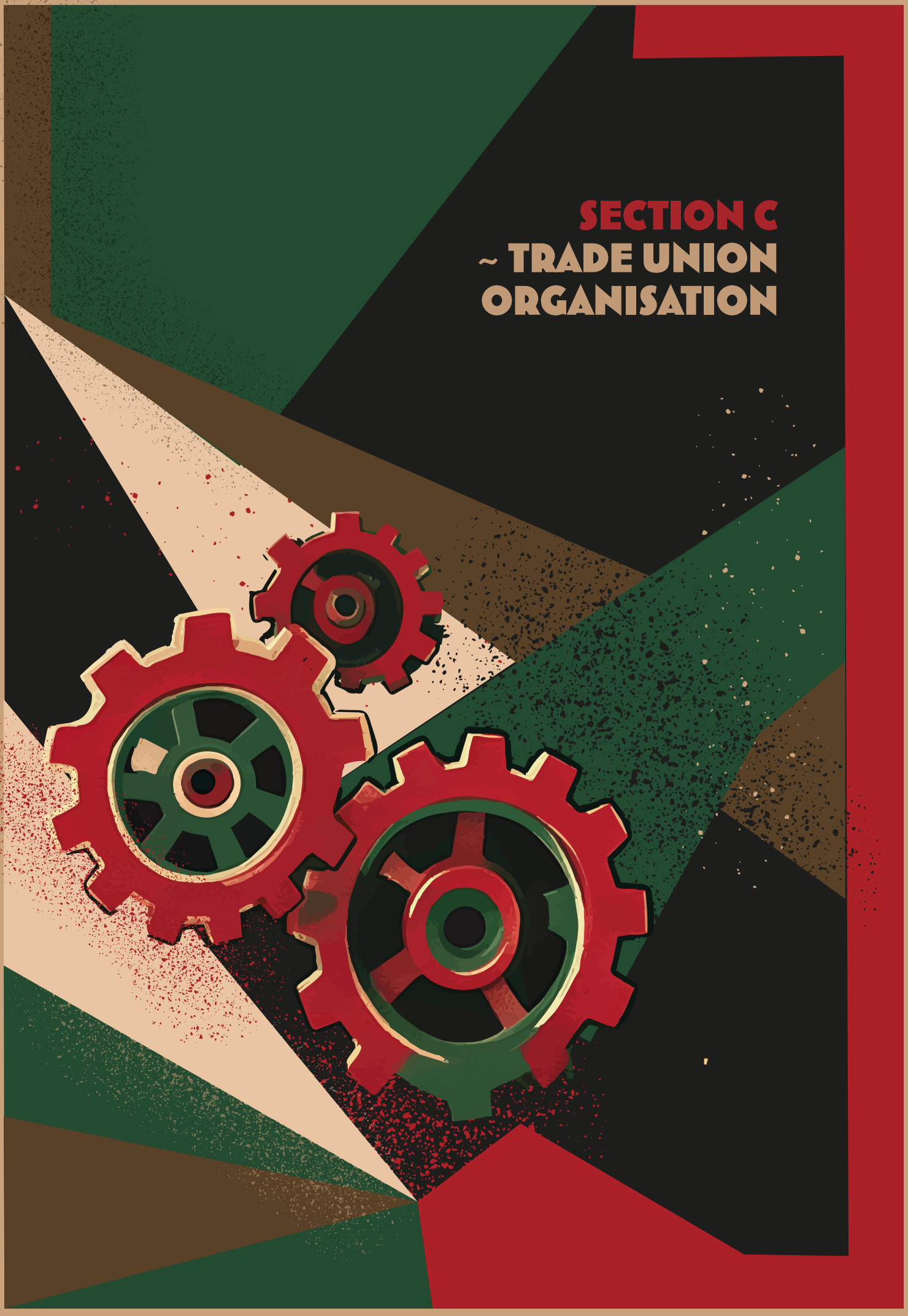
Conference calls on the Northern Ireland ICTU to:

- Develop a strategy for increasing union membership, especially in the private sector, in consultation with affiliated unions.
- Work with affiliated unions to support greater involvement of union members from under-represented groups in union structures and activities.
- Involve the ICTU NI Youth Committee in specific work around the recruitment and development of young workers and reps.

Ongoing work of NIC

Support for Youth Committee conference in early 2027.

SECTION C
~ TRADE UNION ORGANISATION



TRADE UNION ORGANISATION

C1 OFFICERS OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND COMMITTEE 2024-26

At its meeting held in December 2024, the Committee elected the following Officers:

Chairperson:
Jacquie White (UCU)

Vice-Chairperson:
JP Clayton (UNISON)

C2 STAFF

The following refers to the staff in the Northern Ireland Office during 2022-24:

Assistant General Secretary
Gerry Murphy

Education, Training & Lifelong Learning
Kevin Doherty

Finance & Programme Manager
Gillian Allen

Equality & Social Affairs
Clare Moore

Policy & Communications
John O'Farrell

Union Learning
Julie Gorman

Administrative Officer
Tony Gallagher



Jacquie White, Chairperson



NIC vice chair JP Clayton UNISON



Owen Reidy addresses ICTU BDC 25



ICTU President Justin McCamphill

C3 WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

The work of the Women's Committee is detailed in Section F2.

C4 RETIRED WORKERS' COMMITTEE

The Retired Workers' Committee (RWC) continues to forge ahead with an ambitious agenda under the chair of Margaret Galloway (PCS), and its vice-Chair Archie Thompson (Unison).

The Retired Workers' Committee (RWC) regular in-person meetings after the initial lockdown hiatus. Two Age Seminars were held in joint session with the RoI RWC in March 2025 in Newry and 2026 in Dundalk.

Another group which has a strong relationship is the UK-based National Pensioners' Convention, and of course many members of the RWC are also members of the (NI) Region of the NPC. Sadly, however, the NPC has faced some serious difficulties in recent times and may not be as active in the future. It's chair Jan Shortt participated in the 2025 Age Seminar, alongside senior trade union leaders including ICTU's President Justin McCamphill. Other speakers included Neil Duncan-Jordan MP, who had been General Secretary of the NPC, and had recently voted against his Labour government's proposal to cut the winter fuel allowance. There were also speakers from Age NI, the Commission for Older People and ICTU's anti-racism project leader, David Carroll.



NI Commissioner for Older People Siobhan Casey

The Seminar in 2026 heard contributions from Siobhan Casey, the NI Commissioner for Older People, who succeeded Eddie Lynch, himself a long-standing friend of the ICTU RWC. There were also sessions on healthy eating and awareness of AI, and NERI's



RWC chair Margaret Galloway



RWC



Justin McCamphill addresses the Retired Workers' Committee Conference.

Tom McDonnell outlined the aspects of Congress' New Economic Model with particular emphasis on how the lives of older people could be improved by a progressive shift in our economic priorities.

Members of the RWC are active in the retired sections of their own affiliates, and also with the All-Party Group on Ageing and Older People and its Chair Claire Sugden MLA. Age NI hosted in 2025 and 2026 a pensioners' parliament in the NI Assembly chamber with age groups (including trade unions) discussing pressing issues such as fuel poverty and services for older people.

The RWC also held discussions with the NIC in October, addressing means in which the views of retired workers can be considered by the NIC while deciding policy and when responding to relevant public consultations, such as the NI Executive Budget. The RWC chair is an observer on the NIC, and the NI RWC nominates an observer to the ICTU Executive Council in alternate mandates. Tom Gillen held that role on the 2023-25 ICTU Executive.

RWC members were also active in the successful campaigns to preserve the popular universal service of the concession pass for over 60's, and the UK wide campaign against means-testing the Winter Fuel Payment. Unite led the campaigning which involved lobbing MLAs and Stormont ministers, a rally at Parliament Buildings and at the NI Dept for Communities and finally highlighting the absence of an Equality Impact



SIPTU delegates at the RWC Conference



Protest against the proposal to cut the winter fuel allowance.

Assessment by the devolved administration. This was the basis for a Judicial Review brought by Unite at Belfast High Court which successfully challenged the DfC. This was part of a co-ordinated strategy in the devolved parts of the UK as well as in London. The government eventually conceded and the payment remains a universal benefit.

Margaret Galloway attended and addressed the ICTU BDC in Belfast in 2025 as a guest speaker, alongside Jimmy Whelan from the RoI RWC. A motion from the ICTU Executive on behalf of retired members was passed, calling for action in both jurisdictions on the 'Rising Cost of living and Living Standards on a Fixed Income'. The conference endorsed the motion's calls authorities in both jurisdictions to make permanent State support for household energy bills and make it easier and more affordable for older homeowners to undertake home energy upgrades, as well as to copper fasten gains in State Pensions and secondary benefits made in recent years, such as the UK's triple-lock.



Both RWCs celebrating May Day 2026



ICTU Youth

C5 CONGRESS YOUTH COMMITTEE

Over the past two years the Congress Youth Committee has continued to strengthen the voice of young workers within the trade union movement.

In 2025 the Committee was chaired by Ronan Sharkey (NASUWT), with Maeve Richardson (FSU) fulfilling the role of Vice Chair.

Michael Kerrigan (FORSA) continues to be the Youth Committee Observer on the Congress Executive Council and was nominated to the ETUC Youth Committee in 2024. He was succeeded by Dara Basketfield (Unite) in the latter role from September 2025.

In September 2025 a new Congress committee was established with Jack Ferguson (SIPTU) and Hollie Gregg (CWU) as Co-Chairs. Ben Eaton (NIPSA) was elected as Secretary to the Committee in September 2025 and also acts as observer to the NIC Executive. In a welcome development Chloe Knox was nominated as an observer to the Congress Women's Committee.

Through 2025 Maeve Richardson (SIPTU) led key projects, most notably the design and implementation of the Your Rights at Work Card, a crucial resource that equips young workers with essential knowledge of their rights. Maeve also represented the committee at the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI).

The committee represented Ireland's young trade union members in Europe and joined delegations with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) to Berlin and Dusseldorf.

In March 2025, Michael Kerrigan (FORSA), John Lawler (ESU) and James Joy (FORSA) joined the ICTU European Officer and EPSU in a delegation to Brussels to meet with the ETUC to discuss the Traineeship Directive. The delegation also met with Irish MEPs at the European Parliament

to stress the importance of a strong Traineeship Directive that safeguards young people across Europe.

The 2026 Dublin May Day campaign was organised by Congress Youth and the Dublin Council of Trade Unions. Congress Youth placed the affordability crisis and its impact on young people at the centre of the day's activities. Under the theme "Can You Afford to Live?", the campaign highlighted the growing gap between wages and the cost of living, with particular emphasis on the cost of housing and the prevalence of low pay. Congress Youth led the march in Dublin and Committee Co-Chair Hollie Gregg addressed a crowd of 2000 people on these issues. The Committee also organised a very successful May Day Social and Cultural event after the march featuring a number of musical acts.



The following day a delegation of Youth Committee activists travelled to Belfast to join the Belfast May Day Rally with Hollie once again speaking on the cost of living crisis and its impact on young workers.

The Youth Committee have also led an active campaign to abolish sub-Minimum pay rates in the South including press events, a presentation in parliament buildings and attendance at a Seanad debate on a Labour Party Bill dealing with the issue.



ICTU Youth Committee

A number of activists from the Youth Committee including members from the North of Ireland also led a workshop on Community Wealth Building in conjunction with Bohemians Football Club.

The Committee have also been working on a proposal to re-establish a Biennial conference for young workers which would alternate North and South.

Monthly online meetings have been very well attended and have included engagements with Trade Union Friends of Palestine and the Anaka Women's Collective. The committee are also investigating how to reach out to other civil society groups regarding training/ information on the importance of trade union membership and rights at work.

Finally the committee are due to welcome and work with a visiting delegation from the youth committee of Cymru TUC in both Belfast and Dublin.

C6 TRADES COUNCILS

Trades Union Councils (TCs) bring together union reps, officials and activists living or working in their respective geographical areas. TCs work and campaign around issues affecting working people in their local workplaces and communities. They have been the backbone of, and at times the instigators of, many trade union campaigns that have sought to unite affiliates and communities behind common issues.

TCs assist the Northern Ireland Committee by campaigning on a range of issues. These issues have covered:

- Providing solidarity to workers engaged in industrial action.
- Engaging with local media.
- Protecting health services.
- Campaigning against social and economic deprivation in local communities.
- Supporting BME migrant workers and opposing racism.
- Supporting trade union recruitment campaigns.
- Defending the NIHE and opposing stock transfers.
- International solidarity, particularly with Trade Union Friends of Palestine.

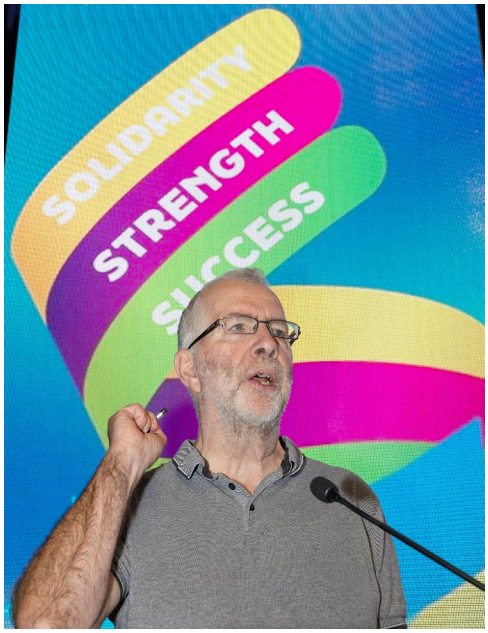
Currently there are active trades' councils in Ballymena and Antrim, Belfast, Craigavon, Derry, Fermanagh, Mid Ulster, North Down and Ards, Omagh, and in the Coleraine area under the Causeway TC.

All TC's are affiliated to ICTU, and they come together quarterly at meetings of the Trades Councils Consultative Committee (TCCC) to share information and initiatives, and to develop and coordinate joint campaigns.

Some of the activities local TCs have been involved in include:

- **Ballymena and Antrim Trades Council (B&ATC)** continue to work on the restoration of community relations following the racially motivated attacks and rioting in Ballymena. They have been engaged on the social and economic problems that fuel discontent and have lobbied Mid & East Antrim Borough Council on issues including employment opportunities. Anti-racism has been a key feature underlining their work, as is the case for the other trades councils.
- **Belfast and District Trade Council (B&DTC)** and Community Arts Partnership, supported by Belfast City Council, run the successful May Day community festival around the Belfast march and rally, to involve families, BME and other communities in May Day. The B&DTC worked with the NUJ on the issue of safety and surveillance of journalists and held a public meeting addressed by Barry McCaffrey, and Trevor Birney on their pursuit of justice and the frightening levels of state surveillance the scale of which is still being revealed. B&DTC were involved in the anti-far right protests in Belfast and continue to hold meetings on how to combat the Far-Right. B&DTC are represented on a range of organisations including, Belfast City of Sanctuary, TUFP, Reclaim the Agenda, Alliance for Choice, Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre, and the International Brigades Commemoration Committee.

- **Causeway Trades Council** were central in mobilising and organising opposition to the far-right anti-immigration protests in Coleraine, April 2026. And also in Portrush in July, when they took the novel and successful approach of combining with the Portrush urban sports community to hold the 'Solidarity Skate,' with the twin aims of demonstrating Portrush people's rejection of racism and promoting their sport and skaters' long running campaign for a skate park. CTC have also been involved in the 'SOS Causeway Hospital Campaign' and highlighting employers non-payment of the National Minimum Wage.
- **Craigavon & District Trades Council (C&DTC)** work with TUFP and other Palestinian solidarity groups to run a number of events in their area. They are currently working with Trademark on anti-racism training events. C&DTC are involved in Save Craigavon lakes and Save the Lough campaigns. C&DTC continue to be actively involved with the International Brigades Commemoration Committee and run an annual public Jim Haughey memorial lecture.
- **Derry Trades Council (DTC)** run the *Worker's Rights and Social Justice Week* of events with Derry City and Strabane District Council, alongside the May Day march and rally each year in Derry City. They also organise a number of historical and cultural events as part of the week. DTC have been actively promoting the Good Jobs Bill, campaigning on the impact of Translink's and the Ulster University's budget cuts on the North-West and promoting UNISON's free school meals campaign. DTC have also held protests against racism and against the slaughter in Palestine.
- **Fermanagh Council of Trades Unions (FCTU)** have been active supporters of the campaign for the restoration of services in the South-west Area Hospital. FCTU annually holds an event to mark International Workers' Memorial Day in Enniskillen and engages in local labour and working-class historical projects.
- **Mid Ulster Trades Council (MUTC)** have been involved in pro-Palestine demonstrations and against the far-right anti-immigration protests. MUTC have also been active in solidarity with industrial disputes.
- **Omagh Trades Council (OTC)** organise an annual event to mark Workers Memorial Day.



Omagh TC's Anton McCabe

To maintain and develop the work of trade's councils, the TCCC appeals to unions to ensure that they affiliate to and encourage their members and activists to engage with the trade's councils in their local areas.

C7 GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

Congress international work continues to be informed by our Global Solidarity Committee and our affiliation to the ITUC. The Committee now operate on an all-island basis and carries forward the international resolutions passed at the 2025 ICTU BDC.

The Committee has developed and has developed a work programme in co-operation with the all- island Congress Global Solidarity committee. Work with both committees is now more aligned, with NI-only unions now fully participating in meetings, seminars and actions. Dooley Harte (Craigavon Trades Council)/UCU) is vice- chair of the Congress GS committee alongside Anne Piggott (ASTI) as chair.

There were two successful Global Solidarity Summer Schools hosted in Newry and Wexford. In August 2025,100 trade unionists from both sides of the border met and heard a representative of the Palestinian teachers' union GUPT, Anan Da'ana.

ICTU Assistant General Secretary Gerry Murphy praised attendees as "the global ambassadors for our movement in every workplace it is you who highlight the injustices and inequalities inflicted on our brothers and sisters in conflict zones across the world."

In her opening remarks, ICTU vice-President Jacquie White covered the scope of policy areas which formed the discussions in plenary sessions and eight workshops. Among those topics of immediate concern was far-right activity in Belfast earlier that week.

"Following the race riots up and down the island over the past year we in the North of the island have managed to sink to even lower depths this week. The social media coverage of the vigilante groups harassing and intimidating those from ethnic minority backgrounds - well, there are no words to describe. Horrifying and sickening merely touch upon it. The use of language – from undocument-ed to accusations of rape and child abuse – is indicative of the narratives of the far right agenda – deliberate and calculated – designed to divide and destruct.



Gerry Murphy addresses 2025 GSSS

"And when we add to that the PSNI reports that almost half of those arrested for race hate disorder in Belfast last August had previously been reported to the PSNI for domestic abuse, we realise the enormity – if we didn't know already – of the job of work to be done.

Naturally, Palestine was the main topic of debate. Jacquie got to the heart of the matter:

"We have to be mindful of language used and political response. It is not a war in Gaza. It is not a war if one side has one of the most advanced militaries in the world, cutting edge weapons, complete control and normality at home while the other has no army, no freedom of movement, no access to clean water and food and no homes.

"It is not a war, and the persistence of those in power denoting it as such simply denies the facts. It is not a war, it is genocide, and those in power must call it as such – and act accordingly."



Patricia McKeown addresses session on Palestine

The main speaker to a major session on Palestine was Anan Da'ana, from the Palestinian Teachers Union GUPT. On a panel which included Senator Frances Black, David Landy (Jews for Palestine) and Claire Liddy (GAA Palestine), chaired by Unison Regional Secretary Patricia McKeown.



Palestinian teacher Anan Da'ana at the 2025 GSSS



Guests from Turkish-Kurdish union KESK

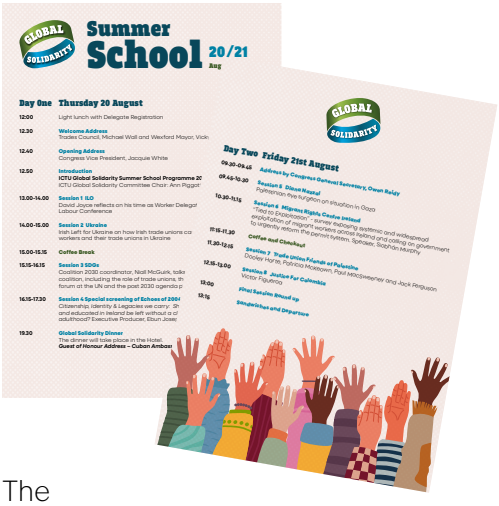
Anan told delegates of his daily life as an educator in Hebron, describing in a powerful illustrated presentation of the severe restrictions, including over 100 checkpoints in Hebron, the destruction of infrastructure, and the division of the Abraham mosque. He emphasised the difficulties in education, noting that students and teachers face significant delays and humiliation at checkpoints. Da'anna thanked the Irish for their support, likening them to angels for their solidarity.

Patricia and Gerry detailed Congress' policy of Palestine, boosted by a composite motion passed at July's BDC.

This motion is comprehensive, strategic and specific in the demands it makes of the Irish government, the EU and of the ICTU itself. It was passed unanimously at the BDC and encapsulating a total of 16 developments in the policies and actions of these bodies. This is the most comprehensive policy position of any trade union movement in the world on this issue.

The summer school continued over both days with expert-led workshops on:

1. Decent Work for Platform Workers: Darragh Golden, UCD, Tea Jarc, ETUC and Kruskaya Hidalgo, Solidarity Centre
2. Central Bank Campaign – Helen O'Mahony, IPSC
3. IHRA definition – David Landy
4. Beijing +30 – Dr. Norah Burns, School of Law, QUB and Board member National Women's Council
5. BDS training materials – Cathlin NI Cathail
6. Community Collaborations to Challenge Racism – David Carroll and Philomena Obasi (Irish Network Against Racism).
7. Corporate accountability – Irish Coalition on Business and Human Rights, Chris O'Connell (Trócaire)
8. "What is Divestment – the 'D' in BDS?" – Dooley Harte and Jack Ferguson



The 2026 summer school in Wexford also had an extensive two-day programme addressing:

- Colombia, where trade union members are responding to both a rollback of the peace process and the recent earthquake;
- Gaza, where delegates heard moving testimony directly from Palestinian eye surgeon Diana Nazzal;
- The exploitation of migrant workers in Ireland, with the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland presenting its "Tied to Exploitation" survey;
- Afghanistan, marking five years since the Taliban takeover and the ongoing exclusion of women and girls from education, work and public life;
- And the historic ruling by the International Court of Justice confirming workers' right to strike under international law.

Opening the two-day event, ICTU Vice-President Jacqui White said the rise of far-right messaging and influence was being felt directly in communities across the island, pointing to the growing frequency of racially motivated attacks, harassment and intimidation.

"The Global Solidarity Summer School is more important than ever, as we see the growing influence of far-right and anti-democratic forces in Europe and around the world. The rise of far-right messaging and influence on our doorsteps is reflected in the incidents of racial attack, harassment and intimidation in towns throughout the island.



Meeting a trade union delegate from the Basque country

"Earlier this summer, a horrendous knife attack in north Belfast, was used a pretext for pure racist thuggery and violence across several days, with people from minority backgrounds targeted and their property de-stroyed. The trade union movement stands with all those who were victims of such attacks."

The event also examined the ongoing Boycott, Divest, Sanction campaign, and Ireland's role in responding to the genocide against the Palestinian people.

"Ireland is currently the gateway that allows Israel to raise money on European markets to fund its war," Ms White said. "The Central Bank of Ireland should decline to transfer approval of a new prospectus to another EU member state, and it should refuse to approve a new prospectus for Israel Bonds in 2026. This is a straightforward, practical step that the Irish authorities can take right now."

"Our international work is not some kind of extra thing we do, unrelated to what's happening here at home. It is a key element of our desire to create the conditions that hinder the rise of inequality and hate – and that work is ongoing."

The school also paid tribute paid to its main organiser, Congress Equality Officer David Joyce, who will be retiring before the next Summer School, being held in Newry in August 2027.

C8 TRADE UNION FRIENDS OF PALESTINE

Much of Congress' work is carried out in partnership with Trade Union Friends of Palestine (TUFP). We also worked with affiliates, wider civil society including the Irish Anti-Apartheid Campaign for Palestine. Unions have been to the fore of marches across the island and have spoken at many of them, including our President Phil Ní Sheaghdha and former President, Patricia McKeown at regular rallies in Dublin, Belfast and other places.

The affiliates' membership of TUFP continues to grow and the work is supported by the multi-union steering group which meets regularly.

As well as feeding into all of the work described earlier in this report, TUFP has been busy building a workplace ambassador base inside unions, organising workplace action, pickets, vigils, meetings to promote worker and community boycotts of Israeli products. TUFP co-sponsored many of the demonstrations with Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Jews for Palestine Ireland and the Palestin-ian Community itself, and continues to actively participate in the European Trade Union Network for Justice in Palestine. In addition, TUFP supported unions to adapt motions in favour of apartheid free zones, lobbying for ethical procurement in the public sector and supporting workers who refuse handle Israeli goods.

The trade union work on pensions has been very successful with two major pension schemes disposing of around £81,000,000 of Israeli Government Bonds. One is the Universities Super



The NIC met the Palestinian UK Ambassador in Belfast

annuation Scheme, the largest private pension scheme in the UK. The other is the local NILGOSC scheme covering a range of public sector workers in Northern Ireland.

Trade Union Friends of Palestine in the Republic of Ireland supported the Teva consumer boycott campaign and were part of the steering committee of the significant INTO conference on the rights of Palestinian children and is also affiliated to the Irish Anti-Apartheid Campaign for Palestine.

Members have also made a number of collections at conferences, organised gigs and other fundraisers and most recently were part of the group that staged an occupation of the Central Bank, protesting at the sale of Israeli Bonds. They also worked with the Cork Trades Council to erect a banner on Connolly Hall in Cork calling for the enactment of the Occupied Territories Bill. A general meeting was held in March 2025 seeking to build the work of TUFP across Ireland, and like the ICTU Global Solidarity Committee, it functions as a single all-island group.

In June 2025, ICTU called upon workers across the island of Ireland to observe a moment of reflection on June 4th (the International UN Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression) as a simple act of solidarity and remembrance for the loss of life and violations of international law.

Commenting, ICTU General Secretary Owen Reidy said:



Dooley Harte speaking at a BDC workshop



"Over the last 18 months, we have watched in horror as the death toll in Gaza has continued to mount, with innocent men, women and children subjected to terrible violence. Union members, like much of the Irish public, have been appalled by Israel's wanton violations of international law.

We saw during Covid how moments of national reflection can bring us together and offer hope through solidarity. The UN Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression provides an opportunity to pause and reflect on these tragic events and their devastating impact on the people of Gaza, particularly the children who have suffered so greatly.

Speaking on behalf of trade union leaders in NI, Gerry Murphy added

The trade union movement in the North has impeccable bona fides when it comes to calling for peaceful and democratic solutions to conflicts locally and abroad. We have over decades led civil society responses to political violence, but the scale of what is being imposed on the Palestinians by the Israeli government calls for a principled mass response from across our society.

A composite motion on Palestine was passed at the ICTU conference in July 2025. One aspect of this was supporting trade unionists who in good conscience cannot be complicit in war crimes. In September, Congress wrote to the Irish Taoiseach and the British Prime Minister warn of "flashpoints of conscientious objection" to Israeli actions. The letter to Sir Keir Starmer stated that NIC-ICTU is "a longtime supporter of the BDS campaign and are now in the process of stepping up these actions in line with a motion to our Biennial Delegate Conference in Belfast in July. We are declaring ourselves an apartheid free zone – reviewing all of our procurement and pension investments to ensure that we are not inadvertently complicit in



NIC members with Palestine's UK Ambassador Husam Zomlot at Áras Uí Chonghaile

Israel's horrific actions. Many affiliates have also been doing similar work."

"We believe the gravity of the situation is such that it is time for the British Government to comply with your legal obligations under international law, as called for by dozens of UN human rights experts, including:

Sanctions on individuals promoting and committing war crimes.

Imposing "a full arms embargo on Israel, halting all arms agreements, imports, exports and transfers, including of dual-use items."

Cancelling or suspending "economic relationships, trade agreements and academic relations with Israel that may contribute to its unlawful presence and apartheid regime in the occupied Palestinian territory. / Banning imported illegal settlement goods.

Expelling apartheid Israel from the UN by withdrawing its accreditation to the UN General Assembly and push for lawful sanctions against it.

And seeking the expulsion of apartheid Israel from the UN by withdrawing its accreditation to the UN General Assembly and to push for lawful sanctions against it similar to those imposed on apartheid South Africa.

Your inaction so far has led to an unconscionable situation for some trade union members worried about being exposed to complicity through handling of Israeli goods, facilitating trade with Israel or even worse the trade of arms with Israel. It would not be surprising if some of these develop into flashpoints of conscientious objection by some workers and trade unions will not be found wanting in supporting workers from any consequences of such actions. This situation is not tenable however and it is important that there are legal protections for such actions."

C9 HEALTH AND SAFETY

Congress organised the Commemoration for Workers Memorial Day in 2025 and 2026. The event was attended by the Department for the Economy Minister as well as the NIC ICTU Chair.

Congress spoke at the launch of UNITE's Extreme Weather campaign at Stormont and also attended the sub group of the Strategic Engagement Forum of the LRA on extreme weather.

The *Workers in the Eye of the Storm* report highlighted the dangers that workers were exposed to during Storm Eowyn when an unprecedented red weather alert was issued across the island of Ireland. The policy document and associated demand for extreme weather legislation follows the tragic death of UNITE member Matthew Campbell, an electrical engineer who was killed by a falling tree while working during Storm Ali.



UNITE launch of workers in the eye of the storm, Minister Archibald with S Fitzgerald and G Partridge

Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI)

The HSENI is the lead body responsible for the promotion and enforcement of health and safety at work standards in Northern Ireland.

Congress has engaged with the HSENI Chairperson, Chief Executive and Board members during this period and has also made representation to the Minister in relation to the filling of the worker representative places on the HSENI Board.

At the time of writing, only one of the three places is filled.

A major ICTU conference on elimination psychosocial risk at work was held in Dublin on 20th October.



Psychosocial risks and resulting consequences for mental and physical health are among the most challenging issues in occupational safety and health (OSH). These risks

are preventable however and can be addressed through action by Government, state agencies and employers working with trade unions. In this conference, key-note speakers will focus on the psychosocial working environment, highlighting how the way work is designed, organised and managed can affect workers' safety, health and organisational performance and what we can do to ensure that workers mental health is prioritised.

Speakers included, Professor Rory O'Neill, Dr Richard Wynne, Dr Elizabeth Barrett, Mr Mark Cullen, CEO Health and Safety Authority and Congress President and INMO General Secretary, Phil Ní Sheaghdha.



Workers Memorial Day 2025



Workers Memorial Day 2026, with MInister Archibald, Jacquie White and GMB's Alan Perry



Dooley Hart addressing he International Brigades event in Belfast City Hall



Jacquie White unveiling the blue plaque for Alexander Bowman

C10 ARTS AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

The Arts and Culture Committee (ACC) works to promote, develop and protect the interests of workers in arts and culture sector, and to campaign for an Arts and Culture policy for NI. The ACC also assists the NIC by responding to all issues pertaining to the arts and culture sector.

Alice Adams Lemon, Equity, was elected as Chair of the Committee, and Angela Moffatt, Prospect was elected as Vice Chair.

The ACC considers mechanisms to support professionalism in the sector, including pay, terms and conditions, dignity at work, opportunities for arts workers from every part of the sector and to address the mistreatment, bullying and harassment within this industry.

The continuing issue of underfunding of the Arts has been the dominant issue for the Committee. A real-terms cut of over 40% to Arts Council Northern Ireland funding over the past 10 years has deeply impacted artists, producers and communities.

The Arts in NI receives the lowest per capita investment in the UK at just £5.07 per person. This sits far behind Wales (£10.51), Scotland (£10.14), and the Republic of Ireland, which invests up to five times more per citizen (€21.58 to €25.90).

Since the last BDC the situation has deteriorated further with theatre and arts groups suffering severe threats and closures due to consecutive budget cuts and the stalling of funding. Low pay, precarious work and poverty have become ever more prevalent across the arts and entertainment industry.

In addition to this, the Minister for the Communities, Gordon Lyons, refusal to sign off on the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's (ACNI) comprehensive 2024–2034 strategic plan has left the sector entirely without long-term



Davy Nicholl, Tom Sullivan (CSP) Gerry Murphy with Alice Adams Lemon and Alan McKee (Equity)



Paddy Mackel opens the 2026 May Festival

stability or direction. The Minister has also failed to deliver on an Arts policy which he announced in July 2024.

As a result, the Committee supported an Equity led protest on 8th September 2026 at Stormont when a letter of 'No Confidence' in the Minister for the Communities was delivered with the aim of highlighting the "failure" of the Minister to produce an arts policy and the underinvestment in the arts across Northern Ireland.

The Committee has engaged with other organisations in the sector to try to find ways to build pressure for fair treatment for the Arts.

The Committee has also been considering the experience of the successful introduction of the Basic Income for the Arts scheme in the South of Ireland and more recently attempts to have a similar scheme introduced in Scotland.

The introduction of a similar scheme in NI could also potentially increase union membership in the Arts.

The frustration of the passage of the Good Jobs Bill has undermined attempts to address the charging of upfront fees for some performers and creative workers, and other matters affecting workers in the sector such as delays in the payment fees.

The Committee also participated in the May Day festival 2026.

The ACC is open to representatives of all affiliates with membership or an interest in the Arts and Culture sector.

C11 BELFAST MAY DAY FESTIVAL: GROWING STRONGER THROUGH PARTNERSHIP AND SOLIDARITY

The Belfast May Day Festival, a joint initiative by the Belfast & District Trades Union Council (BDTUC), the Community Arts Partnership (CAP), and the ICTU, has demonstrated remarkable growth and engagement since is first year in 2024. What was once a single-day march has evolved into a two-week programme of cultural, political and educational activity, marking a significant broadening of May Day's appeal.

In 2025, the festival ran under the theme "Voices of Solidarity," with events spanning 28th April to 9th May . The centrepiece remained the traditional march and rally from Writers' Square on 3rd May, where thousands gathered to hear speeches on workers' rights, anti-racism, and international solidarity . As always there was a strong showing from ICTU affiliates at the rally and events. The programme also featured a family fun day in 'Larkin's Square' with music, art workshops, and exhibitions, successfully drawing in families, migrants, asylum seekers and young people beyond the traditional trade union orbit .

2026 marked the third annual festival, and the momentum continued until another successful two week programme encompassing over 20 events, including community chess, protest song karaoke, walking tours, and debates on anti war, live music and poetry. The march and rally itself has "morphed into a day-long carnival" in the Cathedral Quarter, reclaiming space through partnerships with community venues like the Oh Yeah Music Centre and The Black Box . Critically, CAP's outreach with diverse groups of young people and communities across Belfast has engaged new audiences, teaching trade union history through art and bringing their creations to the rally.

The prospects for this festival going forward are genuinely positive. The partnership model between BDTUC, CAP, and ICTU has proven effective in embedding May Day within Belfast's broader progressive and community networks with the the aim of tying together "the threads of progressivism and alternative ideas which already exist across the city". With attendance figures reaching upwards of 4,000 and a programme that continues to innovate, the Belfast May Day Festival stands as a model of union renewal and community engagement. We look forward to May Day 2027!




UNISON
the public service union
Black and Migrant Workers


SERVICES INDUSTRIAL PROFESSIONAL TECHNICAL UNION
SIPTU
BELFAST
1990
EQUITY


FOUNDED 1919
NASUWT
Royal Avenue


NORTHERN IRELAND Nº2 REGION
FOUNDED
1918
THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION
FBU
THE FIRE BRIGADE UNION FOUNDED 1918


NO CUTS
Northern Ireland Committee
Irish Congress of Trade Unions
May Day Festival
EQUALITY · DIVERSITY · SOLIDARITY

SECTION D
~ EDUCATION



EDUCATION

D1 THE TRADE UNION EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The NIC ICTU Trade Union Education Programme (TUEP) is a vital resource for all trade union officials, representatives, and members. It provides a forum for trade unionists to come together to develop their knowledge and skills, and to learn from the experiences of others.

Around one thousand learners participate in the training and seminars offered by NIC ICTU each year.

Value of TUEP

Academic studies show that professionally trained union reps make a real difference in workplaces. They improve workers' terms of pay and conditions; protect members and jobs; ensure safer working environments; promote equality, wellbeing, fairness, and social cohesion; and enable access to skills, training, and development.

TUEP ensures that reps are fully up to date with developments in employment and case law as well as advances in workplace best practice. TUEP courses provide reps with the opportunity to consider how to respond to latest developments in the workplace and the dangers of insecure work. In addition to this TUEP provides reps with the skills to utilise new methods of communication to enhance organising opportunities.

Safety and Wellbeing

The presence of well-trained union Health and Safety Reps prevents thousands of major injuries at work every year. The more trade union training the reps get, the more marked the "union safety effect." Trained reps are at the forefront when it comes to addressing the new hazards of the 21st century. According to an HSE evaluation, trade union safety training is "an important stimulus for taking up 'new issues' in health and safety." It found, for example, gender sensitive strategies, stress surveys, representing workers offsite, participatory risk assessment and work organisation.

Equality and Social Inclusion

Building equality and social inclusion is another key priority for TUEP that runs through all aspects of the programme. TUEP training and learning prepares representatives to play a key role in:

- Promoting equal rights in the workplace. Reps consider how to progress the equality agenda in the workplace through campaigns and by working with employers to develop and update policies and procedures that advance equality and inclusion.
- Building inclusion. Reps are encouraged to create a supportive union atmosphere in the workplace through which the members feel that they can participate fully and that their opinions are valued.
- Challenging harassment and discrimination. Reps gain the knowledge and skills to ensure

that complaints are dealt with effectively and efficiently.
- Acting as a role model in treating everyone fairly.

Further to this, TUEP has helped build social cohesion by providing employment rights training for BAME and migrant workers. The TUEP Disability Champions course provides information and skills to help improve access, opportunity, and equality for people with disabilities in the workplace.

New Developments

TUEP now offer a *Digital Organising* course which helps reps and official with:

- Identifying the best methods of digital communication.
- Understanding and utilising social media platforms.
- Demographics and data analytics.
- Developing a communications strategy and content.
- Creating creative content to build membership and maximise members engagement.
- Supporting campaigns.
- Getting the union message into the media.

Trade unions have always been at the forefront of the drive for equality and inclusion at work, whether through the struggle for equal pay, through tackling sectarianism, racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of prejudice. Another new course TUEP offers looks at all aspects of inequality in the workplace, including social and economic, and focuses on developing strategies to effect positive change. This course aimed at experienced reps and officials aims to:

- Strengthen knowledge of equality issues in the workplace
- Promote an understanding of union values and policies on equalities
- Explains the legal framework of the right to equality.
- Examines the roots of racism, sexism, and sectarianism.
- Challenge prejudice, including racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination and harassment.
- Consider social and economic inequality, including precarious employment and low pay.
- Critically analyse equality law and workplace policies.
- Examine how to use legislation to effect positive change in the workplace and wider society.
- Understand how to use union structures and strategies in working for equality.
- Develop campaigns to improve equality, build and engage union membership.

TUEP continues to develop the programme to meet changes in the workplace, economy and society. More recent courses include the following.

Recognising that the workplace will be affected by the climate crisis our *Climate Crisis and the Workplace* course looks at a 'just transition' to a greener economy, where workers have a central voice in planning the transition and encourages learners to be part of the efforts to decarbonise and move to a more sustainable, zero-waste, circular economy.

The *Menopause and the Workplace* course designed to create greater awareness of the menopause as a workplace issue. It is designed to highlight factors that may negatively impact on workers experiencing the menopause, identify risks and discrimination, and consider best practices tackle the workplace issues facing workers experiencing the menopause.

Another new course *Neurodiversity Champions* was developed from our experience in running the *Neurodiversity in the Workplace* which gave reps the skills and confidence to represent and support neurodivergent members and to advocate for more inclusive and equal workplaces.

At the request of affiliates TUEP deliver workplace specific training on handling grievances and disciplines to joint classes of frontline management and union reps. This training is aimed at improving understanding and providing alternatives to triggering grievance and disciplinary processes.

TUEP assisted the ICTU Ant-Racism Project Coordinator, to deliver anti-racism and BME leadership training in Belfast.

TUEP continue to develop new training initiatives to support ethnic minority workers on topics including *Accessing Employment Rights, Reporting Workplace Hate Incidents and Sharing Good Practices*, and *Workplace Harassment and Discrimination*.

TUEP worked with TUFP to develop a BDS course to assist unions and reps to understand and consider how to implement BDS.

TUEP has been working on the roll-out of the following new courses:

- Social Dialogue
- Collective Bargaining
- Good Jobs - Developments in Law and Practice
- Productive Workplace Relationships
- International Trade Unionism
- Handling Change in the Workplace

As union representatives are more effective if they possess up-to-date skills and knowledge relevant to their role TUEP are now offering opportunities for 'repeat' or 'refresher' training in a limited range of accredited courses. TUEP regularly review courses to ensure that the content meets the needs of the modern workplace ensuring that reps keep abreast of legislative changes, developments in best practice workplace policies and wider skills.

For further information or if you wish to enquire about arranging bespoke courses for your union please contact the NIC ICTU Education Officer at kevin.doherty@ictuni.net

About the Programme

TUEP contains progression pathways for union officials, union representatives, health and safety representatives, equality representatives, union learning representatives and members. All courses are accredited through Open College Network (OCN). On successful completion learners will obtain level 2, or 3 Awards, Certificates, or Diplomas. The courses are free and are run mainly on a day release basis over 3, 5, 10 or 32 days depending on the level of qualification attached to the course. Evening courses are also available.

The programme is delivered in partnership with the South Eastern Regional College (SERC) and OCN NI.

The NIC ICTU Education Department also designs and delivers bespoke courses to meet the needs of affiliates which can be run in affiliates offices, the workplace and other locations.

The NIC ICTU Education Programme continues to develop with a number of new courses added to the programme reflecting demand from affiliates and changes in the workplace and society.

Course Delivery

The majority of TUEP courses are delivered in the classroom, or through a hybrid model, and some are delivered online. The method of delivery is continuously reviewed to meet the need. To meet demand, TUEP also run online evening courses.

Accredited Courses:

TUEP offers the following core union reps courses:

- Certificate courses:
- Trade Union Reps Stage 1
- Trade Union Reps Stage 2
- Certificate in Employment Law
- Health and Safety Stage 1
- Health and Safety Stage 2
- Union Learning Reps



Diploma Courses:

- Employment Law
- Occupational Health and Safety

In addition, TUEP offer a further and developing range of accredited courses, including:

- Challenging Inequalities
- Ensuring Safe Workplaces
- Working from Home
- Dealing with Stress
- Bullying and Intimidating Behaviour in the Workplace
- Negotiation and Communication Skills
- Handling Grievance and disciplines
- Disability Champions
- Pay and Bargaining
- Equality Law
- Tackling Prejudice in the Workplace
- Digital Organising
- Equality Reps in the Workplace
- Confidence in the Workplace
- Climate Crisis and the Workplace
- Dealing with Redundancies
- Mental Health and the workplace
- Learning and Organising
- Taking a Case to Tribunals
- Menopause and the workplace
- Campaigning
- Hybrid Working.

Further details can be found at https://www.ictuni.org/events

Webinars and Seminars

NIC ICTU also run a variety of unaccredited seminars on various employment related issues. Some of seminars are delivered in partnership with affiliate unions, the Nevin Economic Institute, Belfast City of Sanctuary, the Labour Relations Agency, and the Equality Commission. Seminars are delivered through webinars and in person. The topics include:

- Bullying and harassment in the Workplace
- Multi-ethnic workplaces
- European developments on Employment Law
- Agency Workers Directive
- Dignity at Work
- Flexible Working
- Mental Health in the Workplace
- Disability Law in the Workplace
- Legislative Reform
- Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace
- Leadership in the Workplace
- Agency Workers Directive
- Health and Safety
- Challenging Racism
- Pregnancy and Maternity rights
- Menopause and the Workplace
- Family Friendly workplaces
- Managing Conflict at Work

New additions to our seminar titles include:

- Good Jobs
- Sectoral Collective Bargaining
- Facilitating Productive Workplace Relationships
- Public Appointments
- Developments in International Employment Law and Practice
- Modernising Trade Union Framework

Further details can be found at https://www.ictuni.org/seminars-webinars



D2 UNION LEARNING FUND

Under an agreement with the Department for the Economy, NIC ICTU continues to have full responsibility for the administrative and financial management of the Union Learning Fund (ULF). From 2024, the following 10 unions delivered projects through the ULF: Aegis, BFAWU, Equity, FDA, FSU, INTO, NIPSA, Unison, Unite and USDAW

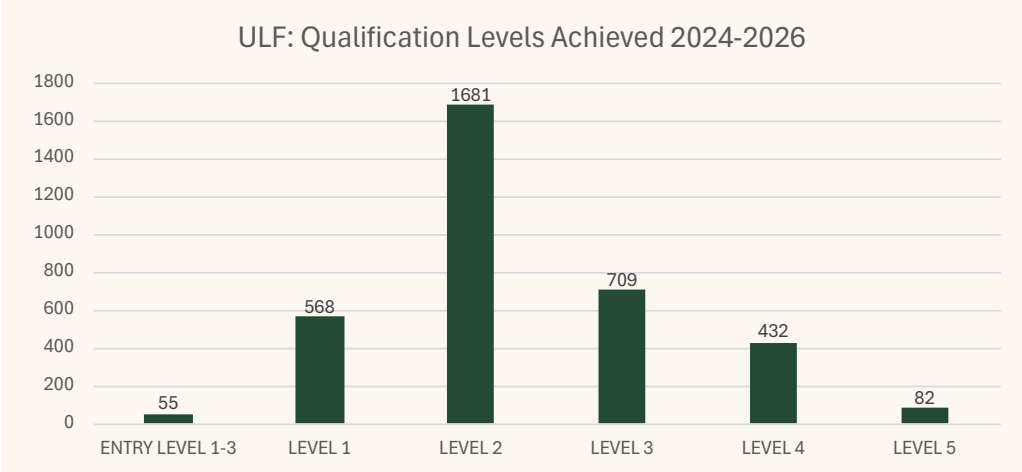
During the 2024-2026 reporting period, ULF projects engaged with and supported more than 8,500 workers. Key outcomes included:

- 535 workers completed Essential Skills courses in numeracy, literacy, or IT.
- 2,995 workers completed and achieved upskilling qualifications.
- 4,370 workers completed Continued Professional Development (CPD) courses.
- 310 workers completed introductory IT courses.

A key strength of the ULF is its ability to support workers at all stages of their learning journey, from developing foundational skills and achieving first qualifications through to progressing to higher-level qualifications and vocational training.



Between 2024–2026, Level 2 recorded the highest number of accredited qualification achievements, alongside strong participation at Levels 1, 3 and 4. Achievements at Entry Level and Level 5 further demonstrate the ULF's inclusive approach to supporting progression at all levels.



Union Learning Conference

In March 2025, the Conference was held in the MAC, Belfast. The conference focused on the theme, *Neurodiversity in the Workplace: Breaking Down Barriers to Success*. NIC ICTU Chair, Jacquie White launched the NIC ICTU Neurodiversity Guide. The guide aims to provide information to help union officials and workplace representatives to represent and support neurodivergent members.





In March 2026, the Conference addressed the theme, *Skills for a Fair Future: Unions Leading Change*. Discussions focused on Artificial Intelligence (AI), emphasising consultation, skills development and ensuring workers have a voice in how AI is introduced.

The conference also explored the Green Economy, highlighting the importance of a just transition to sustainable industries and equipping workers with the green skills needed to access secure, quality jobs.

The conference also celebrated 10 years of partnership with The Open University, including the launch of an AI-focused section on the ICTU Learning Hub, supporting lifelong learning and preparing workers for the changing world of work.



Partnership with The Open University

In June 2024, The Open University hosted a Trade Union Showcase event, bringing together ULF Project Managers and ULRs from various trade unions. The event highlighted successful projects and initiatives, including the Unison K102 project, the FSU Access project, ULR training and the ICTU Learning Hub.

The showcase concluded with a collaborative group task, providing an opportunity for participants to exchange ideas, share experiences and identify further opportunities for partnership working.

ICTU Learning Hub

Since its launch in 2023, the ICTU Learning Hub has provided free, flexible online learning for workers, supporting skills development across a wide range of sectors. The Hub provides access to CPD courses, articles and videos and has continued to expand its offer in response to emerging skills priorities:

- 2024 – Green Skills section
- 2025 – Neurodiversity section
- 2026 – Artificial Intelligence section

This continued development ensures that union members can access relevant learning opportunities that support them to adapt to changes in the workplace and build the skills needed for the future.



Launch of the Alliance for Lifelong Learning first research report.

Alliance for Lifelong Learning

In 2024, NIC ICTU joined the Alliance for Lifelong Learning (ALL), alongside partners including The Open University, FALNI, OCN NI, CO3 and AONTAS. The Alliance provides an important forum for organisations working across the adult learning sector to collaborate and promote greater access to lifelong learning opportunities.

In September 2024, the Alliance met with Economy Minister, Conor Murphy to discuss the importance of lifelong learning and the role of their respective organisations in supporting it. NIC ICTU highlighted the role of the ULF in supporting lifelong learning and the benefits this brings to the workforce and the wider economy.

In 2025, the Alliance launched its first research report, *Measuring the Impact of Adult Education*, highlighting the vital contribution and impact of adult learning across Northern Ireland.

In 2026, the Alliance brought together education providers, policymakers, employers and learners for a discussion on *Supporting a Culture of Lifelong Learning*. The session explored barriers to participation, priorities for action and opportunities for a more coordinated approach. Fallon McCrea (USDAW) and Charlene Massey (Unite) shared their experiences of returning to learning with the support of the ULF, highlighting the positive impact that accessible and supported learning can have on workers' confidence, skills and career development.

SECTION E
~ POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REPORT



POLITICAL & ECONOMIC REPORT

EI DEVELOPING AND LOBBYING FOR GOOD JOBS

Back in November 2024, the NIC-ICTU BDC met in L'Derry where 200 delegates and guests heard speeches and debated motions on fair pay, 'Good Jobs', supporting a comprehensive NI Employment Bill and challenging racism in the streets and violence against women and girls everywhere.

The conference was addressed by First Minister Michelle O'Neill who said that 'the NI Executive wished to see a 'partnership' develop with the trade union movement.' She also praised the human rights campaigning of unions, saying that 'not only are you champions for your members in work-places, but champions of democracy also."

Pam Cameron, junior minister at The Executive Office, stated that

"Trade Unions are valued by all parties on the NI Executive, and acknowledged that unions had not been properly represented on public bodies for a number of years and that this would be addressed after the appointment of a new Commissioner for Public Appointments."

In his speech to the conference ICTU Assistant General Secretary Gerry Murphy paid tribute to the union members who took unprecedented strike action over the previous two years, culminating in 170,000 public sector workers going on strike on 18 January 2024.

"Your decision, to withdraw your labour on that single day, demon-strated that public servants are the backbone of the economy. That the services you provide are essential for every person and that the state can't function without you. No bus drivers. No classroom assistants. No social workers. No physios. No trains. No radiographers. No school meals. No vets. No civil servants to assist the public."

He argued that the next step for unions would be "to lobby and campaign for new NI employment legislation in your workplaces and communities, to convince not only trade unionists that this legislation is overdue and needed, but that it's fair implementation will be also be as good for managers and principals and board members. There is no contra-diction between fairness, decency and a more efficient and productive workplace."

This core project of the NIC began with a series of lobbying events at Stormont and with meetings involving all political parties. In early 2025, MLAs from the Economy Committee heard evidence from trade union leaders and experts on the anticipated Good Jobs Employment Bill.

There were detailed questions from MLAS on all aspects of the legislation, following a presentation from ICTU Assistant General Secretary Gerry Murphy during which he told the committee.



Good Jobs Bill Rally at Stormont

The consultation on the proposed Good Jobs Bill contains 31 proposals under four themes. 19 or over 60% of these simply align Northern Ireland with Britain's standards. The remaining 12 proposals are under active consideration by the British Government also and are essential to ensure workers in Northern Ireland are not left behind again. However, parity should not be our only ambition.

We welcome the package of proposals to be brought forward in the proposed bill and reflected in the recent consultation. We see it as a commitment to raising the minimum statutory floor of working conditions here. We support this because the evidence shows that poor quality jobs have a negative effect on workers, the economy and society. A Good Jobs Bill will play a significant role in addressing several key economic policy issues in Northern Ireland.

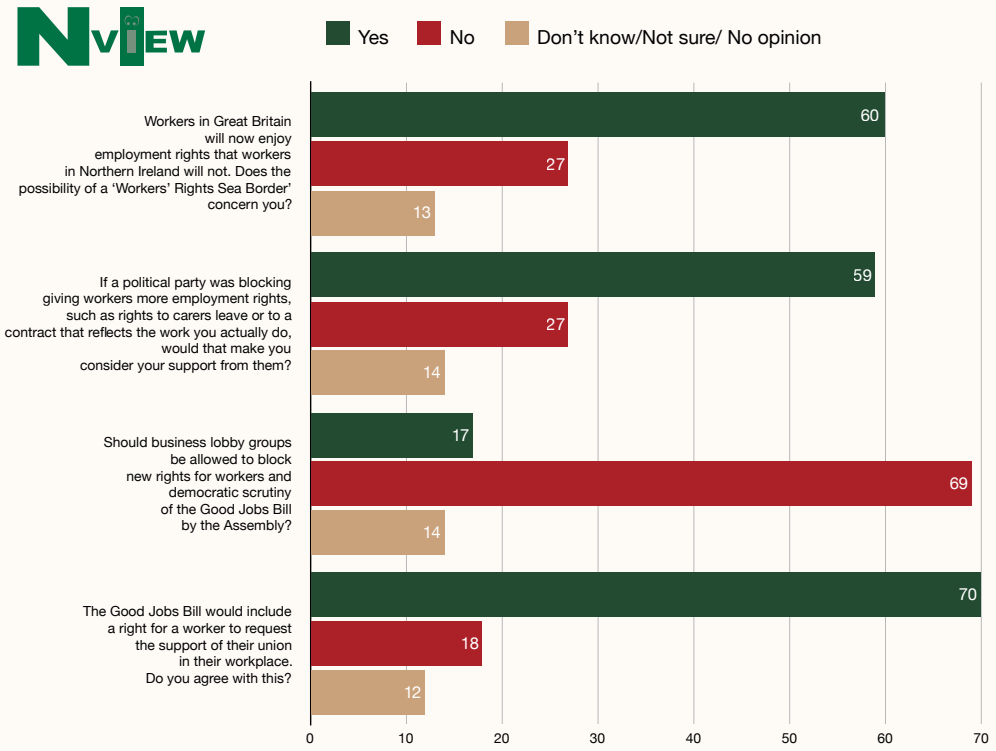
Poor-quality jobs are bad for workers and their families. Insecure jobs, with unstable hours, where workers do not have a voice, and where the workers ability to balance their work with their life is difficult, creates stress, burnout, and an increased risk of illness directly affect workers' mental and physical health. The academic and research evidence is crystal clear that bad jobs have a negative impact on workers' health and living standards.

Poor-quality jobs are linked to high turnover, slower innovation, and lower productivity, leading to broader societal costs, including higher healthcare expenses and lost tax revenue. Raising the minimum floor for wages and working conditions can mitigate these negative factors."

The Good Jobs Bill will also go some way in addressing the disparities between responsible employers, who offer fair wages and decent working conditions, and those who rely on exploitative, low-cost labour models. Many ethical businesses face competition from unscrupulous employers using precarious and exploitative work practices to keep costs down. By establishing these minimum standards, the bill will help create a fairer environment that encourages and gives cover to employers that invest in their workforce.

Poll Question EV1, background: New workers' rights have been passed in Westminster affecting work-life balance, terms of employment, pay & conditions and representation in the workplace. This legislation does not apply to Northern Ireland, which requires devolved laws. Similar legislation for Northern Ireland, know as the 'Good Jobs' Employment Rights Bill has been drafted and is ready for politicians to scrutinise. However, it is being blocked at the NI Executive, thus denying the assembly the right to democratically scrutinise the Bill through the legislative process.

In this Context answer the following questions; Yes, No, or Don't know/Not sure/No opinion

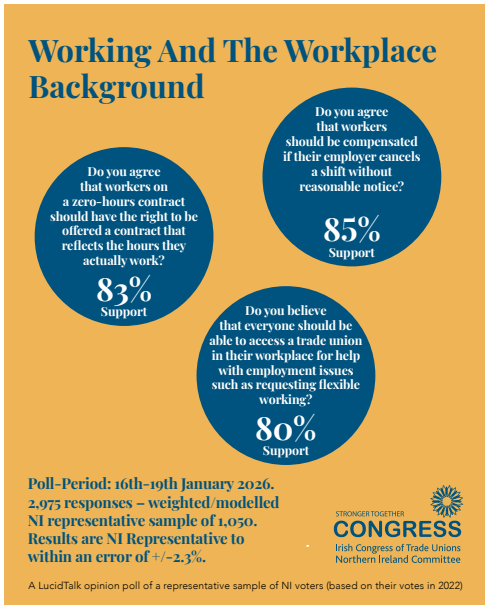


NIVIEW 'Omnibus' NI-Wide Poll – July 2026: NI Representative (3,043 responses - 1,050 balanced/weighted NI representative sample)

LUCIDTALK - NIVIEW - Northern ireland (NI) "Tracker" Poll-Project - Summer 2026: Poll period: 17th July-19th July 2026. 3,043 responses (18+ age-group) - Balanced - Weighted to be NI representative via 17 NI demographic measurements. All data results are accurate to a margin of error of +/-2.3%, at 95% confidence.

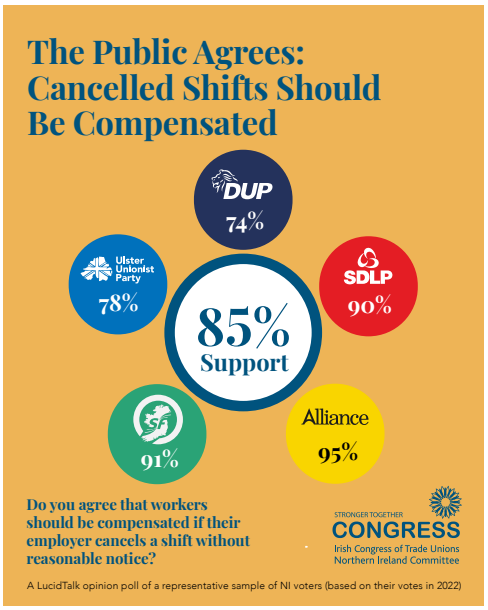
In April 2025, the Economy Minister Caoimhe Archibald released her *'Way Forward'* document. It reflected the broad range of issues that business and unions debated in the LRA Engagement Forum and over 2024's extensive consultation process, and separately among the ICTU's affiliated unions.

The trade unions welcomed this latest development which offered the NI Executive an opportunity to create a meaningful legacy for every working family in Northern Ireland by approving a new employment bill for the NI Assembly and its Economy Committee to debate its proposals and amend as necessary, all the way from first reading to royal assent.









Gerry Murphy commented: "While today's announcement marks progress, it must be emphasised that this is not yet legislation. Over the coming days, ICTU will re-engage with our affiliates to assess the details of these proposals, and we look forward to further discussions to work through the finer points and ensure that the strongest possible protections for workers are realised. Much of what is proposed isn't radical – it represents basic, long-overdue modernisation to bring Northern Ireland's employment rights in line with standards already in place in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland. It's important to be clear that this is not the final Bill. The real test will come in whether these proposals

lead to strong, enforceable rights that deliver for working people."

For the remainder of the year, Congress and affiliates built up a coalition of support for the full bill as outlined in the Way Forward document. The campaigning was given a further boost by the results of an opinion poll commissioned by Congress. LucidTalk are NI's main polling organisation, and conduct quarterly poling on political questions for the Belfast Telegraph and other clients. The Winter 2026 poll was conducted in January and its general findings revealed that just one in four people think Stormont has improved their lives since its restoration two years ago.

The same people were asked their opinion about aspects of the Executive's proposed Good Jobs Bill. This legislation will give all workers the right to be able to access a trade union in their workplace for help with employment issues.

This proposal has the support of 80% of voters across Northern Ireland.

Among political parties, level of support was in excess of 90% for Sinn Fein, SDLP and Alliance voters while the majority of DUP and UUP voters supported the proposal by 61% and 60% respectively.

The Good Jobs Bill also contains a proposal to give workers on a zero-hours contract the right to be offered a contract that reflects the hours they actually work. DUP voters back this proposal by 71%, UUP voters by 72% with larger levels of support from Alliance (91%), SDLP (97%) and Sinn Fein (90%).

LucidTalk also asked if 'workers should be compensated if their employer cancels a shift without reasonable notice', another clause in the legislation, and this was supported by 74% of DUP voters, as well as a large majority of voters from SDLP (90%), UUP (78%), Alliance (95%) and Sinn Fein (91%).

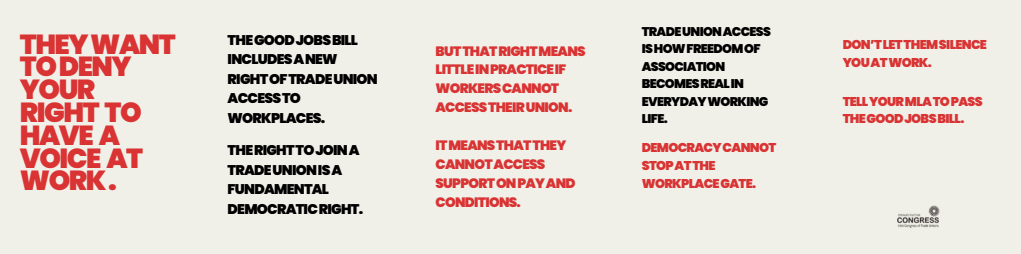
Some 2,975 people took part in LucidTalk's online poll from January 16-19.

Jacquie White, Chair of the NI Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions said,

"These figures confirm that this legislation is overdue and there is an appetite for it across voters from all parties. It is two years since Stormont returned from suspension with a pledge to improve people's lives, with better wages and better working lives. Workers in GB have recently secured these new rights through legislation passed by Westminster. Our NI Assembly has the responsibility for these matters here and needs to step up.

"When you ask them, people understand the issues. Workers need access to unions in order to ensure their rights in the Good Jobs Bill are respected and their voices heard. If we say we want action on matters such as zero-hours contracts, we need unions in the workplace to make sure the rules are being followed fairly. This is something which will protect good employers from a handful of exploitative bad bosses. With recent criticism of Stormont from the public, the level of support across the board for these proposals makes the Good Jobs Bill an easy 'win' for all political representatives."

Wider economic statistics underlined the importance of new



legislation. The Living Wage Foundation research was based on the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings and highlights where and what sectors are blighted by low wages in a period of rising prices. It finds that "areas with the highest proportion of jobs below the real Living Wage were the North East (18.8 per cent), Northern Ireland (17.3 per cent), and the East Midlands (17.2 per cent)".

The report also confirms the status of hospitality and retail as the UK economic sectors with more people paid below the Real Living Wage of £13.45 per hour. "The retail and wholesale industry had the highest number of jobs below the real Living Wage" with 53% of hospitality jobs and 50.9% of workers in sales occupations. 57% of workers aged between 18-21 were in jobs paying less than the RLW.



Gerry Murphy said,

These figures illustrate the urgent need for the NI Executive to agree the proposals in the Economy Minister's Good Jobs Bill and let our MLAs do the jobs we pay them to do and legislate for better job security for every worker.

The Bill aims to address the insecurity of Zero Hours Contracts and make it easier for trade unions to represent their interests, defend their jobs and negotiate better wages. Many, if not most of the people being paid less than a living wage do not have access to trade unions.

We have been lobbying politicians and talking with employers representatives for two years now and we have one year of the NI Assembly mandate left to get this vital legislation through the stages of passing a bill into law. Most of the rights in the Good Jobs Bill are already in legislation in England, Scotland and Wales. We need to catch-up with our legislation and get off the bottom of the table".

In March, International Women's Day was marked by ICTU wrote to every MLA to urge them to get behind a bill which will benefit workers in Northern Ireland, particularly women workers.

The Good Jobs Bill will introduce important rights such as getting rid of exploitative zero and low hour

contracts in all but limited circumstances as well as ensuring that every worker can access the support of a trade union in their workplace. The Bill will also regulate for basic work life balance measures such as carers leave, more flexibility for fathers and parents when taking paternity leave, introducing neonatal leave and pay and making the right to request flexible working a 'day one right'.

ICTU's Equality Officer Clare Moore said: "*Good Jobs are good for everyone. Good for workers, good for employers and good for the economy. Good jobs particularly matter for women workers. Women are more likely to be in low paid and precarious employment and are more likely to bear the brunt of responsibility for caring for children, elderly parents and other dependents.*"

LucidTalk's poll shows that most people in Northern Ireland support improving employment rights, with women even more likely than men to agree to improvements.

When asked whether they agreed that workers on a zero-hours contract should have the right to be offered a contract that reflects the hours they actually work, 89% of women agreed against 78% men. Women were also more likely to agree that workers should be compensated if their employer cancels a shift without reasonable notice (87% Female, 82%) male.

When asked if they agreed whether everyone should be able to access a trade union in their workplace for help with employment issues such as requesting flexible working, women were unequivocal – with 88% of women agreeing.



The results of this poll show how much these rights matter. All parties and all MLAs need to listen to the people and recognise that this Employment Bill offers the best chance to start delivering much needed employment improvements to their constituents. The Assembly has an opportunity to show the people of Northern Ireland that they can pass important legislation we know the mandate for the Executive is tight so this will only be done if parties cooperate and work together

Later that spring, the backlash arrived, in the shape of a tendentious letter to the Economy Minister from a phalanx of business lobbyists, of which there are quite a few. The letter was based on little evidence and few specific objections were made, amid claims that there had been insufficient consultation, and some inflation caused by the war between Iran and Israel/US. In fact, there has been detailed consultation, ongoing discussion and numerous meetings with business and employer groups as well as trade

unions. The Labour government in Westminster had recently completed all stages of its landmark Employment Rights Act, and they started after the General Election in July 2024. Much of that legislation is in the Good Jobs Bill, along with other laws passed at Westminster under successive governments, including under Conservative Prime Ministers.

"The inflation of recent months had not forced the Starmer government to scrap that law, and it is a strange argument to say that uncertainty in global markets should mean continued uncertainty for workers on precarious contracts," said Gerry Murphy. "The issue is not time. The issue is will. This cynical letter to the Minister is an attempt to block positive change that people understand and want.

"What exactly are the problems business lobbyists have with those improvements? Most firms being represented by these 20 lobby groups are practicing already many of these proposed improvements. The only firms who will benefit from the Good Jobs Bill being stalled are those who are undercutting good employers.

"This is a time-wasting exercise, and these business lobby groups would be better off engaging seriously in the updating our employment laws than seeking the Minister give up on reforms which will benefit workers and the economy as a whole.

"The Good Jobs Bill is not theirs to prevent. It is the task and responsibility of the NI Assembly and Executive to follow through on their publicly stated commitments and complete the legislation by next spring."

In May, a large rally of trade unionists gathered at Stormont and was addressed by the Economy spokespersons of all parties. Despite the support of most parties and a clear majority of MLAs, the DUP and UUP backed the calls from business for the bill to be blocked at the NI Assembly. And there it remains. Business claimed that they cannot support legislation they haven't seen, and the DUP/UUP say they won't release the bill to the Assembly for publishing because business won't back a bill they haven't seen. They are hiding behind each other.

Campaigning continued over the summer and into the autumn, with a series of interventions at Stormont and in the media. Years of constructive work with business at forums such as the LRA Forum, established during the covid pandemic, and many kind words about social dialogue counted for little when the interests of a small number of firms persuaded those lobby groups, despite those good employers who have constructive relations with the trade unions in their workplaces. Those employers stayed silent, and the tone was set by anti-trade union rhetoric. Evidence-based argument was ditched for clichés about 'union bullies' copied from the Tory press.

They have sought at every stage to delay, obfuscate and misrepresent key elements of this legislation. Despite all of this engagement over the last two years, it appears that participation, on their part, was never genuine. Faced with such bad faith, trade unions on the LRA Forum had not choice but to withdraw from that body.



It tells voters something about the access which really matters - not for workers to access support from a trade union, but for business lobbyists access to the corridors of power.

The objection raised was about unions gaining a 'right to request' access to meet with workers for recruitment and representation. Without Trade Union access, every unreasonable manager and supervisor will have an unaccountable veto over whether workers get better work-life arrangements or terms of employment.

A signal has been sent from behind the closed doors where this veto was exercised. The business lobby is plainly not interested in consulting or negotiating on an equal footing with social 'partners'. In turn, Trade Unions aren't interested in bargaining with bad faith operators who say they want better relations with 'their' workers and then run off to the NI Executive crying for a veto.

Opinion polling has shown that the proposals in the Good Jobs Bill are hugely popular with the public, with clear majorities of every demographic and voting preference. The majority of parties in the NI Assembly have stated support for the Bill. It is a challenge to our democracy that special interest lobbyists are being allowed veto progress.

What this requires is political leadership and a willingness to look beyond narrow interests of a few. In correspondence with every minister on the NI Executive, it was noted that "for the bill to become law, it must pass through all stages of legislative scrutiny before the end of the current Assembly's mandate. If the current inaction by this Executive were to prevent that legislative process from taking place, we would regard this as a serious breach of trust and a failure of the Northern Ireland Executive to fulfil its own Programme for Government commitments.

"The reconstitution of the Executive in 2024 represented an opportunity to show that devolved government can make life in Northern Ireland better for all people who live and work here. If this Executive fails to progress the Good Jobs Bill, workers across Northern Ireland will have to seriously question whether the devolved institutions are capable of making an appreciable difference to their standard of living.

"The trade union movement in Northern Ireland would likewise be compelled to consider whether engaging with devolved government here is in the best interest of the thousands of workers we represent. We are clear that if this bill fails to

progress, we will hold this Executive solely responsible for that failure. It will be for ministers of this Executive to account for their own action, or lack thereof, if that failure comes to pass."

In August, another LucidTalk opinion poll showed that over 70% of the total sample agreed that trade union access should be part of the Good Jobs Bill. Despite the widely stated opposition of business groups and some unionist parties, there remain significant levels of support among unionist voters (44% versus 36% opposed) as well as overwhelming support from nationalist and Alliance voters in support of trade union access.

Similar proportions of voters disagree that business lobby groups be allowed block new rights for workers and democratic scrutiny of the Good Jobs Bill in the NI Assembly. 45% of unionist voters say that business groups should not wield a veto over new workers' rights, with only 33% in support. This is the first time that the wisdom of business groups to comment on NI's economy has been questioned.

The poll showed that arguments before the summer recess over the





DUP's blocking of the Bill at the NI Executive have been noted by the voting public. While a majority of DUP voters support the party's position (48%), a significant minority (28%) say that they would consider their support for a party which was blocking giving workers more employment rights.

Although the question did not mention the DUP, it is notable that 48% of UUP voters and 37% of TUV voters agreed that they would consider their support for such a party, which may affect how some unionists use their transfer votes at next spring's Assembly election.

Unionist voters are also concerned about the widening of a 'Workers' Rights Sea Border', following the passing in Westminster of most of the same rights, including trade union access to workers in firms with 21 employees or more. 50% of unionists are concerned about this new 'Sea Border', including 39% of DUP voters, 59% of UUP voters and 63% of TUV voters.

Speaking on the finding of the poll, ICTU Assistant General Secretary Gerry Murphy said:



"Laws for better workers' rights are being rolled out across England, Wales and Scotland right now, but yet again workers in Northern Ireland are being denied these same rights by parties who represent a minority of MLAs and whose public support is under pressure. The public and most MLAs believe that this legislation is overdue and there is an appetite for it across all parties' supporters.

People understand what the legislation aims to address when questioned about it, and that taking trade union access from the Bill will make it less effective. Workers need access to unions in order to ensure their rights in the Good Jobs Bill are respected.

This legislation still remains an easy 'win' for an Assembly and Executive which has delivered little since its restoration 2 ½ years ago and has just a few months left. However, there remains still time to pass all stages of the Good Jobs Bill - if the will is there.

It is understandable for unionist voters to be concerned about the creation of a workers' rights sea border, and they are. But this is a huge concern for supporters of Sinn Fein, Alliance, and SDLP also. There is already a gap between the employment rights enjoyed by workers in GB and those in the North, and that gap is widening to a gulf.

It is apparent that the Stormont parties are in pre-election mode. Political parties can choose to listen to the public's viewpoints on what is a real 'bread-and-butter' issue, or the admonitions of professional lobbyists. Those polled clearly do not agree with the idea that preventing NI Assembly debate and delaying workers' rights should be in the gift of lobbyists."

As the autumn deepened, attention became focused on the real problem of the Executive's budget and the threat that public sector workers here would be deprived of the same wage increases as their equivalents in Scotland, England and Wales. Less money and fewer rights for public and

A new poll has found that strong support for the Good Jobs Bill.

70% of respondents agreed that trade union access should be part of the legislation.

69% say business lobby groups should not be allowed block new rights for workers.

The poll also shows impacts on party support.

59% of respondents say they'd reconsider support for any party blocking new employment rights.

60% say they are concerned by the possibility of an Irish sea border for workers' rights, should the Good Jobs BIll be blocked.

private sector workers, while some businessmen took to social media to complain about 'divisive' terms such as 'workers rights sea border'.

In September, the NIC discussed the extent of the growing discontent among workers in both private and public sectors at the inability of the NI Executive and the UK Government to agree a Stormont budget.

Speaking after the meeting, Gerry Murphy said:

In January 2024, trade union members across Northern Ireland took part in the largest day of coordinated industrial action witnessed here for decades. That day marked the culmination of months of strikes and stoppages across all sectors of our economy. This action was necessary because of political stalemate, the absence of a budget and the refusal of the UK government to provide adequate funding for Northern Ireland.

Here we are, over two and a half years later, and we are met with the very same conditions. While the Executive has been restored, we have no Northern Ireland budget due to political stalemate. While the UK government has since acknowledged its role in underfunding Northern Ireland, it still refuses to provide us with funding equivalent to that in Scotland or Wales.

Met with the same conditions, the response of the trade union movement will be the same. In 2024, we forced the political class to face up to its responsibilities, and we will do so again. There needs to be a fair and enduring settlement to funding for public services in Northern Ireland.

A fair and enduring settlement from Westminster is the only route to delivering a fair and enduring budget at Stormont.

The Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions is clear that delay or inaction in bringing about this settlement will lead to an intensifying programme of industrial action."

Unions will continue to represent the best interests of their members, and will do so in individual workplaces, in the corridors of Stormont, in new and old media, on picket lines when necessary and together on the streets on rallies and demonstrations. Wherever there is a better way for better lives for working people, through persuasion, or lobbying, or negotiation and industrial action, in the words of Tom Joad, "we'll be there."



E2 DEMOCRACY AT WORK PARTICIPATION, LOBBYING, LEGISLATION

In March 2024 NIC-ICTU launched Democracy at Work Social Dialogue and the Tripartite Model. The aims of the policy paper can be summarised with these three objectives:

1. Introduce the case for a social dialogue model including trade unions as equal partners, common among administrations across Europe and in these islands.
2. To recall that a form of social dialogue, the 'tripartite model', served us all well at an earlier time of crisis, during the 'troubles' and the more recent Covid pandemic. However, that inclusive model has gradually eroded with trade unions pushed to the sidelines.
3. To highlight the undermining of the tripartite model on crucial non-departmental public bodies, such as the HSENI, and Tribunals.

   Since then, a series of interventions have began to restore the place of trade unionists in our public bodies, but progress has been often painstaking, even on statutory bodies on which trade unionists are legally entitled to serve, such as the Health and Safety Executive, and the Office of Industrial Tribunals and Fair Employment Tribunals.

This has been raised with relevant ministers and public bodies and is ongoing. These meetings with senior political leaders at the NI Executive and the NIO on public appointments and the Good Jobs Bill have also been opportunities to raise long-standing policy concerns of NIC-ICTU.

Completing B/GFA & honouring commitment to Bill of Rights

The trade union movement has been unwavering in its call for the full implementation of the Belfast/ Good Friday Agreement since its endorsement in the 1998 referendum, including the Bill of Rights. We called on the UK Government to fulfil its obligation under the B/GFA by taking a Bill of Rights to completion via Westminster legislation.



NIC Chair Jacquie White being interviewed by ITV's Paul Reilly



Addressing the NI Assembly Economy Committee on 26 February 2025



Briefing FM Michelle O'Neill and Sinn Fein MLAs

Scrapping the Legacy Act and return to principles of Stormont House agreement

We agree with victims organisations such as WAVE, who say that these proposals clearly conflict with the duty on the UK under the European Convention on Human Rights to effectively investigate unlawful death and torture, and that these proposals will undermine the Human Rights Act and the rule of law.

Promoting tax justice and fairness to fund proper public services

In any modern state with locally elected mayors and accountable assemblies, there is significant room for manoeuvre for various kinds of local taxes to raise or lower – income, property, carbon, consumption,



JP Clayton, NERI's Lisa Wilson and Clare Moore in Stormont

tourism, etc. As the NI Fiscal Commission found, what options there are will make very little difference.

ICTU's 2020 No Going Back report highlighted that fact that in the UK, one of the largest gaps in tax was in social insurance contribution and in particular those levied on employers. This gap remains significant and it is estimated that if employer social insurance contributions were to rise to meet the average of our European peers, it would raise an extra £90 billion in the UK. For Northern Ireland, this would result in an extra £2.6 billion in revenue generated annually.

Action on climate change and a Just Transition to Net Zero

Workers need to be empowered in the process of change that is needed to transition to a sustainable, post-carbon economy. There are huge opportunities – in terms of jobs and skills from such a transition – but there are also huge risks and threats. Workers cannot be side-lined from shaping the economic transition, instead they must play a central and deciding role. It is vital that the trade union movement, in particular those representing the trade unions representing workers in industries which will face the greatest change, is centrally involved in securing a truly Just Transition. The NI Just Transition Commission was legally established in 2026, and has a trade union nominee appointed and endorsed by NIC-ICTU, Greg Sachno (Unite).

Improved relations with EU

We backed the Windsor Framework as something which can mitigate the worst effects of Brexit on trade and jobs. After years of chauvinist bluster, NI needs a Westminster government who is willing to talk seriously about improving relations with whom we share a land border, hopefully negotiating deals on (say) phytosanitary standards that will make much of the Irish Sea border irrelevant.

Change hostile environment towards asylum seekers

People fleeing war need safe and legal routes to reach asylum, and our ageing population can benefit from their skills and humanity, as the 'native' labour force declines. It is possible to be both humane to others and self-interested for our futures and the health of our economy, not to mention the social and cultural benefits of a more pluralist society.

Recognition of the State of Palestine

Congress welcomed the historic recognition of the State of Palestine by



Ireland, and later the UK, as "a very welcome development, as it clearly affirms the right of Palestinians to self-determination in a sovereign Palestinian state". Congress also supports stronger action by the international community to hold Israel's extremist government to account for its reprehensible actions over many decades.

Ending the annual budget impasse

Congress has called for multi-year budgets which are adequate for the real need of the people of Northern Ireland.

In September 2026, a strong call came from NIC-ICTU, making clear the growing discontent among workers in both private and public sectors at the inability of the NI Executive and the UK Government to agree a Stormont budget.

Gerry Murphy said:

in January 2024, trade union members across Northern Ireland took part in the largest day of coordinated industrial action witnessed here for decades. That day marked the culmination of months of strikes and stoppages across all sectors of our economy. This action was necessary because of political stalemate, the absence of a budget and the refusal of the UK government to provide adequate funding for Northern Ireland.

Here we are, over 2 and a half years later, and we are met with the very same conditions. While the Executive has been restored, we have no Northern Ireland budget due to political stalemate. While the UK government has since acknowledged its role in underfunding Northern Ireland, it still refuses to provide us

with funding equivalent to that in Scotland or Wales.

Met with the same conditions, the response of the trade union movement will be the same. In 2024, we forced the political class to face up to its responsibilities, and we will do so again. There needs to be a fair and enduring settlement to funding for public services in Northern Ireland. A fair and enduring settlement from Westminster is the only route to delivering a fair and enduring budget at Stormont.

The Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions is clear that delay or inaction in bringing about this settlement will lead to an intensifying programme of industrial action."

E3 WHAT IS IN THE 'GOOD JOBS' EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS BILL?

The main policy measures in the Employment Rights Bill are:

- Zero hours contracts (ZHCs) – a right to move to a banded hours contract, and exclusivity terms in ZHCs to be made unenforceable;
- Fair and transparent allocation of tips, gratuities and service charges;
- A right of access for trade unions to workplaces;
- Neonatal care leave and pay;
- A right to one week per year of Carer's Leave;
- Enhancements to paternity leave arrangements;



NI Assembly Economy Committee chair Phillip Brett supporting Safe Leave



The minister outlines the Good Jobs Bill to the NI Assembly

- A right for all workers to a written statement of employment particulars on their first day of employment;
- A right for all workers to an itemised pay statement;
- Enhanced protection from redundancy and dismissal for those taking pregnancy, maternity, adoption or shared parental leave;
- Enhancements to statutory flexible working request arrangements;
- Protection from dismissal for failing to agree changes, for changing terms or for the purpose of replacement (dismissal and re-engagement/ fire and rehire);
- Enhanced protection from dismissal for participating in official industrial action;
- Strengthened arrangements for collective redundancy notifications for ships' crew;
- Increased penalties for failure to notify redundancies to the Department for the Economy;
- Rights for mariners to redundancy payments;
- Improvements to balloting and notice in relation to industrial action;
- Fairer treatment of agency workers (removal of the Swedish derogation); and
- A fairer reference period for calculating pay for annual leave.

See Section G3 for more detail.

E4 CHALLENGING RACISM AND THE FAR RIGHT

After the horrific murder in 2024 of three children in Southport and attempts to kill others, there was a wave of unrelated racist violence triggered by misinformation on social



Minister Archibald briefed TU activists in early 2026

media and cynical manipulation by 'respectable' politicians and international actors. A racist attack followed in Ballykelly and there were calls for street agitation aimed at mosques and minorities. ICTU immediately called for support for victims and the emergency services. NIC chair Paddy Mackel said: "We also stand with all vulnerable citizens of any background attacked or threatened by racist and Islamophobic thugs, such as the families targeted and threatened with racist graffiti in Ballykelly on Wednesday night. We urge all political parties and civic leaders to make clear their unapologetic opposition to all attacks of this nature, including the messengers of racism, islamophobia and sectarianism."

ICTU President Justin McCamphill added:

"ICTU represents over 800,000 workers in trade unions across the island of Ireland. The playbook being spread around the UK this week is the same as the lies and fearmongering after a similar attack on children in Dublin last November. The message from trade unionists then is the same today – we stand with all victims of hate crime; we support our public servants who defend the vulnerable and we have zero tolerance for divisive misinformation or attempts to spark violence."

After a wave of violence and arson targeting muslim-owned businesses forced the NI Assembly to break its summer recess and debate the violence at Stormont, NIC-ICTU called for a public rally at the steps of Parliament Buildings for trades unionists and all those across our community who share our values of equality, diversity and solidarity. We worked with our friends at NICVA to ensure a large and representative turnout. Speakers included. NICVA Chief Executive Celine McStravick, Unison Regional Secretary Patricia McKeown with Unison member and NHS worker Susan Magutkuona, as well as NIC-ICTU chair Paddy Mackel who told those gathered:

"We offer solidarity to all those who have borne the brunt of these disgraceful assaults. Shop keepers and retail workers. Health workers who traveled here from other countries, often at government's request to care for and comfort our citizens.

Owners of cafés and restaurants who make an honest living by providing employment and serving the wider community. Asylum seekers fleeing persecution and war from elsewhere in the world, who are warehoused in hotels which are not designed for ongoing family living. Our under-resourced Emergency Services who have also faced abuse and violence for protecting lives, homes and small businesses."

2024 was the first of three summers of racist violence. In June 2025, there were scenes of disorder and targeted attacks on ethnic minorities in Ballymena. Gerry Murphy expressed support for local trade unionists. "NIC-ICTU was involved in supporting Ballymena Trades Union Council, political and community representatives in similar circumstances a few years ago. There followed a series of interventions after which tensions were calmed and inaccurate perceptions about migrant workers were dispelled.

"We see a similar challenge right now in the same city, turbocharged by unregulated social media. We have learnt from experience in Ballymena and many other places that misinformation about groups of people needs to be challenged. Contrary to many unchallenged assertions, the Roma community in Ballymena are not 'illegal immigrants' but hard-working families employed through employment agencies to do jobs which otherwise would not be done.

"We will support as best we can civil society organisations, elected representatives, the emergency services, employers and the trade union community of Ballymena to restore calm and improved community relations."

Later that summer Trade unions representing teaching and support staff have responded with sorrow and anger to a flood of online misinformation about Sanctuary Schools in Northern Ireland.

"It is staggering the amount of lies and misrepresentation which are allowed to pollute social media", said Jacquie White, Chair of the NI Teachers Council, the negotiating body for five unions representing teachers and school leaders.

"Last summer saw serious street violence after deliberate misinformation was spread concerning asylum seekers and schools were left to pick up the consequences when schools reopened. In the days between now and schools restarting, parents as well as school staff will require clear guidance to challenge these toxic myths. We welcome today the clear statement from Belfast City of Sanctuary (BCoS), who have been building the Schools of Sanctuary program, now active in over 72 schools across Northern Ireland.

"Such clarity can and should be used by the Education Authority and the Education Minister. Unions have been working with the EA and also the NI Assembly Education Committee to achieve better resourcing for the specialist teams working for greater harmony in schools across different groups."

BCoS coordinator Israel Eguaoige summarised their message: "Building a better future in Northern Ireland starts in the classrooms; our schools of sanctuary are teaching compassion, not controversy."



A briefing with Hope Not Hate

Speaking as vice-Chair of NIC-ICTU's Education Group of unions representing support staff and other educators, Susan Neill added that "Unions support initiatives such as this which undoubtedly help schools become safe, welcoming, and inclusive places for all children, regardless of their background. It provides a framework for schools to foster a culture of kindness and empathy, celebrating the diversity that enriches our communities.

Safer schools are better places in which to learn and to support children reaching their full potential. A harmonious working environment for everybody is to be a right worth defending, and getting the resources to match the urgency of the situation is essential", Ms Neill concluded.

In September, Congress hosted its second all-island national conference addressing anti-racism in the workplace and beyond. The conference was run by Stronger Together Anti-Racist Workplaces and Trade Unions Project, which supports ICTU's affiliated membership of over 800,000 working people in implementing comprehensive anti-racism strategies.

Speaking before the event, ICTU General Secretary Owen Reidy commented:

"Today's conference represents an important milestone in our commitment to workplace equality. Trade unions must be at the forefront of tackling discrimination, championing unity over division, and ensure that racism is not tolerated in any professional environment."

Commenting on the event, Anti-Racism Workplaces and Trade Unions Coordinator, Dr David Carroll stated:

"With the 'Stronger Together' project now in its second year, the trade union movement demonstrates remarkable determination to address racism head-on. Our initiatives have attracted enthusiastic participation from trade union representatives and members committed to confronting

racism and all manifestations of prejudice."

In June 2026, there was another round of horrific violence in Belfast, which some referred to as 'a pogrom', following a shocking incident of violence which was caught on video and circulated on social media globally.

"Today the trade union movement stands with the victim of a horrendous knife attack in north Belfast, and his neighbours who came out and defended him. We stand with the emergency services who addressed the scene and are caring for his serious injuries on hospital. We stand with the police officers who arrested the assailant and all police officers who have, in turn, faced appalling violence which has no motive beyond raw racism. We stand with all families whose property has been targeted and their safety put in danger by thugs hiding their faces behind masks and scarves. We stand with the workers and business owners forced to close their shops and services as threats were made on social media and in person,"

"We stand against the criminals who are attacking people, property and public services. We also stand against those who feed these flames with loose talk about 'illegal immigration', 'invasion' or 'alien cultures'. We stand with all victims of knife crime, regardless of their background and regardless of the background or ethnicity of their perpetrators. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions stands with communities afflicted by fear and violence as we have done so many times in the past and will continue to do so."



Kevin Doherty delivering an Employment Rights course for Migrant Workers

E5 HEALTH COMMITTEE

The Health Committee continued to meet regularly online and in person, intervening on issues affecting members across a wide range of unions. A key focus of the Committee over the last two years has been seeking to re-establish Partnership working structures to influence strategic health policy affecting the workforce, patients, service users and the public. This is separate from the objectives pursued through long-standing bargaining structures but provides the opportunity to ensure policy aligns with unions negotiating priorities. As the challenges facing health and social care services grow more severe, aggravated by increasing cuts to funding, the importance of developing effective partnership structures grows.

In February 2025, the committee was reconstituted and with John Patrick Clayton (Unison) becoming Chair, and Claire Ronald (CSP) remaining as vice-Chair, continued with the support of over 12 affiliated unions representing workers across the Health and Social Care sector.

Health unions were represented by NIC ICTUs representative on both the Public Health Agency and Patient Client Council. They were also represented on the Department of Health's Improvement and Transformation Advisory Board (ITAB), which is now being reformed into an Improvement and Transformation Advisory Forum (ITAF). As with our engagement with these transformation structures to date, the Committee will continue to carefully scrutinise the Terms of Reference and remit of these bodies, so



Dale Spence succeeded Karen Murray as RCM Regional Official

that they provide a genuine opportunity for us to engage with the Minister and senior officials on health service transformation and challenge the direction of travel where necessary.

Bargaining structures advised NIC ICTU of their interventions on workforce vacancies and the burden of agency staffing costs. Alongside bargaining structures, the Committee continued to press for the introduction of Safe Staffing legislation before the end of the current Assembly mandate, raising the issue in our briefing session with MLAs from the NI Assembly Health Committee.

Health unions had regular engagement with the Health Minister Mike Nesbitt to re-convene the HSC Partnership Forum between trade unions and professional bodies, employers and the Department. Through our interventions over the last 12 months the Forum has recommenced its

meetings, but challenges remain in securing full participation from Chief Executives across HSC organisations and in securing full commitment from the Department to progress a meaningful work programme in partnership. Health unions continued to engage with the Minister in relation to pay and conditions, which are under the remit of a separate negotiation structure. At the time of writing, engagement with the new Minister, Robbie Butler is being sought to ensure that the Partnership Forum continues and is strengthened.

Members of the NIC-ICTU Health Committee briefed MLAs on the NI Assembly Health Committee in June 2025. The meeting covered topics which MLAs on the committee seemed not to have heard about from other evidence sessions, such as the DoH Partnership Forum and the ongoing transformation agenda in Health trusts, safe staffing legislation, as well as perennial issues such as budget and addressing health inequalities.

5a UK Covid Inquiry

ICTU is a core participant in the UK Covid Inquiry, alongside colleagues in the TUC, WTUC and STUC.

This has involved working with affiliates and our records of a substantial amount of records and data covering the period 2008-2022, as modules 1, 2 and 3 examined the UK's preparedness for a pandemic, how it handled the pandemic from February 2022-24, and how the National Health Service coped. Module 6, on the impact of the pandemic on the publicly and privately funded adult social care sector was responded to in early 2025.

Thus far, NIC-ICTU has delivered detailed responses to requests for evidence under The Inquiries Act 2005, and on two occasions ICTU AGS Gerry Murphy delivered oral evidence.

Module 1 revealed how the UK's public health system had been ground down by a decade of austerity. What hindsight offers us now is the bigger picture, as detailed by ICTU's Gerry Murphy to the Covid inquiry:

"In the 10 years between 2010 and 2020, the grant for Resource DEL was £177m below what it was in 2009/10, a 1.6% reduction while public expenditure on health continued to increase by around 6% annually.

"The cumulative loss in capital spending in the 10 years to 2020 was £4.2bn. It was estimated in 2020 that the NI Executive has a backlog of capital expenditure projects totalling £5bn, and this is likely to have increased substantially in the years since."

The UK Covid Inquiry's Module 2c arrived in Belfast in April 2024, and heard evidence from politicians, senior civil servants, health officials and 'ordinary' people affected by the pandemic. According to NISRA's figures, over 4,000 people died of covid 19-related illness in NI between February 2020 and October 2021. About ten per cent were of working age. These were the people for whom Gerry Murphy gave evidence on the second day of the public hearings in Belfast.

Gerry Murphy noted that the highest proportion of the 391 deaths of people of working age was amongst process, plant, and machine operatives (12.91%), whereas professional and technical occupations had the lowest rates (4.5%).



Gerry Murphy at the Covid-19 Inquiry

A great many in front-line and essential work were in lower paid roles, who could not safely work from home, and were already suffering health disadvantages. That included many who worked in health and social care, but also those who kept transport moving, who cleaned public spaces, who worked in food processing and manufacturing.

Those who had no choice but to continue to attend workplaces were at greater risk of catching the virus and passing it on to vulnerable relatives and into those communities already suffering health disadvantages.

There had been a refusal of NIO ministers or the devolved NI Executive to engage with trade unions on anything like the level seen in the devolved administrations in Cardiff and Edinburgh. *"For instance in Health, the Bengoa Report which was delivered in late 2016 set out the context for the transformation of health services that was required to put the services on a sustainable footing given demographic and other pressures,"* Mr Murphy told the inquiry. *"The report noted that additional funding would be required to transition services to this new approach. The report recommended a ring-fenced transformation fund. The collapse of the Executive meant that none of this work was undertaken before the pandemic took hold in 2020."*

Despite the constructive engagement of individual ministers in departments such as Health and Education, this was not sufficient in the context of the Covid-19 crisis. The Covid-19 pandemic impacted on all aspects of government; piecemeal social partnership was not sufficient to address the all-encompassing nature of the crisis.

The inquiry continues, and in the past two years, ICTU has submitted evidence to Modules 3, 6 and 9, on respectively, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on healthcare systems, the adult social care sector and examining the decision-making by the government in Northern Ireland in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Inquiry issued its findings on each module over the period and found itself in agreement with the evidence submitted on behalf of the trade union movement, evidence often coming from direct experience of front line workers.

For example, it found that the NHS systems healthcare systems coped with the pandemic, but only just. On a number of occasions, they teetered on the brink of collapse and only coped thanks to the almost superhuman efforts of healthcare workers and all the staff who support them.

"Healthcare workers and support staff were obliged (often at considerable cost to themselves and their families) to work under intolerable pressure for months on end. Some patients suffering from Covid-19 did not get the quality of treatment they needed and some non-Covid-19 patients had their diagnoses and treatments delayed to the point where their conditions became untreatable.

"Many thousands of people died in hospitals and died alone."

Among the Inquiry's recommendations is "increasing support for healthcare workers, improving retention and increasing resilience."

In Northern Ireland, there were feats of endurance and heroism by NHS workers. In the submission made by NIC-ICTU with the assistance of healthcare unions, the context of a decade of under-investment was outlined. Northern Ireland experienced the smallest increase in per capita health spending over the 10 years leading up to 2020. Nominal spending increased by 18% in Northern Ireland compared to 29% in England and Wales, and 23% in Scotland. Capital spending by the NI Executive was £137m or 9.2% below where it was in 2009/10 in real terms.

The toll of deaths among NI's NHS workers are unclear. The ONS record 241 COVID-19 related deaths among healthcare workers in England and Wales.

NISRA's statistics from March 2020 to October 2021 record 391 Covid-19 related deaths in the working age population, out of 3,692 deaths overall. Almost the same as the total deaths of over three decades of the 'Troubles'.



ETUG delegation to the NI Assembly Education Committee in May 2025

E6 EDUCATION TRADE UNION GROUP

The ETUG is made up of teaching and support staff unions organising in the education sectors, chaired since 2024 by Marie O'Shea (INTO) and vice-chair Susan Neill. It meets regularly to develop education policy matters for the NI trade union movement. It lobbies policy makers, as well as the public and was a useful hub of information across 12 unions, both in outlining the effects of budget cuts and co-ordinating support for unions taking industrial action. The round of industrial action relating to teacher workload remains a live issue, despite a comprehensive review in 2025, with teaching unions balloting members in summer 2026.

ETUG lobbied the NI Assembly Education committee with several formal evidence sessions and informal briefings. For instance, on legislation for school uniforms, school inspections and reforms on Special Educational Needs provision. There were calls for more permanent recruitment, disparity of salaries across the sector and overall investment in a part of our education system which faces increasing demand.

Unions agree that uniforms can instil pride, support positive behaviour and discipline, protect children from social pressures to dress in a particular way, nurture cohesion and promote good relationships between pupils. However, cost is always a issue, as well as equalities considerations.

ETUG and its members also lobbied for safer and more tolerant school environments for students and staff, by supporting a comprehensive Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum which addresses the needs of this society and empowers our young people to make informed choices and effect change in their own lives. Related to that was a robust campaign against sexual abuse and harassment in schools and staff being trained and equipped to deal with its manifestations, including on social media.

In May 2026, MLAs were provided with powerful testimony by NASUWT's Sally Rees, part of a ETUG delegation on the rise of Violence Against Women and Girls in our schools and colleges. Sally highlighted the nature and range of misogyny that female teachers and girls are experiencing from sexist comments, sexual graphic messaging, to image based sexual abuse. She drew the Committee's attention to the lack of robust trauma informed practice in schools. Too often the order of protection is reversed putting the needs of the offender over the needs of the victim. It is clear women and girls are at risk in our schools. Which is why trade unions believe Misogyny which leads to Sexual Harassment and assault needs to be treated as a Health and Safety issue.

Sally ended her evidence by calling for mandatory RSE content which is consent focused, debunks harmful gender stereotypes and includes critical digital literacy on the use and abuse of online platforms and social media. Additionally, there were recommendations for the introduction of the UK Feminista's 'whole school approach' to Sexism and Sexual Harassment which aligns with The Executive Office's EVAWG strategy.



ETUG returned to offer evidence to the NIA Education Committee in 2026

In September 2025, a group of youth organisations, LGBTQIA+ charities and education unions condemned the Education Minister's removal of guidance for supporting trans youth in education, urging him to reinstate the guidance in a joint statement co-ordinated by The Rainbow Project.

The joint statement referenced the Department's own research published in 2017 after it emerged this morning that the Department has removed the publication from its website. The report showed that, at the time, around two thirds of LGBT pupils did not feel safe and supported in school, and that trans pupils faced key issues addressed in the guidance including access to toilets, flexible uniform policies, and appropriate use of name and pronouns.

Susan Neill, said "we are gravely concerned that this important guidance has been withdrawn and would ask that the Minister immediately publish the legal basis for the withdrawal. Given the legal uncertainty as to how the Supreme Court judgement applies to Northern Irelands devolved institutions, we believe that this is at best a premature move on the part of a Minister who would be better to focus on delivering educational outcomes for every child in every school across Northern Ireland."

The Stormont committee also heard the case for universal free school meals. In March 2026, Congress issued a statement reiterating policy since 2022. "We support the calls today from Advice NI, the Women's

Support Network, Feeding Britain and all education unions who argue that the NI the Executive now make the eradication of child poverty a cross-departmental priority and we believe that a universal offering of Free School Meals is a key step to achieving this. In this context, we note ministers' collective obligations to develop, implement and deliver an effective Anti-Poverty Strategy, and we believe that a universal offering of Free School Meals would represent a practical and meaningful policy measure aligned with those commitments.

We also welcome the Education Minister Paul Givan's commitment to link future income threshold increases to inflation to ensure that support keeps pace with the rising cost of living. While we recognise the Department's challenging budget position, we note that these measures, will only partially address the gap in support for many working families who continue to struggle with food insecurity. We would therefore encourage continued consideration of phased steps towards a universal model."

ETUG was engaged in challenging the Education Minister Paul Givan on his proposals for a new management authority to support the controlled schools' sector. The concerns raised by ETUG include:

- There was no prior notification of the staff unions within the Education Authority
- The Minister's description of the Education Authority as failing controlled schools without providing any context or taking account of years of underfunding
- The failure of the Chief Executive of the EA to defend the organisation
- The review will be led by the Chief Executive of the Controlled Schools Support Council (CSSC). As currently constituted the CSSC has three places for the Transferor Representatives' Council. ETUG are concerned that the direction of travel is to convert the existing body to a management authority. There are many teachers and support staff within EA (controlled integrated and special school staff in particular) who are not currently within a school with a specific religious ethos.

The ETUG do not believe that this review is warranted but nevertheless are seeking commitments that recognised unions will be consulted with during the review and any new body is constituted that the board will have a balance of members.

The ETUG recognises that there is an argument that this is justified as maintained schools have a separate managing authority but believe that creating a new body is a retrograde step and that the Minister should focus instead on delivering a single managing authority for all teachers and support staff.

In late 2024, there was a serious incident at a school in north Belfast involving children from a refugee background which escalated into serious community tensions. This prompted a discussion within the ICTU's education unions, alongside our friends at Belfast City of Sanctuary, with whom we support and work with through our migrant workers' project. The Congress anti-racism project officer David Carroll was also involved and offered practical advice which will support engagement with external groups and officials, as well as

informing the exiting Congress Trade Union Education programme.

ETUG unions held a series of meetings involving our affiliates who represent support staff as well as teachers and are identifying where the present system of managing incidents involving ethnic and racial differences is working and, crucially, failing students and staff alike.

ETUG engaged with the Education Authority NI and Department of Education to catalogue the resources available for a school which finds itself in a similar situation as that school. From that, ETUG are compiled this information into a short briefing paper for the NI Assembly Education Committee, as well as the Minister and officials in EANI and DE. The committee was briefed in spring 2025, with unions informing MLAs about its interaction with EA:

"The EA acknowledges that it needs to have a proactive and a reactive response to Racism. Its difficult for schools and EA / youth services as they really need to have the support of society and political representatives. Committee on the Administration of Justice have completed a report on mapping far-right activity and it has sought to shape and improve the public policy response to racist violence and intimidation, including: the response from the Stormont Executive in its hate crimes and tackling paramilitarism programmes; influencing hate crimes legislation and duties to remove hate expression; and a more effective policing response.

"One of the main findings that the CAJ report highlights is the amount of misinformation and disinformation that there is around incidents and we need to build capacity particularly on how we combat this misinformation and disinformation. We need to find and shape approaches within the BME and anti-racism sector on how to report and seek effective remedy for online racist agitation. We need to better engage with mainstream media on mapping of racist violence and combatting disinformation.

"Public authorities in the education sector, including the Education Authority and Department, have a specific role in tackling online racist discourse impacting on schools, as well as broader duties to tackle linked issues such as racist bullying in schools but it needs to be funded."

E7 PRIVATE SECTOR COMMITTEE

The Private Sector Committee (PSC) works to promote, develop and protect the interests of private sector workers, including the maintenance and protection of terms and conditions of employment. The PSC will assist the NIC by responding to all issues pertaining to the private sector.

The Chair of the PSC is Alan Perry, GMB, and the Vice Chair is George Brash, Unite.

Receives reports from affiliates organising in the private sector covering pay and conditions negotiations, disputes, threats to employment, upskilling, new developments, and campaigns to protect jobs and industries such as Harland and Wolf (H&W) and Shorts.

The failure of Stormont to develop a proactive and interventionist industrial policy is a serious weakness that continues to threaten the future of shipbuilding and the fragmented

aerospace sector, and other high value manufacturing and new technology sectors.

The PSC continue to look at under investment and the weaknesses in the current provisions for skills and apprenticeships. The Committee has considered how Union Learning projects can be utilised to assist in addressing skills shortages and failings in the current apprenticeship model having received a briefing on the new apprenticeship scheme in H&W. This scheme is seeking to reinvigorate the traditional apprenticeship model where skills are passed from older workers to a new generation.

The PSC has identified the need for a new cross departmental government approach to the upskilling of the current workforce and for young people entering the labour market. To facilitate this unions need to,

- Lead on pushing state and employer bodies for a strategic approach to skills needs for now and the future.
- Encourage employers to invest in skills and training for the long-term and not shed jobs/skills as a first reaction to commercial difficulties.

Push for the re-establishment of integrated employer focused training boards based on the Tripartite model.

The Committee has also been engaged on the impact of AI development on the workplace having received a presentation from FSU on their *Artificial Intelligence: The Impact on Financial Services Employment* report.



TUC General Secretary Paul Nowak

The PSC has also engaged on the developments of the Good Jobs Bill, explored union leveraging opportunities through the social value clauses in the public procurement process, the need for better promotion of union successes in the sector and the sharing of relevant information, including organising strategies.

The Committee is open to representatives of all affiliates with membership in the private sector.

E8 COUNCIL OF THE ISLES

The council of the isles is the annual meeting of the trade union centres across these islands. The body comprises of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) of England, the Scottish TUC, the Welsh TUC and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. The council of the isles meeting in 2026 took placein October at the TUC HQ in London. The Council provides an opportunity to discuss developments in the industrial relations landscapes and lessons to be shared across the trade union movement on these islands. The representatives of ICTU were Jacquie White ICTU Vice-President and Gerry Murphy ICTU Assistant General Secretary. Issues discussed and debated included trade unions strategies, trade union renewal and reform, tackling the far-right, resetting the EU relationship, and international solidarity.

E8a North-South Committee

The North-South Committee seeks to identify and seek resolution of the industrial, social and economic issues affecting the members of affiliated trade unions and working people more generally across the island of Ireland and the development of policy options for consideration by the ICTU Executive Council. It also contributes support and advice to the members of the ICTU Executive Council appointed to the LEEF Shared Island Sub Committee and the work of the ICTU European Officer. Regarding the implementation of the Windsor Framework and ongoing relationship between the devolved administration at Stormont and the European Union and the associated role of the government in Dublin. The committee also provides guidance on the implementation of Congress policy on the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.

The 2024-26 members are from both the Executive Council and the NI committee:

- Owen Reidy, ICTU
- Gerry Murphy, ICTU
- Gerry McCormack, ICTU (Retired June 2026)
- Anne Speed, UNISON (Retired December 2025)
- Carmel Gates, NIPSA
- Denise Walker, GMB
- Frank Jones, IFUT
- John Boyle, INTO
- John O'Connell, FSU
- JP Clayton, UNISON
- Justin McCamphill, NASUWT
- Katie Morgan, FORSA
- Kevin Callinan, FORSA
- Paddy Mackel, UCU
- Patricia McKeown, UNISON
- Phil Ni Sheaghdha, INMO
- Susan Fitzgerald UNITE

E9 UNI EUROPA CONFERENCE

March 2025 saw the largest European labour gathering ever in Northern Ireland for the conference of UNI Europa, a 7 million worker federation of service sector unions. The conference, with over 600 delegates was the biggest European union event in Northern Ireland's history.

Oliver Roethig, Regional Secretary of UNI Europa, said:

"At a time of sky-rocketing corporate profits, deepening inequality and an extreme right threatening democratic values, the European trade union movement must rally together to build worker power. United, we will move forward through collective bargaining, helping workers win a real say and more pay. There is no better place to move this mission forward than Belfast, with its rich trade union history."

Under the theme 'Real Say, More Pay', union leaders set the strategic course for UNI Europa over the next five years and addressed some of the key issues facing unions today, such as strengthening collective bargaining; new workplace issues like Artificial Intelligence; the unity of trade unions across political divides; and addressing the multiple crisis of the cost-of-living, the rise of the far right and its attacks on democracy. Union leaders from across the Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain addressed these issues at the event.



Owen Reidy speaking at the UNIEuropa conference



Oliver Roethig, Regional Secretary of UNI Europa, with ETUC's Esther Lynch

Gerry Murphy said:

"we are delighted to be playing our part in welcoming UNI Europa to Belfast and will share our perspectives with colleagues across the European continent on our common purpose of better wages, terms and working conditions for all workers. We are especially keen to learn from trade unionists in many states how they overcome challenges in organising workers in some service industries which have been difficult for unions to operate on behalf of some of the worst paid workers in all of our societies. For these workers in particular, strong legislation which both allows and encourages trade union participation and collective bargaining are sure-fire routes to happier workplaces with well-treated staff, across all states and regions."

The day before the conference, on 24 March 2025, women workers and trade unionists met for the UNI Europa Women's Conference. Its theme 'Collective Women Voices, Common Future' underlines the 6th UNI Europa Regional Conference's focus on collective bargaining and the necessity of including women and a gender perspective when bargaining for workers' rights to build a common future for all.



SECTION F
~ EQUALITY & HUMAN RIGHTS



EQUALITY & HUMAN RIGHTS

The following is a report on the work of Congress and the Equality Committees in pursuit of our objectives for a fairer and more equal society – A Better Fairer Way.

During the period, NIC ICTU engaged with the Dedicated Mechanism Unit (DMU) of the Northern Ireland Human Rights and Equality Commissions.

Senior Officials of the DMU attended meetings of the Northern Ireland Committee to give briefings on their work including in relation to Article 2 of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Congress also worked with the Human Rights Consortium to organise a training session on the implications for equality, human rights and the obligations in the Windsor Framework following the judgement in the For Women Scotland case. This was followed by training sessions focusing on the implications following the Supreme Court judgment from the Dillon case.

F1 EQUALITY COALITION

Congress is a member of the Equality Coalition, The Equality Coalition is jointly convened by UNISON and the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ).

Cumulatively, the member organisations in the Equality Coalition work across all nine equality categories covered by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, as well as on other recognised protected equality grounds, including (but not limited to) socio-economic status, language, citizenship, irrelevant criminal record, and immigration status.

The Equality Coalition was founded in 1996 by community and voluntary sector organisations and trade unions. It was instrumental in putting equality at the forefront of the agenda at that time, specifically in relation to Policy Appraisal and Fair Treatment (PAFT), the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, and the aforementioned NI Act 1998.

Gender Pay Gap reporting and Pay Transparency Directive.

In March 2024, the Dedicated Mechanism Unit (DMU) of the Equality and Human Rights Commissions delivered their recommendation that the EU Pay Transparency Directive amends Directive 2006/54/EC, on the *Equal Treatment of Women and Men in employment and occupation*, which is included in Annex 1 of the Windsor Framework.

Amendment or replacement of the Annex 1 Directives triggers the dynamic alignment obligation under Article 13(3) of the Windsor Framework, requiring the law in NI to keep pace.

This analysis informed the consultation response to the Gender Pay Gap Reporting consultation which was issued from Department for Communities in late 2024. Congress recommended that the Gender Pay Transparency Directive be

transposed without delay and further recommended that the threshold for reporting a gender, ethnicity or disability pay gap apply to employers with 10 or more employees. Since the consultation, Congress has liaised with both the Cabinet Office and the EU to reinforce the position on the transposition of the Pay Transparency Directive.

The DfC consultation on Gender Pay Reporting regs closed in early 2025. As indicated in the consultation, the Department intended the regulations to be brought forward via the Employment Bill. Given the lack of progress in relation to the Employment Bill, Congress has sought clarification from the Minister as to how the regulations will be implemented should the Employment Bill fall.

The obligation to introduce Pay Reporting regulations is outstanding since the 2016 Employment Act when schedule 19 of the Act mandated the Northern Ireland Executive to draw up Gender (and disability and ethnicity) pay gap legislation. Similar legislation was introduced in GB and in Republic of Ireland in 2015 and 2021.

F2 WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

Women's Committee in Northern Ireland.

The Officers during the period were

- Tina Creaney, NIPSA, Chair
- Maxine Murphy Higgins, NASUWT, Secretary

Women's Committee Work included:

The Joint Women's Committee worked to organise the National Women's Conference in 2026 in Dundalk, the theme was Achieving for Women in Work: A New Economic Model for Women Workers

Over 180 delegates attended the conference and debated a wide range of motions

Writing in the report to conference ICTU General Secretary Owen Reidy said:

Congress as the representative voice of workers on the island of Ireland has developed this New Economic Model in conjunction with NERI as



Voting at Women's Conference



Delegates to Women's Conference 2026



Gayle Matthews, PCS



Geraldine McGowan, INTO at Women's Conference 2026



Joint Chairs at Womens Conference 2026



ICTU President at Women's Conference 2026



NERI at Women's Conference



Joint Women's Committee



USDAW delegates to Women's Conference 2026

our contribution to the debate about how we want our society to look and what type of economy we aspire to for our children and grandchildren. We intend to relentlessly promote and popularise this progressive vision of how this island can and should be over the next number of years and beyond. Having the opportunity to debate and discuss this at our Women's Conference is an importance chance to further shape our policies and strategy for rolling our vision out. Everyone wants to see a strong economy, with good, well-paid jobs. Yet in the face of global challenges and changing economic environment, we hear the same old calls for cuts to wages and threats to workers' rights. European competitiveness will not be rebuilt through deregulation, or by weakening workers' rights and protections, by



David Joyce, ICTU with Joint Chairs



cutting pay, forcing longer hours, or making work more insecure. That path creates a race to the bottom. Europe will not win by lowering the bar. Support for collective bargaining, valuing care, pay transparency and investing in infrastructure: these aren't just good for workers and families, they support the wider economy as well. With the New Economic Model, we're demonstrating a clear vision of the future.

The Women's Committee also organised a Women's Seminar in the Fairways Hotel in March 2025. The seminar focused on themes of tackling the far right and the connections between misogyny, racism and other forms of discrimination. Speakers included Dr Ruth Breslin, Director of The Sexual Exploitation Research and Policy Institute, Giulia Massobrio from the ITUC as well as Kudsia Botool from the TUC and Aaskshanka Surve from the NUJ.

The Seminar included fringe meetings on Palestine and the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign and included updates on the situation on Palestine from the Trade Union Friends of Palestine.

Congress continued to work alongside a range of organisations participating in training seminars on menopause and reproductive health alongside the Equality Commission and the LRA.

Women's Council of the Isles (WCoI)

The WCoI took place in Derry in 2025. Despite difficulties experienced due to a red weather warning, the meeting heard from each of the Committees on topics as divers e as dealing with miscarriage and tackling the far right in schools and workplaces.

The 2026 WCoI took place in Dundalk. and again focused on tackling the far right including misogyny. The two days saw over 80 delegates from Scotland, Wales, England and Ireland North and South gather to exchange



Collette O'Hagan, UNITE



Gaye Partridge, UNITE, WCoI 2026



TUC at the WCoI 2026



Danielle McCusker, UNISON



Kellie O'Dowd, GMB, WCoI 2026



STUC delegate together with TUC reps at WCoI 2026



Sally Rees, NASUWT, WCoI 2026



TUC Cymru at the WCoI 2026

ideas and discuss challenges within the trade union movement.

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

Statements were issued to mark International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November which highlighted the action being taken by trade unions in pursuing workplaces and society free from gender based violence.

The Women's Committee supported an event organised by NASUWT focusing on 'The Bystander Approach' which included a screening of a film featuring Jackson Katz exploding myths around 'rape culture' and misogyny.

ETUC Women's Committee

Congress is represented on the ETUC Women's Committee by the NI Equality Officer and the Committee met a number of times during this period.

The ETUC Women's Committee led on work including lobbying on the proposed new EU Directive on Gender Based Violence as robust as possible.

While welcoming the adoption of the Directive in May 2024, the ETUC Women's Committee voiced frustration that it failed to adequately deal with gender based violence in the world of work, despite repeated interventions by ETUC and Confederations.

Also disappointing was the decision imposed by France and Germany to exclude Article 5 on the harmonised definition of rape based on consent in line with the standards of the Istanbul Convention.

In June 2024, the Executive Committee of the ETUC adopted a special resolution: *On the Offensive to combat gender based violence in the world of work*.

The resolution notes

- Preventing and combatting gender-based violence in the world of work is a key priority of the ETUC. The recently adopted *Directive combatting violence against women and domestic violence* fails to deliver meaningful provisions to make the world of work safer for women workers. It also fails to recognise our role as trade unions to end gender-based violence.
- **Call for a new EU Directive eradicating gender-based violence in the world of work.** A Directive to eradicate gender-based violence in the world of work should be included in the work programme of the upcoming European Commission and European Parliament on the basis of the social policy chapter of the TFEU. Occupational safety and health legislation is an important entry point for such an initiative.
- A proposal for a new Directive must include measures to prevent and tackle all relevant forms of gender-based violence in the world of work, online and offline, and offer practical solutions for safe workplaces through an intersectional lens, in which the social partners must be involved and trade unions have a key role. A strong focus should be made on how to define and address different

aspects of economic violence, as well as the prevention of secondary victimisation and further discrimination. ETUC should seek support for such a call from the European Parliament, by means in particular, of monitoring the implementation of the *Directive combatting violence against women and domestic violence*, stressing the need for follow-up measures relating to the world of work.

The ETUC Women's Committee completed a new project on tackling gender based violence and harassment focusing particularly on new forms of violence including cyber bullying and harassment via social media. Congress was represented on the steering group and participated in interviews to contribute to the report and toolkit.

Priorities for the ETUC Women's Committee for the next mandate Include:

- Monitor and influence the transposition of the Pay Transparency Directive, monitor the Gender Pension Gap
- Push for ETUC key demands to be included in the Directive combating violence against women and domestic violence
- Deliver concrete tools to end the undervaluation of work predominantly done by women and the gendered labour market segregation through collective bargaining, social dialogue and legislation
- Launch a mapping of AI in the workplace and in training with the Women's Committee in preparation of the announced new Directive on AI in the workplace, influence the trialogues of the AI Act towards including a gender-dimension
- Adopt the Youth Action Plan at the Women's Committee meeting), and organise exchanges between the Women's Committee Presidium and the Youth Committee bureau.

Northern Ireland Strategic Equality Strategies

The New Decade New Approach agreement promised the publication of long awaited social inclusion equality strategies. In late 2020, the Department for Communities invited NIC ICTU to nominate onto co design groups for the Gender Equality, Disability and Anti-Poverty Strategies. Nominations were Clare Moore (ICTU), Taryn Trainor, (UNITE) and John Patrick Clayton, (UNISON). Co-design groups were also established to deliver a Sexual Orientation Strategy.

The Co-design groups working on each of the strategies committed significant time and energy to preparing robust documents to guide the development of the draft strategies. Despite this work, the Minister for Communities has yet to confirm when the draft strategies will be issued for consultation. The failure to publish an anti-poverty strategy was the subject of a successful judicial review brought forward by the Committee for the Administration of Justice.

Childcare for All

Congress spoke at the launch of the Childcare for All strategy at Stormont in advance of the publication of the Childcare Strategy.

Commenting on the Childcare Strategy, Congress said:



Relaunch of Childcare for All campaign, Stormont

While we welcome the publication of the draft strategy and acknowledge the challenging fiscal context, the scale and longevity of the childcare crisis make the limited ambition of the draft strategy difficult to accept.

Congress maintains that reliance on the private sector to deliver early years education and care is fundamentally the wrong approach. The draft strategy does not challenge this model, nor does it set out a credible pathway towards a model where childcare is actually a vital public service, much like other forms of education, which is delivered through public investment in partnership with providers across a range of settings, including in the community and voluntary sectors.

It is deeply concerning that the option of introducing a cap on provider fees was considered but ultimately rejected.

If childcare policy aims to make services more affordable and accessible, this cannot come at the expense of pay and conditions for workers.

Childcare workers are currently underpaid and undervalued, and the sector faces acute recruitment and retention challenges. Professionalisation, fair pay, and decent working conditions are essential to building a stable, high-quality workforce.

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls

The Executive Office announced the development of a an Ending Violence against Women and Girls strategy, something which the trade union movement has been calling for over many years.

Congress responded to the VAWG call for views and was represented on the Co Design group which met a number of times in late – end of 2022.

The Women's Committee, together with Congress Secretariat has met with Officials from TEO to highlight the need to include the workplace in the eventual strategy (including the realisation of ILO C190) and to press for legislative reform where necessary.

Congress was pleased to note that the draft framework and action plan, which was consulted on in 2023, included among the priority actions, the establishment of a workplace working group to include trade unions and employers.

The Cross Sectoral Workplace Forum is facilitated by the Labour Relations Agency with the secretariat provided by The Executive Office. Membership includes Congress, the Equality Commission NI, CPD and Women in Business. Whilst the group has met a number of times, little actual progress has been achieved, it is the view of Congress that employers and their representative bodies need to show more commitment to this area.

At the all island Biennial Conference in Belfast in 2025, renowned campaigner and author Dr Jackson Katz gave a key-note address about men's leadership in ending a culture of misogyny and violence against women and girls. Dr Katz also hosted a fringe meeting at the event.

Following on from this, the Executive Council established a High Level trade union Sub Group to tackle violence against women and girls. The members of the Women's Committee continue to devote considerable time to issue include leading training and policy work within their sectors.

Safe Leave – Time to deliver

The Safe Leave Act was passed before the Assembly collapsed in 2022. Following on from the restoration in 2024, Congress called repeatedly for the introduction of Safe Leave.

Despite our continued pressure, no firm timetable for delivery was confirmed by November 2025. As part of our events to mark International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, Congress organised a Safe Leave Rally in Stormont. The Minister addressed the well attended rally pledging for the introduction of the regulations before the end of the current Assembly mandate.

The Minister established a working group to work alongside the Department Officials to advise on comprehensive Guidance.

Domestic and Sexual Violence Strategy

Congress is represented on the current advisory group to the Domestic and Sexual Violence strategy and responded to the call for views on the new strategy.

Members of the Congress Women's Committee and the Congress Secretariat play an active role on a number of coalition groups including the Equality Coalition, the Human Rights Consortium and the Northern Ireland Women's European Platform.

F3 DISABILITY COMMITTEE

Disability Committee

Officers were

- Chair Lucia Collins, NIPSA
- Vice Chair Pete Brennan, SIPTU
- Secretary Pauline Hurst, UTU

The Disability Committee organised a well attended seminar on mental health focusing on the HSENI's Stress Management Standards as well as the Equality law issues for trade union representatives.

The Committee held regular meetings which included guest speakers from Disability Action as well as the National Union for Supported Employment. Members of the Committee and Secretariat contributed to strategic engagement on the Department for Communities Disability Employment Strategy and members of the Committee North and South attended the Harkin International Summit which was held in Belfast for the first time.

The Committee is working on a guide for trade unions on Neurodiversity in the workplace and this will be showcased at an event in Autumn 2024.

F4 LGBT

Following on from engagement with Belfast Pride, ICTU organised a coordinated presence of trade unions at Belfast pride. It was agreed that this was extremely successful and gave significant profile to trade unions at the largest parade in Northern Ireland.

Consultation responses during this period included:

- Amendment of the Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay Regulations to include Miscarriage Leave and Pay Entitlement
- Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) consultation
- Submission to the United Nations Human Rights Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
- Department of Education consultation on Relationship and Sexuality Education.
- Gender Pay Gap Reporting Consultation
- Response to draft childcare strategy
- Response to anti poverty strategy
- Response to disability employment strategy
- Response to House of Lords Inquiry into Article 2 of Windsor Framework



Training on Article 2 with Human Rights Consortium

F5 BAME AND MIGRANT WORKERS

NIC ICTU supports BAME and migrant workers and communities in a number of ways.

Congress is represented on the Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership, the Migrant Centre NI, Belfast City Council Migrant Forum, and Belfast City of Sanctuary.

Congress continues to provide advice and support to affiliates and other organisations working with BAME and migrant workers.

Congress also provides training on employment rights, challenging discrimination and racism, and on how trade unions can support BAME and migrant workers. Congress developed an accredited course with Belfast City of Sanctuary on workplace discrimination and the role of trade unions delivered to representatives of ethnic minority communities. One of the aims of the course is to encourage ethnic minority community's representatives can engage with unions to challenge discrimination.

With our workplaces becoming more racially diverse, unions are best placed to lead the fight against racism, discrimination and unfair conditions both at work and in wider society.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

NIC-ICTU are represented on the Steering Committee of Belfast City of Sanctuary, whose work welcoming refugees and asylum seekers has been supported by many affiliates. Many Global Solidarity activists promoted online solidarity events with migrants. Workshops on Employment Rights for refugees have also been delivered through ICTU Education.

Trade unions supported the bid for Belfast City Council to declare itself as a 'Sanctuary City', one of a network of town and cities across these islands who have made an explicit commitment to support asylum seekers and refugees.

Defending All Communities

Every workplace should have, on display, the 2017 the updated Joint Declaration for Dignity at Work and Inclusive Working Environments, an initiative fostered by the LRA's Employment Relations Roundtable, and signed by unions and employers organisations, to to promote a culture:

- giving all persons an equal opportunity for employment and advancement irrespective of religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, sexual orientation, sex, disability, and persons with or without dependants;
- encouraging all employees to develop their full potential;
- rewarding achievement;
- where the employer is working to maintain and/or ensure fair participation in its recruitment and employment thus achieving a workforce that is broadly representative of the Northern Ireland community;
- and respecting expressions of diverse identity in the context of a harmonious and inclusive working environment.

What this means on the ground

Sections E4 and E6 have examples of our work standing up for the safety and security of migrant workers and minorities, and it is instructive to offer a practical example from the agri-food sector showing how this ties together with other worker concerns, such as the Good Jobs Employment Rights Bill. This is a response to an investigation conducted by The Detail investigative website.

Northern Ireland's agri-food sector has relied for decades on overseas workers. Native workers largely avoided jobs in the sector regarding the work as low paid, physically demanding, dirty and repetitive with very limited prospects for career progression. From 2004 a large percentage of the work-force came from countries new to the EU through the legal right of citizens to move, live, and work freely across any member state.

Mistreatment and exploitation of these vulnerable new workers existed, but as they lived and worked here openly, trade unions, statutory bodies, and NGOs could dedicate resources to engage with them and provide support. Unions helped them access their employment rights, offered protection and organisation to improve their working conditions.

Brexit and the subsequent changes to the immigration framework fundamentally changed the situation with overseas workers, particularly in the agri-food sector. labour shortages caused by the significant drop in EU workers in the sector have led employers to look outside the EU to fill gaps in the workforce.

However, the UK government's restric-tion of legal pathways for employers in the NI agri-food sector to recruit over-seas means that those workers who do get in find themselves in a more precarious and vulnerable situation than migrant workers experienced prior to Brexit.

By way of example, while those workers who come in under the Seasonal Worker Scheme have employment rights on paper, in reality, even if they manage to become aware of their entitlement to these rights during the short life of their visa, it is highly unlikely that they will be able to enforce them as the Employment Tribunal system is notoriously slow, complex to navigate, and hopelessly clogged at the moment. On top of this, there is also the fear that if workers on a seasonal visa do challenge their employer, they could be sacked and forced to leave the country or blocked from future employment.

Further to this, as this investigation identifies, divergent immigration systems between the South of Ireland and the North create cross-border regulatory gaps that organised groups and some unscrupulous employer's exploit.

While enforcement agencies North and South have cooperated on cross-border organised crime and human trafficking, there is no formal collaboration specifically focused on protecting exploited migrant workers from employment rights abuses as the two jurisdictions operate separate employment law systems.

Without the secure rights to live and work in the North enjoyed by EU workers prior to Brexit (currently still

available to those who qualified under the EU Settlement Scheme), life for today's migrant workers can be more precarious and open to exploitation. This vulnerability lowers their potential to engage with trade unions or statutory safety nets.

In addition to this, two other factors leave migrant workers in NI more exposed to exploitation. The lack of resources for existing statutory enforcement agencies, and an antiquated underpinning legal framework.

'Austerity measures' implemented by successive British governments and the failure to fund the devolved administration at Stormont at the required level of social need, unlike Scotland and Wales, has saw the public sector in the North straining in interminable crisis. Statutory bodies tasked with protecting workers, such as the HSENI, the Equality Commission, and the Employment Agency Inspectorate (EAI) are now woefully under resourced.

Employment law is a devolved matter to the Northern Ireland Executive. Recurring political instability and collapses of the devolved government has resulted in NI falling significantly behind Britain when it comes to employment protection legislation.

For instance, when the Immigration Act 2016 was passed the specific sections expanding the GLAA's powers and labour market enforcement did not apply to NI as it required the passage of complementary legislation through Stormont. This did not happen.

As a result, in NI, the GLAA's authority remains restricted in scope to the original 2004 Act (licensing and regulating specific sectors like agriculture, horticulture, and food processing/packing). The GLAA in NI does not hold independent investigatory, search, or arrest powers for broader labour market abuses or modern slavery offences. Operational enforcement and criminal investigations outside the strictly licensed sectors in NI are led by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) rather than GLAA officers.

It could be argued that for the DUP, who held the Economy Minister portfolio from 2016 to 2024, worker's rights have never been high on their agenda.

This changed in 2024, when Sinn Fein took the position of Minister for the Economy. They immediately announced their intention to introduce a Good Jobs Bill which sought to reduce casualisation and precariousness of employment, relevel the employment rights of NI workers with those in Britain, improve trade union rights, and enhance Work-Life Balance measurers.

While NIC-ICTU hoped for more from the Bill, we fully support its passage into law.

Proposals in the Bill that could assist migrant workers include the requirement for recruitment agencies to provide workers with a Key Information Document (KID) prior to the agreement of an assignment. A KID should provide at least a work summary and clearly explain the minimum rate of pay, details of any deductions, frequency of payments, how holiday pay is calculated and who is responsible for paying the worker. The Bill would also entitle all workers to be provided with detailed payslips.



Unions suppported events such as the annual Refugee Picnic





Zero and low hours workers who consistently and regularly work more hours than their contract states would have the right to move to a contract that more accurately reflects their working pattern (a 'banded hours' contract) under other provisions of the Good Jobs Bill.



The Bill proposes to enhance the enforcement powers of the Employment Agency Inspectorate (EAI) which is tasked with regulating the private recruitment sector. The legislation would also open information sharing gateways between the EAI and relevant and appropriate regulators, in prescribed circumstances. However, there was no provisions in the Bill to provide the EAI with powers to address breaches of general employment rights of workers engaged by recruitment agencies.

The most significant proposal within the Good Jobs Bill would allow trade unions the right to request access to workplaces, including digital access. This right would allow unions to engage with, recruit, and represent workers in the workplace. It would also allow unions to ensure that the existing statutory employment rights and protections, including those under health and safety legislation, of workers are being complied with.

NIC-ICTU believe that for vulnerable workers, it is pointless adopting legislation to protect the working environment if you do not allow for the monitoring and enforcement of what is happening in practice within businesses.

As this investigation identifies, there are workplaces in NI where vulnerable and migrant workers work in unsafe conditions and are denied basic employment rights under precarious employment contracts. Individual workers who speak out, find that they no longer have a job. The many and high hurdles such workers face should they try to assert their individual employment rights through Employment Tribunals are prohibitive. Without a right to access such workers, unions struggle to protect them.

While the Good Jobs Bill has received support form most political parties in the North, it is currently being blocked by the DUP at the Stormont Executive.

NIC-ICTU are deeply concerned that any further delaying may leave insufficient time for the Bill to pass through the Assembly's democratic

discussion and scrutiny stages before the current Assembly term ends in early 2027.

With the passing of the Employment Rights Act 2025 (ERA) the rights of workers in Britain have jumped even further ahead of those in NI.

One of provisions of the ERA establishes a single enforcement body in Britain, the Fair Work Agency (FWA), to transform how employment rights are enforced. The FWA will bring together the work of the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate, HMRC's National Minimum Wage Enforcement Team and the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority to become a 'one-stop-shop' for enforcing workforce rights.

The FWA will have the power to inspect workplaces and to require employers to produce relevant documents and evidence demonstrating compliance with employment law. It will be a criminal offence for employers to knowingly or recklessly produce false documents and information, or to intentionally obstruct enforcement action or fail to comply with an enforcement requirement without reasonable excuse. Crucially, where a worker has a right to bring a claim in the Employment Tribunal, the FWA will be able to bring those proceedings in place of the worker, as well as give legal advice or provide representation in employment, trade union or labour relations cases.

NIC-ICTU believe that a similar single enforcement agency, provided it is adequately funded and resourced, is urgently required for NI, too, as trade unions lack the capacity to cover all workplaces. But, given what is happening with the Good Jobs Bill it is unlikely to be established anytime soon. However, a "firewall" between labour enforcement bodies and immigration enforcement must be established to ensure that workers are able to report illegal behaviour by employers and recruitment agencies, including those based overseas, without triggering an investigation into their own visa status.

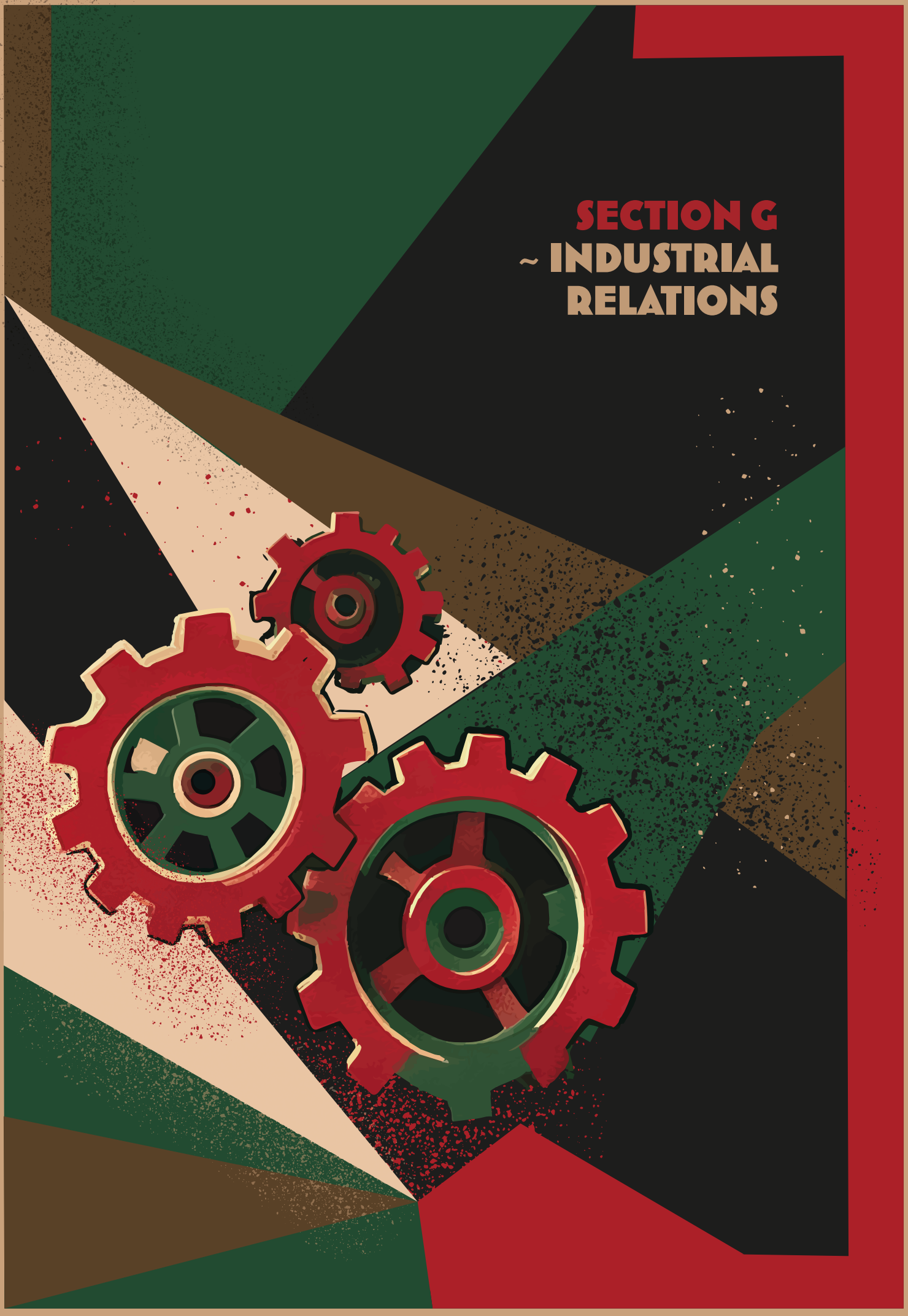
Further to the above, to address some of the abuses above, NIC-ICTU would call for the following:

- Employment Tribunals need to establish fast track cases to deal with complaints from overseas workers on short term visas with special provisions in place to support such claimants.
- However, a more effective model for dealing with employment rights abuses would involve rebalancing the current employment rights infrastructure towards enforcing employment rights rather than simply settling disputes.
- Work visas and permits should not be tied to specific employers. On ending employment, workers should have sufficient leave to remain in order to find alternative employment and to access their employment rights through the legal systems. Or transition to sector-specific or regional visas rather than single-employer sponsored visas. This allows exploited workers to quit an abusive employer and legally move to another employer within the same sector.
- The introduction of a rights-based immigration system across the island where all workers, regardless of immigration status, have their employment rights respected at

work and can access healthcare and social security support. There is also a need for greater alignment of enforcement agencies North and South and the underpinning legal framework to allow for cross-border collaboration specifically focused on protecting exploited migrant workers from employment rights abuses.

- The GLAA licensing of recruitment agencies model should be expanded to all sectors reliant on international recruitment. Under this system, employers here should face severe criminal penalties if they source workers through an unlicensed overseas broker.
- While it is illegal for UK based recruitment agencies to charge workers fees, the practice exposed in this investigation of overseas agencies doing so needs to be halted by introducing a "joint and several liability" legal framework. If a NI employer uses an overseas agency that charges illegal fees, the NI employer should be legally liable to repay the worker. For agencies operating in NI but using overseas partners must be obligated to provide transparent, audited paper trails showing how their overseas partners operate and are funded.
- Because a recruitment agency operating physically inside another country cannot be prosecuted in NI, the UK (and Irish) government(s) should sign binding, bilateral agreements with primary origin countries. These agreements should mandate a shared, publicly accessible register of approved, ethically audited recruitment agencies.

SECTION G
~ INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS



INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

G1 DEMOCRACY AT WORK: PARTICIPATION, LOBBYING, LEGISLATION

The Northern Ireland Engagement Forum was set up as a result of a campaign by the NIC-ICTU to achieve a forum for social dialogue in Northern Ireland and in response to the Covid 19 pandemic. The forum was to advise the Minister for the Economy and the Executive on labour market related matters relating to Covid 19. It had equal representation of union nominees and employer nominees. It discussed in detail the Good Jobs Employment Bill, the safety of workers in extreme weather and gender issues.

However, as outlined in Section E1, the sudden objections made by business lobbyists to the Good Jobs Bill forced a rethink by the NIC in early summer 2026, which then informed the LRA that "representatives of the ICTU are withdrawing from the Forum for the foreseeable future. This decision has not been taken lightly. The Committee has concerns as to the continued usefulness of the Forum given the lack of genuine and respectful engagement."

G2 BETTER IN A TRADE UNION

The roll out of the Better in a Trade Union (BIATU) PR campaign from 2024 followed on from the decision of the ICTU Biennial Delegate Conference in July 2023 to ratify the Trade Union Renewal Report which covered a number of key targets identified by the Executive Committee, to raise public awareness of trade unions and to support unionisation in the workplace in the context of the Good Jobs Bill and the EU Directive on Minimum Pay.



USDAW delegates at the ICTU BDC

G3 IMPLEMENTING THE GOOD JOBS BILL

Theme A: Terms of Employment

1. Ending exploitative zero-hour contracts

DfE will legislate to introduce:

Zero and low hours workers who consistently and regularly work more hours than their contract states will have the right to move to a contract that more accurately reflects their working pattern (a 'banded hours' contract).

The worker will be eligible to apply to move to a banded hours contract after completing a qualifying period. This qualifying period will be set out in regulations after further engagement with stakeholders but may be 26 weeks. An employer will be able to decline a banded hours request only in limited circumstances which will be set out in regulations. Where a worker is content to remain on this type of contract, they are free to do so.

To ensure workers know about the right to have banded hours, DfE proposes to add a requirement for employers to inform zero and low hours workers of this right in the written statement of particulars that they must provide to the worker at the beginning of employment.

Those who work on zero and low hours contracts will also have a right to reasonable notice of shift patterns. The precise detail of these arrangements will require further engagement with stakeholders.

Workers on a zero hours or low hours contract will have a right to compensation where an employer cancels or curtails a shift at short notice. The precise detail of these arrangements will require further engagement with stakeholders and will be contained in regulations.



Economy Minister Caoimhe Archibald briefed trade unionists on the Good Jobs Bill in April 2026

DfE will also ban exclusivity clauses in both zero and low hours contracts that do not guarantee an income above the Lower Earnings Limit.

DfE will provide powers which would permit it to extend the right to banded hours to other types of contracts other than zero and low hours contracts, if it is necessary to do so in the future.

Primary legislation

2. Understanding employment status and addressing bogus self-employment

Work with British Government to address, due to interaction with tax system.

Policy Development

To help provide clarity about the existing framework, the Department will develop guidance on employment status for individuals and employers.

Guidance

Dismissal and re-engagement (fire and rehire)

The Department will introduce legislation to make it automatically unfair to dismiss an employee in order to alter the terms of their contract, where that employee does not agree to such alterations.

The only exception shall be when an employer can show that it was acting in response to immediate financial difficulty and could not have reasonably avoided the need to seek to vary the terms of the contract.

Primary legislation

3. Redundancy: offence of failure to notify

Catch up with GB.

Introduce personal liability for the offence of Failure to Notify.

Primary legislation

4. Written statement of particulars

Catch up with GB.

DfE will legislate to require employers to provide a written statement of core employment terms and conditions to employees and workers, on or before the first day of employment.

DfE will also expand the information that an employer is required to provide in the principal statement. This will include information about a worker's terms of employment, including pay, working hours and paid leave. It will also include information on a worker's right to join a trade union, if they wish to do so.

DfE will also consider how best written statements can be adapted to inform zero hours contract workers of their new right to switch to a banded hours contract.

Existing employees and workers will be able to request a written statement that meets the new requirements.

Primary legislation

5. Agency workers: pay between assignment contracts

Catch up with GB.

DfE will introduce legislation to abolish 'pay between assignment' contracts (the 'Swedish Derogation') which can risk agency workers being paid less than their permanent counterparts, even after completing the twelve-week qualifying period

Primary legislation

6. Agency workers: Key Information Document

Catch up with GB.

To improve understanding of the terms of work on offer, DfE intends to make it a legal requirement for recruitment agencies to produce a Key Information

Document for work seekers.

Secondary legislation

Employment Agency Inspectorate: information sharing

Catch up with GB.

DfE intends to legislate to open information sharing gateways between the EAI and relevant and appropriate regulators, in prescribed circumstances. The intention is to support the EAI in designing more proportionate and transparent enforcement actions, enabling them to work more effectively with the recruitment agencies who are subject to them.

Primary legislation

7. Employment Agency Inspectorate: enforcement powers

Catch up with GB.

DfE will legislate to enhance the enforcement powers of the EAI via the introduction of Labour Market Enforcement Undertakings and Labour Market Enforcement Orders.

LMEUs and LMEOs are authoritative in nature but would allow recruitment agencies to continue to operate, while they fulfil the conditions agreed or imposed by the EAI on them. Conditions imposed would be dependent on the nature of an infringement.

Primary legislation

Theme B: Pay and Benefits

8. Tips, gratuities and service charges

Catch up with GB.

DfE intends to introduce legislation that will ensure:

- Payments for service that are in the control or under significant influence of employers will be required to go to workers fairly and transparently, aside from deductions required by law.
- Employers will be required to keep records of payments for service received and distributed, with workers having a right to request access to those records.
- The Department will also seek to bring in a statutory Code of Practice to set out the principles of fairness and transparency.

Primary legislation

Introduce a Statutory Code of Practice to set out the principles of fairness and transparency.

Secondary legislation

9. Payslips

Catch up with GB.

- Extend the right to a pay statement to workers (as well as employees).
- For those whose pay varies as a result of time worked, pay statements should be itemised to detail information on the hours worked.

Secondary legislation

10. Calculating holiday pay (the holiday pay reference period)

Catch up with GB

To help those who work irregular hours or whose pay varies across the year, DfE intends to legislate to change the holiday pay reference period from 12 to 52 weeks.

Primary legislation

11. Working Time Regulations: record keeping requirements

Catch up with GB

DfE will work with the Labour Relations Agency to produce guidance for employers and workers articulating clearly the record keeping requirements of employers.

Non-statutory guidance

12. Working Time Regulations: Right to disconnect

DfE intends to work with social partners to agree a statutory Code of Practice for the Right to Disconnect and how it should apply here

Primary legislation

Theme C: Voice and Representation

13. Workplace access

Trade unions will have the right to request access to workplaces, including digital access. While it is intended that employers would not be able to unreasonably withhold access to workplaces from trade union officials, such access will not be automatic and will require adherence to certain provisions such as only entering during reasonable times and in compliance with health and safety and security arrangements on site.

Primary legislation

14. Trade union workplace recognition

There is currently a requirement for the employer to have at least 21 workers before that request to be recognised can be made. However, the majority of businesses in the north of Ireland do not reach this 21 worker threshold.

So that a greater number of workers here can access a trade union, the recognition threshold for trade unions will be reduced from 21 to 10 workers.

Secondary legislation

15. Collective bargaining: introduction of collective sectoral bargaining

With a view to improving workplace relations and the terms and conditions of all workers, and mindful of the potential impact on the economy, DfE will engage with key stakeholders and the Labour Relations Agency to identify and consider how a collective bargaining framework could operate more widely than at present.

DfE will work with these key stakeholders and the Labour Relations Agency to promote collective bargaining, with the overarching aim of working towards the EU Adequate Minimum Wage Directive target of a collective bargaining coverage rate of 80%.

Policy Development

16. Industrial action: balloting and notice

To balance the needs of businesses with the right for workers to take industrial action, the notice period for industrial action will remain at seven days. This is in line with the south of Ireland.

DfE will however consider what reasonable changes to the administration of the balloting process can be made to reduce bureaucracy for unions and employers.

Policy Development

DfE intends to legislate to permit the use of e-balloting systems for trade unions as an alternative to postal ballots.

Primary legislation

17. Protection for trade union representatives

With a view to improving workplace relations, DfE will produce a Code of Practice, in consultation with local stakeholders and the Labour Relations Agency, on facilitating workplace relationships. This will include a minimum set of expected behaviours as to how all parties should engage with each other.

Secondary legislation

18. Protections for employees taking part in industrial action

Remove the 12-week limit on protection from dismissal.

Primary legislation

19. Facilitating productive workplace relationships

In the interests of supporting respectful and effective workplaces, DfE will produce, in consultation with local stakeholders and the Labour Relations Agency, a Code of Practice on facilitating workplace relationships.

Secondary legislation

20. Information and consultation – definitions & thresholds

Catch up with GB

Ensure that the right to information under ICE Regulations applies to smaller establishments/satellite offices within larger organisations.

Reduce the percentage of employees required to make a valid request for an ICE agreement from 10% to 2%.

Reduce the minimum number of employees from 15 to 10.

Secondary legislation

21. Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE)

No action will be taken at this time.

22. Public interest disclosure (whistleblowing)

Catch up with GB

To better establish if prescribed persons are fulfilling their responsibilities, and to capture information on disclosure trends, DfE will require prescribed persons to produce annual reports.

Exemptions will apply for certain office holders who have no regulatory powers to investigate such as Members of Parliament and the Assembly.

Secondary legislation

Theme D: Work Life Balance

23. Flexible working

Catch up with GB

DfE will make it easier for people to ask their employer for flexible working arrangements.

- The right to make a flexible working request will apply from the first day of employment – a day-one right.
- Employees will be permitted to make two statutory flexible working requests in a 12-month period, with a second request allowed once the first request has been fully determined or withdrawn.
- Employees will no longer be required to state the potential impact of a flexible working request.
- For employers, the statutory grounds for refusing a flexible working request will remain unchanged, but they will be required to demonstrate that they have acted reasonably in doing so.

Primary legislation

24. Carer's leave

Catch up with GB

DfE will therefore introduce carer's leave entitlement on the same terms as that operating in Britain.

- An employee with caring responsibilities will be entitled to take up to one week of unpaid carer's leave every 12 months to care for a family member or dependant with a long-term care need.

- Unless in an emergency situation, an employee will be required to provide their employer with notice - the notice period being the earlier of: twice as many days as the amount of leave requested; or three days in advance of the leave (for example, if requesting one day of carer's leave, two days' notice should be given as a courtesy to the employer)
- An employee who takes carer's leave will have similar employment protections to those applying to other kinds of statutory leave.

DfE will provide the legislative basis for paid carer's leave. There are potentially significant legislative, administrative and financial implications which require careful consideration by the Executive before paid leave can be introduced.

- In order to inform these discussions, the Department has commissioned independent research on the potential costs and benefits of paid carer's leave.
- The Department will also lobby Westminster to introduce a statutory entitlement to paid carer's leave as this would resolve the administrative and affordability challenges.

Primary legislation

25. Neonatal care leave and pay

Catch up with GB

DfE will give eligible working parents a new statutory right to leave and/or pay.

- Neonatal care leave and/or pay will apply to parents of babies admitted to neonatal care in the first 28 days following birth, and who spend at least seven continuous days in neonatal care.
- Eligible parents will be permitted a week of neonatal care leave (and pay if applicable) for each week the child is in care, up to a maximum of 12 weeks.
- Working parents will be eligible for neonatal care leave from the start of employment – a day-one right.
- To be eligible for neonatal care pay, working parents must have worked for an employer for at least 26 weeks, and earn at least the 'Lower Earnings Limit' (currently £125 per week).
- Neonatal care pay will be paid at the lower of the statutory rate (currently £187.18 per week for the year 2025/26) or 90% of average weekly earnings.
- Parents will also be required to give reasonable notice and may need to provide evidence of entitlement to their employer. The Department will work with the Labour Relations Agency to develop guidance on evidence of entitlement as required.

Primary legislation

26. Protection from redundancy for pregnant employees and those taking family leave

Catch up with GB

DfE will enhance protections for pregnant employees, and for those employees who have recently returned to work after a period of maternity, adoption, or six or more weeks of shared parental leave.

- Employees will be protected from redundancy when they inform their employer they are pregnant.
- The redundancy protection period will be extended to 18 months from when the child is born, stillborn, expected to be born, or is placed for adoption. This period of 18 months will include any period of relevant leave taken (Maternity, Adoption and qualifying Shared Parental Leave).
- Someone taking shared parental leave will also have protection from redundancy, once they have taken at least six weeks of shared parental leave.
- Enhance protections from dismissal in certain circumstances for the same cohort of employees on par with rights being introduced in Britain through Make Work Pay agenda.

Primary legislation

27. Paternity leave

Catch up with GB

DfE will enhance paternity leave rights for employees with a new child (including birth, surrogacy or adoption).

- Employees will be permitted to take paternity leave as two separate blocks of one week, or a single block of two weeks.
- The Department will allow paternity leave to be taken at any time within the first 52 weeks following birth or adoption, rather than 56 days as at present.
- The notice requirements for paternity leave related to birth and surrogacy will be reduced from 15 weeks to 28 days for each period of leave.
- Paternity leave will now be a day-one right for employees.
- The Department will legislate to make it possible to increase the duration of paternity leave in the future.

Primary legislation

G4 SUPPORTING INDUSTRIAL ACTION

The period since the 2024 BDC has seen a series of pay claims and some industrial disputes in a period of high inflation, combined with a series of budget impasses afflicting the operation of the NI Executive.

Here is a list which is exhaustive but not comprehensive of workplaces where affiliates stood up for members and got results:

Employment	Unions
Healthcare workers	GMB, NIPSA, UNISON, UNITE
Teachers NI	INTO, NASUWT, UTU and NAHT
University sector NI	UCU UNITE UNISON
Further education NI	UCU and NASUWT
NI Civil Service	NIPSA and GMB
GB Civil Service	PCS
Education Authority NI	UNISON GMB NIPSA and UNITE
Local Govt Leisure Services	UNITE, GMB, SIPTU, NIPSA
Higher and Further Education	UCU, UNITE, NASUWT
Boeing Airbus	UNITE, GMB
Sodexo/ NIO	PCS
NI Water	GMB, NIPSA and UNITE
Poundland, Tesco Distribution	USDAW
National World, BBC	NUJ
City Hotel Derry	SIPTU
Haldane Fisher, Moy Park	UNITE
Translink	UNITE, SIPTU and GMB
Pilgrim Food	UNITE
Collins Aerospace, Interface, Linamar	UNITE
Glen Dimplex, Lycra	UNITE
BT	CWU UK
Dale Farm, Sysco	USDAW
Balcas, Ulster Carpets, Seagate,	UNITE
G4S	GMB
Bamfords/Wrightbus	UNITE
PSNI	NIPSA and UNITE
NICVA	SIPTU
Gordons Chemists	SIPTU
Harland & Wolff/ Navatia	UNITE GMB



NIPSA's outgoing GS Carmel Gates and her successor Maria Morgan



PCS's Gayle Mathews

SECTION H
~ APPENDICES



APPENDIX 1: STANDING ORDERS

1. Northern Ireland Conference

1.1 The Northern Ireland Conference shall meet biennially. The place and date shall be decided by the Northern Ireland Committee, subject to the approval of the Executive Council.

1.2 The Chairperson for the Sessions of the Conference shall be the Chairperson of the outgoing Northern Ireland Committee.

1.3 A Conference Arrangements Committee of five persons and two substitutes, elected at the previous Northern Ireland Conference, shall be responsible for the arrangements of the business of Conference, and generally take charge of the meeting place.

2. Representation

Only bona-fide members or full-time officials who are members of an affiliated trade union and resident in Ireland may be appointed as delegates in accordance with the following scales:

a. Trade unions with an affiliated membership in Northern Ireland of less than 1000 members = one delegate

Trade unions having an affiliated membership in Northern Ireland of:-

1000	members but less than			2000	=	2	delegates
2000	"	"	"	3000	=	3	"
3000	"	"	"	4000	=	4	"
4000	"	"	"	5000	=	5	"
5000	"	"	"	6000	=	6	"
6000	"	"	"	7000	=	7	"
7000	"	"	"	8000	=	8	"
8000	"	"	"	9000	=	9	"
9000	"	"	"	10000	=	10	"
10000	"	"	"	11000	=	11	"
11000	"	"	"	12000	=	12	"
12000	"	"	"	13500	=	13	"
13500	"	"	"	15000	=	14	"
15000	"	"	"	16500	=	15	"

16500	"	"	"	18000	=	16	"	
18000	"	"	"	19500	=	17	"	
19500	"	"	"	21000	=	18	"	
21000	"	"	"	22500	=	19	"	
22500	"	"	"	24000	=	20	"	
24000	"	"	"	25500	=	21	"	
25500	"	"	"	27000	=	22	"	
27000	"	"	"	29000	=	23	"	
29000	"	"	"	31000	=	24	"	
31000	"	"	"	33000	=	25	"	
33000	"	"	"	35000	=	26	"	
35000	"	"	"	37000	=	27	"	
37000	"	"	"	39000	=	28	"	
39000	"	"	"	42000	=	29	"	
42000	"	"	"	45000	=	30	"	

and one delegate for each 3000 members above 45000 and up to 75000 and thereafter in accordance with Paragraph 37 of the Constitution of Congress.

Trade Unions must include women delegates in their delegation in accordance with the following scale:

b. Trade Unions having an affiliated membership in Northern Ireland of more than 500 but less than 1000 women shall appoint at least one woman delegate.

Trade Unions having in Northern Ireland:-

Women Membership	Women Delegates	
1000 but less than 5000	at least	2
5000 but less than 10000	"	3
10000 but less than 15000	"	4
15000 but less than 20000	"	5

and at least one woman delegate for each 5000 women members above 20,000.

c. Local Councils of Trade Unions may appoint delegates (who must be members of affiliated trade unions) to the Conference in accordance with the following scale:-

Up to 6500 affiliated membership	1 delegate
Over 6500 affiliated membership	2 delegates

3. Motions

3.1 Affiliated organisations may submit up to three motions for the Conference Agenda. Motions must be signed by the authorised official of the organisation and forwarded to Congress not later than the date specified in the notice to organisations.

3.2 The Northern Ireland Committee may submit up to three motions for the Conference Agenda.

3.3 Motions must be within the scope of the Objects of Congress as set out in the Constitution. They must relate to the matters provided for in Paragraph 37 of the Constitution, viz "matters relating to the internal, industrial, economic and political conditions of Northern Ireland, and of direct concern to Northern Ireland members only". The Executive Council shall determine whether motions submitted are in order and its decision shall be final.

4. Business of Conference

The business of Conference may include the following items:

a. The Report of the Northern Ireland Committee

b. Special Reports from the Northern Ireland Committee

c. Motions from affiliated organisations and the Northern Ireland Committee

d. Guest speaker/s invited by the Northern Ireland Committee

5. Election of Northern Ireland Committee and Conference Arrangements Committee

The election of the Northern Ireland Committee (NIC) will be conducted using the single transferable vote system. The Congress Constitution provides that the election of the Northern Ireland Committee must result in the election of at least four women.

In the event that only four women are nominated for election to the Northern Ireland Committee, prior to the vote commencing these candidates will be declared elected and an election will be held to elect a further 14 members of the committee using the single transferable vote system.

In the event that there are more than four women nominated for election to the Northern Ireland Committee a single election will be held using the single transferable vote system. If the outcome of the election of the Northern Ireland Committee results in less than four women being elected then the following procedure should apply. The last man to be elected amongst the 18 should be replaced by the last woman to be eliminated. In the event that this does not result in four women being elected then the second last man to be elected shall be replaced by the second last women to be eliminated and so on until the minimum requirement of four women is met.

Nominations of persons for election as members of the Northern Ireland Committee (18 members, including four Reserved Seats for Women and one Reserved Seat for Councils of Trade Unions) and of the Conference Arrangements Committee (5 members plus 2 substitutes) may be made by any affiliated trade union entitled to representation at the Conference. Each nomination must be signed by the authorised official of the nominating union and must be forwarded so as to reach Congress not later than four weeks prior to the date of Conference. Nominations must be confined to persons who are delegates to Conference. A nomination shall not be made without the expressed consent of the person nominated.

Nominations for the Conference Arrangements Committee must be persons who are delegates to Conference, and may not be a member of the incoming Northern Ireland Committee.

A list of persons nominated as members of the Northern Ireland Committee and of the Conference Arrangements Committee will be sent to each affiliated organisation and to delegates not later than two weeks prior to the date of Conference.

6. Methods of Voting on Motions and Reports

Voting at Conference shall be confined to delegates and be by a show of hands, each delegate having one vote. Four delegates shall be appointed as Tellers.

7. Limitation of Speeches

The Conference Arrangements Committee shall make recommendations to Conference on time limits of speeches. No speaker shall speak more than once on the same question except the mover of a motion replying to the discussion.

8. Executive Council

Executive Council members and Congress Officials are entitled to attend Conference. Officials may speak as appropriate on motions or reports.

9. Other Matters

Matters not covered by these Standing Orders in principle shall be dealt with in accordance with the Standing Orders of Congress.

APPENDIX 2: MOTIONS BY SECTOR

Conference motions by Theme

THE ECONOMY & THE FUTURE OF WORK

1. The Good Jobs Employment Rights Bill

Conference commends the dedication and expertise of affiliated trade unions and trades councils whose input into the content of the Good Jobs, NI Employment Rights Bill was essential for this landmark legislation to be formulated. Combined, there is an unanswerable case for justice for all working people across Northern Ireland.

A majority of people understand the need for this legislation and support it. Equally it is clear a majority of MLAs in the NI Assembly would support the bill being completed in this mandate. Yet, the Bill continues to be blocked by one Party at the Executive level.

Affiliates have lobbied and campaigned for rights for all workers, especially those not yet in unions. Affiliates will continue this campaign including taking action necessary to defend the rights of working people.

Consequentially, Conference instructs the NIC to continue:

i. seeking the application of workers' rights in NI that align fully with the highest standards of employment and human rights entitlements on these islands and across the European Union;
ii. campaigning to see the NI Employment Rights Bill ["Good Jobs Bill"] enacted in law as soon as practically possible;
iii. co-ordinating with affiliated trade unions to carry out actions in support of this objective in the face of continuing opposition from conservative political forces and reluctant business interests.

This is too important to let wither in the final days of the present NI Assembly mandate. This legislation will return again and again until workers here have the rights they need for good jobs and a decent life. Affiliates working together will result in working people determining the shape of workers' rights.

NIC

2. Delivering Good Jobs

Conference strongly supports a Good Jobs Bill that would see workers in Northern Ireland benefit from a significant uplift to workers' rights, including secure contracts, better pay, improved work life balance and stronger trade union rights.

However, progress has stalled and as of mid-2026 draft legislation has still not been published. Conference is concerned that further delay could require the legislative process to restart and see the timeline for implementation slip, meaning uncertainty and limbo for workers in Northern Ireland.

In addition, there remains work to do to ensure that provisions in the Bill apply to all workers in Northern Ireland and do not exclude, for

example, agency workers from banded hours contracts.

Conference is clear that workers in Northern Ireland must not be left to fall behind the provisions from Westminster or Leinster House, which are already delivering improvements to workers' terms and conditions and their livelihoods.

Measures in the Bill must be brought forward as soon as possible to tackle exploitative practices such as fire and rehire and zero and short-hours contracts, strengthen flexible working rights and raise collective voice at work through a right for trade unions to access to workplaces.

Conference calls on the Northern Ireland ICTU to:

- Campaign to raise awareness of the importance of delivering Good Jobs for workers in Northern Ireland.
- Call for banded hours contracts to apply to all workers.
- Put pressure on the Northern Ireland Executive to pass the Good Jobs Bill before the end of the Northern Ireland Assembly mandate in 2027.

USDAW

3. A workers-centred manufacturing strategy for Northern Ireland

Conference notes that manufacturing is a key pillar of our economy, employing one in ten workers with many of those being skilled, unionised jobs.

However, the sector suffers from underinvestment, high energy costs and a long-term lack of ambition from Stormont.

The last year saw the UK government publish a ten-year industrial strategy, but no similar plans have been brought forward in Northern Ireland.

Conference mandates the incoming executive to launch a campaign demanding that Stormont work with trade unions to develop an ambitious strategy for the future of the manufacturing sector.

This strategy must have good jobs at its heart and ensure long-term economic resilience so that workers do not pay the price for a Just Transition, AI or external shocks such as shifts in trade and the global economy.

This strategy must focus on:

- Supporting the growth of advanced manufacturing
- Growing our domestic supply chains

A successful manufacturing strategy will require public investment and funding, including

- Investment in expanded, high-quality apprenticeships and adult retraining
- Seed funding for manufacturing start-ups, with strong conditionality
- Investment in R&D and innovation
- Investment in actions to future-proof the manufacturing sector and our vital energy infrastructure
- Positive public procurement with strong conditionality

Northern Ireland's workers must no longer be at the mercy of anonymous market forces.

Acquisitions and takeovers must be subject to new rules designed to

ensure transparency, protect workers, and mitigate the economic impact of corporate takeovers. This must include:

- The right for a recognised trade union to scrutinise a takeover bid
- Extended consultation periods
- Protections for workers' terms and conditions
- Guarantees of continuous employment to prevent asset stripping.

Where there is a threat to jobs, skills and critical infrastructure, or a proven strategic imperative, the Department for the Economy must be mandated and funded to intervene to:

- Take a strategic stake in an enterprise
- Take an enterprise fully into public ownership

UNITE

4. Artificial Intelligence in the Interests of Working People

AI is transforming society and work, yet workers and trade unions lack a meaningful say over its introduction. The benefits risk being captured by large technology companies, while job losses, deskilling, surveillance, exploitation and inequality are borne by working people.

Conference believes AI should raise living standards, strengthen public services and empower working people, rather than undermine employment and concentrate economic and political power. Its use must be guided by the public interest, with workers and trade unions having a meaningful say.

Conference calls on NIC-ICTU to campaign for the Northern Ireland Executive and UK Government to:

1. Establish independent AI regulators with robust enforcement powers, tasked with ensuring AI protects workers' rights, the environment, public safety, privacy and economic wellbeing.
2. Introduce national AI plans setting out a strategy placing household prosperity alongside economic growth and national security, promoting workers' rights, public safety and state assets while resisting undue influence from Big Tech.
3. Increase public ownership and democratic control of strategic AI assets and infrastructure, including national datasets, with trade unions represented on governing boards.
4. Prevent AI-driven offshoring, requiring employers to demonstrate that AI restructuring will not undermine employment and conditions.
5. Give recognised trade unions the right to negotiate and agree the introduction and use of AI in the workplace.
6. Ensure trade unions are embedded in decisions over the development, procurement and deployment of AI across public services.

CWU

5. AI Deployment

This Conference Notes with Concern:

- The increasing deployment of Artificial Intelligence across workplaces in Northern Ireland,
- Research findings for the financial Services Union/Tasc report that reveal 88% of respondents believe

AI will lead to job displacement

- The regulatory uncertainty facing Northern Ireland, which sits in a legal gap between the UK's deregulated framework and the EU's stricter protections.
- The possible risk this uncertainty poses to workers.

This Conference Believes

- AI should be used to augment job quality and safety,
- No worker should have their livelihood, performance, or working conditions decided solely by an automated algorithm without human intervention and accountability.
- As AI adoption accelerates, particularly in financial services worker consultation and collective bargaining are essential to ensuring technological change benefits employees, consumers, and employers alike.

This Conference Instructs the Executive Committee of ICTU to

1. Lobby the Northern Ireland Assembly and relevant departments to ensure local AI policies explicitly adopt the worker protections established in the EU AI Act.
2. Develop and distribute a draft AI agreement to all affiliates which could form the basis of a collective bargaining agreement
3. Secure strict commitments from employers that all critical employment decisions—including hiring, promotions, disciplinaries, and redundancies—remain subject to final human review and veto.
4. Campaign for employer/ Government -funded, upskilling programmes to ensure workers facing automation are retrained for higher-value roles, rather than forced into redundancy.

FSU

6. Artificial Intelligence, Workers' Rights and Democratic Control of Technological Change

Conference rejects the claim that technological change has a single predetermined outcome.

There is no economic law that says productivity gains must result in lower wages, worsening conditions or redundancy. Whether the benefits of artificial intelligence take the form of higher profits for shareholders or improved living standards for workers is ultimately a question of power, ownership and collective organisation.

SIPTU believes that workers must have a meaningful role in shaping how new technologies are introduced, governed and used. Technologies that increasingly influence how people work, communicate and access services should be subject to democratic oversight, transparency and accountability rather than being controlled solely according to the priorities of private corporations, shareholders and financial markets.

Conference therefore reaffirms that technological progress should be governed in the public interest, shaped through collective bargaining and democratic participation, and that the wealth created through technological innovation should be shared fairly by those whose labour creates it.

Conference Notes:

1. The growing deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI), automation

and algorithmic management is increasingly accompanied by claims that job losses, wage restraint and the displacement of workers are inevitable consequences of technological progress.

2. History demonstrates that technological change does not determine social outcomes. The benefits of increased productivity have been secured through collective struggle, trade union organisation and collective bargaining, while the costs have too often been borne by working people.
3. New technologies can be used to eliminate repetitive and dangerous work, improve productivity and create opportunities for more meaningful and fulfilling employment. Equally, they can be used to intensify labour, increase surveillance, weaken collective bargaining and transfer a greater share of wealth from labour to capital.
4. Much of the current AI boom is driven by claims that artificial intelligence will dramatically reduce labour costs and generate unprecedented future profits despite continuing uncertainty regarding its capabilities, reliability and long-term profitability. Conference notes that many of these claims are directed as much towards investors and financial markets as towards workers and consumers.
5. The rapid expansion of AI is also driving investment in energy-intensive data centres, creating significant environmental challenges in relation to energy use, emissions and water consumption.

Conference Believes:

1. There is nothing inevitable about AI being used to lower wages, worsen working conditions or eliminate jobs.
2. The deployment of AI is a social and political choice, not a technological inevitability.
3. The central question is not whether AI exists, but who owns it, who controls it, who benefits from it and who bears its costs.
4. Productivity gains arising from technological innovation should be shared fairly between labour and capital through higher pay, improved conditions, reduced working time and expanded opportunities for training and development.
5. Workers should not bear the cost of any future collapse in speculative AI investment through redundancies, attacks on terms and conditions, cuts to public services or austerity measures.

Conference Resolves:

1. To oppose the use of AI for wage suppression, deskilling, excessive workplace surveillance, union avoidance or compulsory workforce reductions.
2. To campaign for collective bargaining rights over the introduction, deployment and governance of AI and workplace technologies, including a statutory duty on employers to consult recognised trade unions before introducing significant AI or automated systems.
3. To seek agreements ensuring that productivity gains arising from AI are shared fairly with workers

through improved pay, reduced working time, enhanced terms and conditions, retraining and career development opportunities.

4. We call upon NIC-ICTU to establish a cross-union working group of affiliated unions, workplace representatives and relevant experts to develop a model Technology & Artificial Intelligence Agreement for negotiation with employers across both the public and private sectors.
5. To advocate that Technology Agreements include provisions relating to:

   i) Trade union consultation prior to the introduction of significant new technologies;

   ii) Collective bargaining over technological change;

   iii) Job security and protection against compulsory redundancy arising solely from AI deployment;

   iv) Retraining, upskilling and lifelong learning;

   v) Transparency in workplace data collection and algorithmic decision-making;

   vi) Human oversight and review of decisions affecting workers;

   vii) Protection against excessive workplace surveillance and monitoring;

   viii) Environmental standards relating to digital infrastructure; and

   ix) The fair sharing of productivity gains through improved pay, reduced working time and enhanced conditions.

6. To support environmental standards for AI infrastructure, including renewable energy use, energy-efficiency requirements, transparent reporting of energy and water consumption, and the recovery and reuse of waste heat where feasible.
7. To work with sister unions across Ireland and Britain to ensure that technological change serves workers, communities and society as a whole rather than the interests of a small number of investors and technology corporations.

SIPTU

7. AI

Conference notes that the accelerating development of Artificial Intelligence has the potential to emancipate humanity or lead to profound risks, including loss of control, extreme inequality, mass disruption, and existential threats. The outcomes of this technological revolution are not inevitable; they are contingent on social choices.

Responsibility for the development of and control over AI must not be left solely in the hands of unaccountable private tech companies or the super-rich who are purely motivated by the maximisation of profit and power.

Ensuring AI benefits humanity requires political action across infrastructure, regulation, democratic oversight, global equity, ethics and the environment.

As the largest civil society organisation trade unions, should play a leading role as the collective voice of working people and their families in seeking protections and democratic

accountability over such technology and to ensure that AI augments human work rather than replaces it.

Conference therefore calls on NIC-ICTU to campaign for robust regulation and democratic human oversight of AI and automated systems across the economy and wider society.

Conference also calls on NIC-ICTU to encourage and facilitate the sharing of affiliated union's knowledge and resources, and to utilise the experience of the international trade union movement, to allow for collective consideration of the implications of the introduction of AI and automated systems to the workplace. The aim being to increase understanding of AI, identify risks, and to develop strategies that protect working people, enhance the quality of jobs, and formulate demands to ensure that workers share in the technological gains.

B&DTUC

8. AI-generated deepfakes

Congress notes the increasing incidence of AI-generated deepfakes, manipulated imagery, fabricated audio, and other malicious digital content targeting teachers.

Congress further notes that, while recent legal developments have addressed certain forms of intimate image abuse, there is still a lack of clear, comprehensive national guidance for schools and employing authorities on how to respond to the wider range of AI-generated digital manipulation affecting staff.

Congress calls on the ICTU to campaign for:

1. The publication of data on incidents involving AI-generated and social media-based abuse of teachers;
2. The development and issue of clear guidance and protective frameworks to safeguard teachers from AI-generated harassment and malicious digital content; and
3. Updated advice to employment authorities on how best to protect and support teachers who are the innocent targets of such degrading treatment.

Congress further calls on education employing authorities to:

- Establish clear investigative procedures and proportionate consequences for those found responsible, including, where appropriate, removal to another educational establishment.

INTO

HUMAN RIGHTS & EQUALITY

9. Male allyship in ending violence against women and girls

Conference notes that Northern Ireland is the most dangerous place for women in the UK, with over 30 women murdered since 2020 and police responding to domestic abuse incidents every 16 minutes.

Congress commends the campaign work of the ICTU Women's Committee and affiliate unions on ending violence against women and girls, including domestic abuse, sexual harassment and misogyny.

Conference recognises that while women and girls are disproportionately affected, ending violence against women and girls requires the active involvement of people of all genders, including men and boys.

We believe that male allyship is essential to challenging the attitudes, behaviours and social norms that enable violence and gender inequality, and that men have an important role to play in prevention, education, early intervention and creating cultures of respect and equality.

Conference further recognises the importance of engaging men and boys without shifting responsibility away from perpetrators or diminishing the voices and experiences of women and girls.

Congress therefore calls upon the Northern Ireland Committee to:

Work with ICTU Women's Committee to develop a male allyship programme and events which aim to:

- engage and educate men and boys in preventing violence against women and girls and challenging harmful gender stereotypes
- help men to challenge sexism, harassment and inappropriate behaviour in the workplace
- make men in positions of leadership to use their influence to challenge misogyny, harassment and violence and to promote gender equality
- encourage men to become positive role models and allies

PCS

10. End Violence Against Women

Conference recognises that misogyny and violence against women and girls, including digital abuse, are endemic in Northern Ireland. This is a workers' and workplace issue and presents a fundamental challenge to our movement.

Conference notes that, while the Stormont executive states that the issue a priority, the Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) act 2022 has still not been delivered. This also gives rise to concerns that promised legislation to criminalise sexually explicit deepfake images relating to adults may be similarly delayed. The NI executive continues to underfund support services for victims and survivors, and Women's Aid is the only such service in the UK without core government funding.

Conference further notes that, although the LRA has issued guidance on workplace sexual harassment,

there is no NI-wide reporting mechanism on how complaints are raised or how many perpetrators are disciplined or dismissed. This contributes to significant underreporting due to a public lack of confidence in the system as well as fear of victimisation.

Conference therefore:

- Demands the immediate delivery of the Safe Leave Act
- Demands immediate operationalisation of the promised amendment to the Justice Bill criminalising sexually explicit deepfake images relating to adults
- Demands that Stormont provide adequate multi-annual funding for Women's Aid and other specialist support services
- Mandates the incoming executive to campaign for mandatory reporting by employers of sexual harassment complaints and outcomes, with penalties for refusal and the establishment of an ombudsman to investigate employer failures.

UNITE

11. Martin O'Hagan

This conference notes that 2026 marks the 25th anniversary of the murder of journalist and trade unionist Martin O'Hagan.

Conference notes that no one has been brought to justice for that murder.

In 2013 the office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland commenced a review into the handling of the murder.

The Ombudsman has confirmed that the review has been completed but has not published the report despite calls by the NUJ.

Conference calls on the ICTU to support the renewed NUJ campaign for immediate publication of the report and for an independent investigation into the murder.

NUJ

12. Political Instability and Reform of the Institutions of Government

Conference notes with deep concern that over 28 years since the signing of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement that the political institutions are still in a precarious position.

Conference believes that the recurrent collapse of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive has resulted in years of lost progress on workers' rights, and economic development.

Conference believes that congress should support measures which:

i. remove the ever-present threat of collapse and
ii. prevent one party from blocking debate on legislation.

Conference calls on congress to lead the civic discussion on how the institutions can be reformed to deliver stable governance and ensure that all the commitments made in the Good Friday Agreement are delivered.

NASUWT

13. Act now to challenge unstable and ineffective government

Conference notes with concern that the ongoing political instability in Northern Ireland has meant that for 5 out of the past 10 years our devolved government has not been functioning.

As we approach the end of the current Assembly mandate, very little legislative progress has been made since the institutions were restored in February 2024. The democratic deficit resulting from the legacy of the conflict has not been overcome, with an Assembly that lurches from crisis to crisis unable to undertake meaningful strategic policymaking or economic planning.

Conference recognises that these problems are exacerbated by mechanisms embedded in the power-sharing model set out in the Peace Agreements which are in desperate need of reform.

Conference recalls the role of the trade union movement in the peace process and its support for the rights and equality safeguards in the Good Friday Agreement, with strong public services as the key delivery mechanism for a better quality of life. However, the reality we face today is rising poverty, widening health inequalities, equality law falling behind the rest of the UK and the Republic of Ireland, failure to keep pace on workers' and trade union rights and no Bill of Rights for NI.

Conference notes that the current Executive's inability to set a budget or to even get the Good Jobs Bill to the floor of the Assembly demonstrates not just an ineffective government but one which is actively running down our public services.

Conference believes that it is time for the trade union movement to mobilise for the progress we have waited too long for. It is not enough to keep hoping that a new mandate will bring something different from the Executive when long-standing commitments, such as those in the New Decade New Approach agreement, remain unfulfilled.

Conference calls on the Northern Ireland Committee to rally the trade union movement to consistent action providing a platform for workers, our families and communities to demand the rights and services we are entitled to.

Conference further calls on the Northern Ireland Committee to support reform of the political institutions with the aim of ending the cycle of unstable government that has blighted the last decade. This includes calling for the removal of the St Andrews veto and the Executive Agenda veto which have been deployed to thwart and block progress on the progression of rights-based policies and issues, including workers and trade union rights.

Conference further calls on the Northern Ireland Committee to lobby the UK and Irish Governments as co-guarantors of the Peace Agreement to fulfil their obligations to ensure the effective functioning of government in NI. This includes engaging with the UK government to progress meaningful reform of the political institutions, provide a more suitable financial settlement to support public services and ensuring the delivery of the long overdue Bill of Rights.

UNISON

14. Age Discrimination

This BDC is familiar with the call for legislation to outlaw discrimination on the grounds of age in the provision of goods, facilities and services. This is despite promises that it would be

brought forward in 2016, 2021 and again in 2022. Several motions to ICTU conferences endorse this policy.

A positive development in the current NI Assembly mandate is the introduction of a Private Member's Bill from Claire Sugden MLA, who also chairs the APPG for Older People. Her PMB aims to "make provision for the prohibition of unjustified discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the ground of age in connection with the provision of goods, facilities, and services."

Similar legislation is available in Scotland, England, Wales and the Republic of Ireland, and is making a real difference for older people. There are examples of this in both private and public sectors, such as availability of car insurance for people over an age barrier which is at the discretion of financial service providers (or more often an algorithm) or medical consultants pre-testing people's 'mental capacity' before commencing life-saving treatment.

After a decade of promises, older people across Northern Ireland are being denied the same rights and protections as fellow NI citizens with 'protected characteristics', and other older people across these islands due to the development of an 'older people's sea border'.

This conference believes that age discrimination legislation in relation to goods, facilities and services must:

- Be framed with a strong purpose clause containing a series of clearly articulated goals.
- Include public, private and voluntary sector in it's scope.
- Include strong protections for older people across all areas of goods, facilities and services, in particular health and social care and financial services.
- Include people of all ages in the scope of the legislation.
- Learn from the experience of the pandemic not to marginalise our older citizens but to value their continued contribution to our society.

This conference calls on the incoming NIC to work with other older peoples' organisations and campaign vigorously to bring Ms Sugden's legislation to belated fruition so that older citizens may get justice. Also, if the PMB is not passed in this mandate, to lobby for its return as an NI Executive Bill in the next NI Assembly.

RWC (proposed by NIC)

15. Strengthening Workplace Protections and Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled and Neurodivergent Workers and Workers with Mental Health Conditions in Northern Ireland

Conference Notes:

1. Disabled workers in Northern Ireland continue to face serious barriers to getting, keeping, and progressing in work.
2. Mental ill health among workers in Northern Ireland is increasing. Stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout are now some of the main causes of workplace absence. Long waits for mental health services and uneven access to Occupational Health support mean that many workers do not receive help quickly enough. This increases the risk of crisis and people leaving the workforce early.

3. The main law protecting disabled workers in Northern Ireland is still the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. As a result, workers in Northern Ireland have weaker and less consistent protection against discrimination, harassment, and victimization than workers in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland.
4. The NIC-ICTU Disabled Workers Equality Committee does valuable work. The Disability Champions training programme has also improved knowledge and support across trade unions.

Conference Believes:

1. Everyone has the right to receive timely and effective reasonable adjustments. Access to these adjustments should not depend on an employer's goodwill.
2. Disabled and neurodivergent workers are more likely to face capability procedures, disciplinary action, and unfair dismissal. These outcomes are often caused by delays in providing reasonable adjustments or by refusing to provide them.
3. Mental health must be treated as seriously as physical health. Workers experiencing mental ill health are often penalised through absence triggers, performance management, or capability procedures. In many cases, early support and appropriate adjustments could prevent these problems.
4. Trade unions must lead the campaign for equal legal protection and workplace systems that provide adjustments as a normal part of working life. Workers should not have to repeatedly explain or prove their health conditions or support needs.

Conference Calls Upon the Northern Ireland Committee (NIC) to:

1. Work with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) to campaign for urgent and wide-ranging reform of disability equality law. This should include one equality law that provides stronger protection and closes current gaps.
2. Lobby the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly to oppose cuts, freezes, or changes led by Westminster that reduce disability and welfare benefits. Such changes can penalise vulnerable workers and push households into poverty.
3. Coordinate a united strategy among all affiliated unions in Northern Ireland to secure the mandatory use of the Workplace Reasonable Adjustment Disability Passport in both the public and private sectors. Agreed adjustments should remain in place when management changes.
4. Promote the widespread use of the ICTU Neurodiversity Guide in workplace bargaining. This should support clear policies on neuroinclusive recruitment, sensory adjustments, and flexible working.
5. Press the Northern Ireland Executive, the Public Health Agency, and employers to provide timely access to mental health support. This should include counselling, trauma-informed Occupational Health assessments, and workplace adjustments that reduce stress and prevent burnout. Workers experiencing mental ill health must also be protected from unfair treatment in the application absence management or capability procedures.

UTU

CHALLENGING THE FAR RIGHT

16. Challenging the Far Right

Conference will recall that a motion was carried at the 2024 BDC condemning 'the outrageous display of racial and ethnic hatred on display' that summer. Since then, we have endured two further summer outbreaks of lawless racism visited upon our members, our neighbours and our friends. There is evidence that this violence is organised both 'on the ground' as well as online.

This movement has a long history of anti-fascism, and this conference commends those who exercise that tradition.

Counter-protests on the streets are instrumental in challenging the far right and this movement has developed additional tools in the continued struggle against ignorance and prejudice.

This includes the work of ICTU's dedicated anti-racism project, as well as the work of affiliates who provide training to their members along with support and assistance to workers in vulnerable communities and at workplaces exposed to attacks online and in person.

Therefore, Conference instructs the NIC to:

i. build on the work of the trade union movement in challenging the rise of far-right politics;
ii. develop strategies to equip trade union members to counter and dispel far right propaganda and protect refugee and migrant workers in their places of employment;
iii. work alongside partners in wider society in countering racist violence and protecting refugee and migrant communities;
iv. campaign to ensure that the NI Executive produce a credible and resourced racial equality strategy which has the support of black and minority representative groups in particular;
v. be prepared and co-ordinate action in opposition to the forces of fascism and to challenge government failings regarding their responsibilities to refugees and immigrant workers.

NIC

17. Resisting the far right through anti-racist solidarity

Conference condemns the racist violence and pogroms against Black and migrant members of our communities that have occurred over the last three summers. Conference is concerned that racist, Islamophobic and anti-migrant organising has been taking place in local communities and on social media by far rights actors intent on instilling fear through disinformation and dehumanising rhetoric.

Conference notes the important work undertaken by the Equality Coalition's subgroup on Monitoring Far Right and Racist Activity, including four published reports mapping and analysing the online activity of far right individuals and organisations and the responses of political parties and elected representatives. This work by the Rabble Cooperative has provided a vital insight into how racist violence

is mobilised and what civil society and statutory authorities can do to prevent and address it.

Conference believes it is important to focus on the powerful demonstrations of practical solidarity that many trade unionists were involved in during the pogroms in June 2026. Trade unions organised with their Black and migrant members to ensure their safety, engage with their employers and meet the immediate needs their families faced. In the midst of horrific attacks, community-based women's organisation Anaka mobilised hundreds of people, including many trade unionists, to form a network of support providing meals, shopping, transport, emergency accommodation and a physical presence alongside families being intimidated. The images of these courageous women helping people escape burning homes made more of an impact than anything the racists set out to achieve.

Conference calls on the Northern Ireland Committee to reaffirm its commitment to existing work progressing anti-racism campaigns and training across the trade union movement, lobbying for more effective law and policy to tackle racism and all forms of religious bigotry, and taking a lead in visible public demonstrations of anti-racist solidarity.

Conference further calls on the Northern Ireland Committee to support affiliates to build a programme of resistance to the far right that starts with doing the hard work of practical solidarity. This includes providing opportunities for capacity building, networking and sharing of best practice across affiliates and a visible anti-racism campaign that focuses on the positive community-building activities that the trade union movement is encouraging workers to get involved in.

Conference further calls on the Northern Ireland Committee to play an active role in challenging statutory bodies, such as the PSNI, Housing Executive and local councils, whose response to the racist pogroms has been inadequate. The Committee should also renew their efforts to promote the widespread adoption and implementation by employers of the Joint Declaration of Protection for Dignity at Work and Inclusive Working Environments.

Conference further calls on the Northern Ireland Committee to examine the recommendations in the four Rabble Cooperative reports and consider what work Congress can undertake to support the implementation of these recommendations alongside our partners in civil society.

UNISON

18. FIGHT RACISM

Racism is a tried and tested weapon of the capitalist class. It is deliberately stirred up by the rich when they seek to divide potential opposition to their economic and social regime.

Over the last few years, the rich have been even more blatant in their use of racism as a divide and rule tactic to divert people from the role of the capitalist class in creating the social and economic misery that plagues society. It is now common currency to see news reports of billionaires openly bankrolling racist, populist far-right political parties, disseminating racist

ideas through media platforms and even supporting violent neo-Nazi gangs.

These rich reactionaries have been partially successful in seeding sections of the population with racist ideas. In some extreme cases, a small minority of the most backward elements of society have been mobilised to racist violence. Although these numbers are currently tiny, they have a significant impact on communities and should be taken very seriously.

The most recent outbreak of racist violence was a case in point. The numbers involved in violence were small but they had a massive impact in society and, without opposition, they will attract wider layers to their cause.

Opposition to the growth of racism must be based on a number of key objectives:

- Countering the racist narrative of the billionaires and their political representatives through information and education.
- Trade union-based struggle against the social and economic poverty that provides the underpinning for racism. Such a struggle can remove the opportunity for the far-right to present themselves as the defenders of working-class communities.
- Recognition that racism exists across the sectarian divide. Failure to adequately recognise this fact has given space for racist ideas to grow in some areas.

Our movement should remain confident that the vast majority of society stands steadfast in opposition to violent racism and against the forces of reaction who seek to mobilise around is. The most recent example of organic solidarity was during the recent racist riots where the work of trade unions in workplaces and community organisations against racist attacks took on heroic proportions. The public display of mass opposition that saw many thousands take to the streets in demonstrations against the racists not only sent a message of solidarity to those under attack but also a warning to the racists about the potential power of the trade union and anti-racist movement.

The trade union movement can be rightly proud of the role it has played. We must be ready to mobilise if there is a repeat of the attacks.

Conference pledges that, in the event of further upsurges in far-right violence, trade union centred demonstrations should take place, and, if necessary, trade unions should repeat our tactics during the period of the 'troubles' when we called members out on half and full day actions to send a warning to the perpetrators of violence. These actions had a direct effect of pushing back against the forces of reaction and of showing massive solidarity across society.

NIPSA

19. Counter the scourge of the Far-Right

Conference recognizes the work done by affiliate unions to counter the scourge of the Far-Right.

Conference was appalled by the scenes of a brutal knife attack on 08 June but that this terrible event was no excuse for the appalling race riots and pogroms that followed.

Conference welcomes foreign nationals into our unions and our communities and recognizes the valuable work they do to invest in and support all our communities, especially their work in the health service.

Conference also recognizes the work of activists in our communities, such as Lurgan Against Racism in our own Trades Council area whose work builds better communities, not tears them down.

Conference calls on the Northern Ireland Committee and its affiliate unions to redouble our efforts to both support our members who have come to this part of the world to work. Conference also calls for further engagement in a programme of education for all our members to promote the work of immigrant workers and the benefits that they bring. Conference also calls on affiliate unions to better engage with community anti-racism groups such as Lurgan Against Racism, to better support and promote their work.

CTUC

20. Defending education from attacks by the far right

Conference recognises the growing threat posed by the far right. Far-right politics feeds on insecurity and division, scapegoating migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, while offering no serious answer to underfunded public services, insecure work, poverty or inequality.

Education is central to this struggle. Schools, colleges and early years settings are civic institutions and bastions of community life, where children encounter equality and inclusion, families turn for support, and communities remain connected in periods of challenge and division. They provide safe, inclusive spaces for children and families exposed to hostility, exclusion or fear.

Conference is concerned these spaces are increasingly under pressure. Far-right narratives seek to undermine confidence in education and educators, attack an inclusive curriculum, intimidate education workers, target migrant and refugee children and families, and present equality and human rights education as political threats rather than democratic responsibilities.

The trade union movement must be clear: defending education from the far right is central to defending workers, children, communities, democracy and the future of public services.

Conference calls on the government to reject far-right narratives which attempt to portray educators as a threat to patriotism and commit to defending education as a space for learning, inclusion, and community.

Conference calls on ICTU to build on its campaigning and challenge the attacks on public education, to defend education and educators from xenophobic and hate-fuelled narratives, support education workers facing intimidation, stand with refugees and migrants, and defend the trade union rights needed to resist attacks on public services.

NAHT

21. Tackling Racism and Promoting Anti-Racism in Education

Conference condemns the organised, planned racist violence that erupted in Belfast and other parts of Northern Ireland in June 2026, which saw homes set alight, families forced to flee, and communities terrorised.

Conference believes that the trade union movement has a duty to condemn all forms of hate crime and to campaign in support of those who are under attack, as well as promoting education to reinforce why such behaviour is unacceptable in a civilised society.

Conference further believes that schools and colleges should be places of safety, welcome, and support for all children and young people, and the education system must play a central role in challenging racism and building a genuinely inclusive society.

Conference commends Congress for its work on tackling racism but calls on all political leaders to show the same solidarity with communities who are under attack.

Conference call of congress to demand that:

i. all politicians are unequivocal in their condemnation when racist attacks occur;
ii. the Department of Education and employers develop a contingency framework to protect educational continuity and pupil safety during periods of civil unrest;
iii. workers who can't get to work during civil unrest are not financially penalised;
iv. education employing authorities provide mental health and trauma support for pupils who have witnessed attacks on their homes or communities and
v. anti-racist education is part of the new curriculum.

NASUWT

PUBLIC SERVICES

22. Wildfires, Climate Change and Fire & Rescue Service Resilience

Conference recognises that climate change is increasing the risk and severity of extreme weather events, including wildfires, creating growing risks for workers, communities and the environment in Northern Ireland.

Conference notes that firefighters responding to large and prolonged wildfires can face difficult terrain, extreme temperatures, heat stress, fatigue, smoke and potentially harmful contaminants, while these incidents place significant demands upon Fire and Rescue Service personnel and resources.

Conference welcomes the Wildfires in Northern Ireland Strategic Framework 2025–2030 and accompanying Action Plan, including their focus on prevention, preparedness, response, recovery and enforcement.

Conference notes, however, that successful wildfire resilience depends ultimately upon the workers required to deliver it.

Conference supports the Fire Brigades Union's Wildfire Resilience campaign and believes that Northern Ireland's approach must place firefighter safety and operational resilience at its heart.

Conference is particularly concerned that structural firefighting Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is not designed for prolonged strenuous activity at wildfire incidents in high temperatures. Firefighters require appropriate specialist lightweight wildfire PPE, equipment, training and welfare arrangements.

Conference further believes that increasingly prolonged and resource-intensive wildfire incidents must not compromise the ability of the Fire and Rescue Service to maintain an effective emergency response to other incidents across Northern Ireland.

Conference therefore calls upon the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to:

- Support the full implementation and proper resourcing of the Northern Ireland Wildfire Strategic Framework and Action Plan, with meaningful involvement of the trade unions representing frontline workers.
- Campaign for sufficient firefighter and emergency control staffing and safe crewing levels to maintain operational resilience during prolonged or simultaneous wildfire incidents.
- Campaign for specialist lightweight wildfire PPE, appropriate vehicles and equipment, recognised wildfire training and competency standards, and suitable welfare, hydration, rest and relief arrangements.
- Call for the occupational health risks to firefighters and other workers from wildfire smoke, contaminants, extreme heat and fatigue to be properly addressed, including appropriate health surveillance.
- Support continued investment in wildfire prevention, sustainable land management, public awareness and community resilience; and
- Support effective multi-agency and cross-border cooperation and mutual assistance during major wildfire incidents.

Conference believes that climate policy cannot simply be about reducing emissions in 2030 or 2050; it must also be about protecting the workers dealing with the consequences of climate change today.

Climate resilience requires investment in workers, properly resourced public services and a strong trade union voice for those on the frontline.

FBU

23. Assaults on Public Service Workers and Calling for Enhanced Protections

This Congress notes:

- The continuing rise in assaults, threats, intimidation, and abuse directed at public service workers across the Northern Ireland, including but not limited to local government staff, health and social care workers, education professionals, transport workers, civil servants, and frontline emergency personnel.
- That these attacks have severe physical, psychological, and economic consequences for workers, their families, and the communities they serve.
- That current legislative protections, including the specific offence of assaulting police officers, fire and rescue personnel, and ambulance workers, do not extend to the full range of public service workers who face similar risks in the course of their duties.

This Congress believes:

- That every public service worker—regardless of role, department, or employer—deserves to carry out their duties free from violence, harassment, and abuse.
- That assaults on public service workers are not only attacks on individuals but attacks on the essential services that sustain society.
- That the current patchwork of protections is inadequate and fails to reflect the realities faced by workers across public services.

This Congress condemns:

- All assaults, threats, and abusive behaviour directed at public service workers.
- The failure of successive governments to provide comprehensive legislative protection for all workers delivering public services.

This Congress resolves:

1. **To call for a unified, crosssector public campaign**, led jointly by trade unions, public bodies, local authorities, health trusts, education institutions, and government departments, clearly condemning all assaults on public service workers and promoting a zerotolerance approach to violence and abuse.
2. **To lobby Stormont** to extend existing legislative provisions—currently covering police, fire and rescue personnel, and ambulance workers—to all workers employed in public service roles, including but not limited to:
    - Local government and council staff
    - NHS and social care workers
    - Teachers, lecturers, and education support staff
    - Public transport workers
    - Civil servants and agency workers delivering public functions
    - Public facing staff in libraries, job centres, courts, and community services
3. **To campaign for the introduction of a specific offence covering assaults**, threats, or harassment

against any public service worker, with appropriate sentencing guidelines and mandatory reporting requirements.

4. **To support affiliated unions** in developing workplace policies, training, and reporting mechanisms that strengthen protection for members and ensure incidents are recorded, investigated, and acted upon.
5. **To work with employers and public bodies** to ensure that no worker is pressured to continue working in unsafe conditions and that all affected workers receive appropriate support, including medical care, counselling, and legal assistance.

Congress confirms that it will not rest until such times that our members are afforded the protection from being assaulted whilst serving the public.

GMB

24. Budget

Conference notes the deepening crisis across our public services, with unsafe staffing levels, rising workloads, growing waiting lists, crumbling infrastructure and repeated failures to deliver fully funded, timely public sector pay awards.

This crisis is the result of years of inadequate Westminster funding, short-term budgets and a fiscal framework that does not reflect our real level of need.

Conference believes that Northern Ireland requires a budget from Treasury that is funded above current need, as is the case in Scotland, and sufficient to fund decent public services, fair pay awards, appropriate staffing levels and long-term investment in service modernisation.

Conference rejects any attempt to make workers and our community pay for underfunding through cuts, privatisation, job losses or regressive household charges.

Conference therefore resolves to campaign for a budget settlement that will secure recurrent Treasury funding based on need, not austerity limits or one-off packages.

Conference further resolves to continue to campaign to protect public services from cuts, privatisation and regressive charges.

Conference instructs the incoming NIC to lobby all Assembly party leaders, the First and Deputy First Ministers and the Secretary of State to agree and deliver these demands.

Our campaign should include coordination across the trade union movement supporting joint industrial action where appropriate to defend pay, jobs and services.

NIPSA

25. Basic Income for the Arts

Over the last few years, the issues of low pay, precarious work and poverty have become ever more prevalent across the arts and entertainment industry. Flaws in the universal credit and wider social security system are a major barrier for access for many creative professionals. Equity's Northern Ireland Committee notes that the Basic Income for the Arts scheme has recently been made permanent in the Republic of Ireland. The devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales are actively investigating

the possibility of similar schemes. It seems that the time for Basic Income for the Arts is here – but not in Northern Ireland. In contrast to these prevailing trends, NI Communities Minister Gordon Lyons has recently stated that no such initiative will be considered in Northern Ireland.

Equity urges the NIC- ICTU Conference to support their campaign which calls on the Northern Ireland Executive to:

- reconsider a pilot basic income for performers and creative workers in Northern Ireland akin to the scheme in the Republic of Ireland.
- work closely with the trade union movement to ensure any pilot scheme aligns with the existing collective bargaining framework to support those in work to earn well.
- work closely with the trade union movement to ensure the scheme does not impact upon funding provided directly to Arts Council Northern Ireland or other arts Arms Length Bodies.
- work closely with Irish Government, Westminster and the other devolved nations to share learnings and investigate potential joint action.

EQUITY

26. Seafarer Jobs and Pay in the Ferries Sector

Congress welcomes growth in ferry passenger numbers and freight volumes into ports in Northern Ireland, including the 55% increase in passengers carried between Birkenhead and Belfast since 2019.

Congress applauds the progress the RMT has made with measures to increase recruitment and retention on all Stena Line's ferry services in the Irish Sea. This includes recent agreements to increase seafarer jobs and apprenticeships.

Congress notes with concern that P&O Ferries continues to undercut pay, investment and jobs at ferry operators in the Irish Sea that recognise the RMT for collective bargaining purposes. P&O operate two ferries registered in the Bahamas on the Cairnryan-Larne route with agency seafarers contracted to work at sea for two months on the National Minimum Wage. Passenger numbers on these services have fallen 14% since 2019 and by 4% in the last year.

Congress notes with concern that the UK Labour Government's Mandatory Seafarers Charter which comes into force in December will not cover seafarers working on commercial ferry routes between the UK and Northern Ireland.

Congress therefore commits to campaign with the RMT and lobby politicians in Northern Ireland to support the RMT campaign for the Charter to apply to seafarers working on commercial ferry routes between the UK and Northern Ireland and for improved measures on pay, safe roster patterns, holiday pay sick pay and pension rights for seafarers which reflect collective bargaining arrangements.

RMT

27. Outsourcing

Congress notes the policy shift announced by the UK Government in June 2026, which formally acknowledged that decades of "outsourcing by default" have damaged public sector resilience, eroded terms and conditions, and enriched private contractors at the expense of workers and public services.

Congress welcomes the introduction of mandatory Public Interest Tests and five-year insourcing strategies at Whitehall level, alongside the commitment to bring 2,000 facilities management workers across 83 civil service buildings back into direct public employment by 2028.

However, Congress recognises that the Whitehall model cannot simply be transposed unchanged to Northern Ireland. With Northern Ireland public procurement accounting for roughly £3 billion annually compared to well over £300 billion UK-wide, the Westminster threshold requiring five-year insourcing roadmaps only for bodies spending over £100 million would let the vast majority of NI public sector employers off the hook.

Congress stands with all affiliate unions opposing the scourge of outsourcing. Congress congratulates the PCS members working for Sodexo at Erskine House in Belfast on their principled stand against a shameless employer that has made hundreds of millions of pounds from the public purse while running down services, cutting hours, offering poverty pay rates, and engaging blatantly in union-busting tactics. These workers have demonstrated extraordinary resilience in fighting for dignity, fair pay, and equal treatment on the civil service estate.

Congress therefore calls upon the Northern Ireland Committee to:

1. Campaign alongside PCS to demand that the Westminster government immediately extend its civil service insourcing commitments to all UK Government property in Northern Ireland, ensuring that outsourced facilities and support staff in buildings like Erskine House are brought directly into civil service employment with matching pay and pensions.
2. Demand that the UK Cabinet Office apply a regionalised public interest test to all reserved government service contracts in Northern Ireland, ensuring that lower-value contracts are not permitted to bypass public sector delivery.
3. Coordinate movement-wide industrial and political anti-privatisation campaign.
4. Organise training for affiliate unions on developing "in-house bids" for NI public procurement.

PCS

28. Delivering excellence in public transport

Conference recognises the service and dedication of public transport workers and the critical importance of modern and sustainable public transport to society. Bus and rail services play a critical role in reducing poverty and advancing social inclusion. They are vital in delivering equality for those with disabilities and reducing social isolation. They help connect rural communities and counter regional imbalances. Our public transport services also help ensure the safety of late-night workers and promote the growth of the nighttime economy.

At a time of accelerating climate change, a modal shift to public transport is essential for a Just Transition to a sustainable future.

Public transport workers and their unions have repeatedly demonstrated their commitment to a modern public transport system – a system which delivers good jobs and serves communities.

Yet consecutive Stormont ministers have failed to properly support or invest in the service. Funding for public transport in Northern Ireland is lower per head and per journey than anywhere else on these islands.

Conference calls on the incoming Executive to support the campaign by affiliated public transport unions for public transport excellence and to:

- Campaign for increased funding of our bus and rail services, including
- Increased investment in our currently inadequate public transport infrastructure and network
- Ring-fenced funding for Translink apprenticeships
- Campaign against cuts to services and discount schemes: measures such as fare freezes must not be funded by cutting service
- Campaign against any attempts to undermine or privatise Translink or to outsource vital functions such as engineering, thus hollowing out the public transport skill base

UNITE

29. Public Transport

Conference notes that:

Translink is facing cuts across both bus and rail networks reducing an already inadequate public transport system for Northern Ireland;

Students, workers and everyday passengers face an increase in the cost of using public transport;

Government spending on public transport per capita in Northern Ireland is among the lowest in the UK; despite the rural nature of NI, just £486 per capita is spent here on public transport, compared to £841 in Scotland, £1,200 in London and £650 on average across the UK;

Cuts proposed will force fare increases for passengers who rely on the fare promotions for affordable public transport access;

Cuts proposed will have an impact on the volume of traffic on the roads with more people opting to use private transport for their commute, increasing carbon emissions;

Cuts proposed are a massive backward step in developing a public transport model to match the needs of the people of the region;

Cuts proposed open the door for private operators to move in on the more lucrative services such as the 212 service between Derry and Belfast, although private operators will have no desire to provide the essential everyday rural and metro services;

That the huge investment in Belfast Grand central station was promoted as a catalyst to the growth of public

transport in the North, built with public funds to enhance the lives of public transport users.

Conference demands that Stormont:

- Reverses the cuts on public transport provision for the region;
- Increases the investment in public transport across all rail and bus provision to at least the UK average;
- Expands the rail network in the west of the region to correct regional imbalance;
- Introduce the fare structures in other regions which include free bus travel for under 21s;
- Return the fuel duty rebate to public transport as is done in other regions;
- Increase the EV fleet numbers across the network.

Conference calls on NICICTU to campaign to ensure the investment in public transport provision in NI is realistic in relation to the needs of workers in the region, and to the environmental challenges we face;

Conference also calls on NICICTU to campaign to ensure the provision of public transport is kept out of the hands of the private transport companies currently circling like vultures to pick off the lucrative services in our public transport network and destroy the services so vital to so many of our society

DTUC

30. Rebuilding Royal Mail for Workers and the Public

Conference believes Royal Mail is a vital public service facing existential challenges, requiring a new vision that secures its future in the interests of customers, communities and workers, including across Northern Ireland, while utilising its national infrastructure and trusted workforce to create social and economic value.

Conference notes the Business and Trade Select Committee's May 2026 report, *The regulation of postal services*, which found that Royal Mail's service is unacceptable, Ofcom is failing as postal regulator, and reform of the Universal Service Obligation is essential.

Conference calls on the NIC-ICTU to campaign for the Northern Ireland Executive and UK Government to:

1. Fully implement the recommendations of the Business and Trade Select Committee's May 2026 report.
2. Create a level playing field in line with the Good Jobs Employment Rights Bill by introducing a single status of worker and sectoral collective bargaining, ending the race to the bottom based on bogus self-employment, insecure work and low pay.
3. Establish a new regulatory framework that puts universal service, investment, quality of service and sector-wide employment standards ahead of competition, and reviews downstream access arrangements.

4. Build on the UK Government's golden share by developing a new ownership and governance model for Royal Mail, with democratic public control and oversight, and worker and customer representation, supporting investment, diversification, growth and public value.

5. Bring Royal Mail and the Post Office back together, creating a stronger national network delivering postal, banking, government and community services.

CWU

EDUCATION

31. The Cause of Education is the Cause of us All

Conference notes:

- Ulster University's announcement of 450 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) job cuts across all 4 campuses
- The united opposition of the campus Joint Trade Unions (JTUs), UCU, UNITE and UNISON to such devastating job cuts
- The legal obligation on the employer to meaningfully consult the JTUs to avoid and reduce redundancies as well as mitigate impact
- The sustained engagement efforts of the JTUs in opposition to these redundancies and to save jobs in each campus and location
- The stated commitment to the expansion of Magee Campus and its documented importance, as outlined in the New Decade New Approach political agreement and the recent Programme for Government
- The opening of a Voluntary Redundancy Scheme on 14th September 2026, with absolutely no change to the scale of redundancies
- The university's continued refusal to take compulsory redundancies and course closures off the table

Conference agrees that:-

- Ulster University's multi campus model is a key component of widening access, given its role in providing opportunities for higher education to young people far beyond greater Belfast
- The scale of job cuts and consequent risk to courses will inevitably contribute to a brain drain of young people who may be forced to seek education and a future elsewhere
- The level of cuts proposed present a direct threat to the expansion of Magee campus in Derry
- The societal impact of such job losses will have a lasting negative impact on the local economy
- Such a level of job cuts announced in any other sector would have engendered greater adverse political reaction and outrage, including strong demands to reverse such a devastating announcement
- The level of cuts imposed present a direct threat to the expansion of Magee campus in Derry
- Unsafe and dangerous workloads will be a real risk to already overworked staff left behind
- Ulster University faces a tangible reputational risk, further

threatening stability and future expansion

- The lack of transparency and accountability of the University's governing Council raises serious questions about the governance arrangements of third level institutions in receipt of public money
- Any rise in tuition fees, a key demand of university management, is likely to result in greater numbers of young people from working class backgrounds and more marginalised communities being excluded from accessing higher education

Conference demands that Ulster University:-

- Step back from the crippling level of job cuts imposed
- Immediately remove the threat of compulsory redundancies and course closures
- Work constructively with the unions to ensure safe workloads are maintained for all staff
- Commit to work constructively with the JTUs to create governance and oversight structures at the university which are fully transparent and accountable

Conference calls on NICICTU to include the higher cost of multi campus Universities and the need for greater investment in Magee and a specific allocation of additional students for Magee under the MaSN (maximum student numbers) scheme as one of its priorities in the coming Assembly elections.

Conference also calls on the NICICTU to fully support the joint request from the three recognised trade unions, in collaboration with university management, to encourage The Executive Office and Assembly Executive to work with all concerned to provide adequate funding to maintain the current multi campus model for higher education, which benefits students and young people across the whole community.

UCU/ DTUC Composite Motion

32. Social media abuse targeting teachers

Congress notes with grave concern the increasing incidence of social media abuse targeting teachers, including the creation of fake accounts, AI-generated videos, and other forms of online misrepresentation.

Congress recognises that such content is often humiliating, offensive, violent and sometimes sexual in nature, and is having a significant negative impact on the mental health and wellbeing of those targeted. These incidents are becoming more frequent and increasingly sophisticated due to advances in generative AI.

Congress calls on ICTU to campaign for:

1. Acknowledgment of the vulnerability of teaching staff to online misrepresentation, abuse, and bullying; and
2. Protection and support for teachers who are victims of such activity.

Congress further calls on education employing authorities to:

1. Introduce policies that enable schools to take robust and timely action against individuals who create or distribute such material; and
2. Ensure proactive education for pupils on the responsible and ethical use of AI and social media.

INTO

33. Our Forgotten Children

Conference recognises that some of the most vulnerable children and young people in our society are those whose lives are affected by multiple and complex challenges, including experience of the care system, poor mental health, developmental trauma, addiction, poverty, homelessness, educational disengagement and criminal or sexual exploitation.

Conference further recognises that these challenges rarely exist in isolation and that the needs of vulnerable children and young people cannot be adequately addressed by any single Department, agency, profession or service.

Conference notes the commitments contained within the Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 and the Executive's Children and Young People's Strategy 2020–2030 to improve the wellbeing of children and young people through effective cooperation across government and public services.

Conference believes that no child or young person should become a victim of gaps between services, departmental boundaries, eligibility criteria or failures in communication and accountability.

Conference further believes that early intervention and sustained, trauma-informed support represent not only a moral and social responsibility, but an investment in the future wellbeing of our communities and society.

Conference therefore calls upon the ICTU Northern Ireland Committee, working collectively with affiliated trade unions, to campaign for:

i. A fully coordinated, cross-departmental approach by the Northern Ireland Executive to identify and support children and young people experiencing multiple vulnerabilities, with clear ministerial responsibility and accountability for outcomes.
ii. Effective cooperation, information sharing and, where appropriate, pooling of resources across Education, Health, Justice, Communities and other relevant Departments and statutory agencies so that support is organised around the needs of the child rather than departmental boundaries.
iii. Properly funded, accessible and trauma-informed early intervention services, including mental health, addiction, social care, education, youth, housing and family support.
iv. Meaningful participation of children and young people with lived experience in the design, delivery and evaluation of the services intended to support them.
v. Recognition and appropriate resourcing of the workers across education, health and social care, justice, youth and community services who support vulnerable children and young people.
vi. The development by the trade union movement of a coordinated campaign to advocate for these children and young people, challenge failures in provision and hold government collectively accountable for ensuring that no child is forgotten and no young person is left behind.

UTU

HEALTH

34. Build A Modern NHS

The foundation of the NHS remains one of the most significant achievements of the working class.

In the period running up to its establishment, it was opposed by powerful capitalist interests, private health profiteers and political representatives of capitalism.

Their opposition was based on the idea that everything, including health, should have a price and should be rationed to make profit for the super-rich. They did not end their opposition at the foundation of the NHS which continues unabated to the present day.

History has taught us that the only true defenders of the NHS are its original champions - the working class, the labour and trade union movement and committed health service campaigners. Defence of our health service and securing its future for the next generations will depend on the same interested parties who created it.

With this in mind, conference commits to playing its role in fighting for a national health service.

Conference pledges to fight for:

- A modern nationalised health service free at the point of use and funded by universal taxation.
- A comprehensive service that covers all health requirements.
- The return of those elements of the health service that vested interests have outsourced.
- Nationalisation of the pharmaceutical industry as part of fundamental health service provision
- Recognition of the rights of communities to have comprehensive services provided in appropriate locations.
- Centring the health service on our heroic health workers who have provided outstanding service in the most difficult conditions.
- Democratic control and management of the health service to be in the hands of patients, communities, health service workers, trade union representatives and political representatives.

NIPSA

35. Flexible Working and Staff Retention in Healthcare

Conference notes that healthcare professions with predominantly female workforces continue to experience significant barriers to accessing flexible working arrangements, despite ongoing workforce shortages and increasing pressures on staff.

Conference believes that the refusal of reasonable flexible working requests contributes directly to the loss of experienced healthcare professionals, negatively impacting staff wellbeing, workforce retention, service delivery, and patient care.

Conference further notes the commitment within the Northern Ireland Good Jobs Bill to promote fair, flexible, and family-friendly employment practices and the opportunity

this presents to strengthen workers' rights.

Conference asks that committee

1. Campaign for a statutory right to flexible working from day one of employment for all healthcare staff in Northern Ireland.
2. Call on healthcare employers to demonstrate clear and objective justification when flexible working requests are refused.
3. Challenge the Department of health NI to accurately publish how many flexible working requests they receive, numbers refused and approved and reasons for refusal
4. Lobby the Northern Ireland Executive to ensure the Good Jobs Bill incorporates robust protections and enforcement mechanisms for flexible working rights.
5. Promote flexible working as a key workforce retention measure to support experienced staff, particularly women, to remain in the healthcare workforce.

SOR

36. Safe Staffing = Safe Care

Congress notes that maternity services across Northern Ireland are being pushed by years of understaffing, underinvestment and increasing demand. Midwives, maternity support workers and student midwives are working in conditions that are neither safe nor sustainable.

Congress is alarmed that 45% of midwives reported experiencing burnout often or always. A recent RCM survey showed that 93% of maternity staff said staffing levels directly affect the quality of care they can provide.

During the survey week, 77% said their unit was unsafely staffed. At the same time, maternal deaths are now 20% higher than a decade ago.

Congress recognises that safe staffing is not simply a workforce issue; it is a patient safety issue, a women's health issue and a workers' rights issue. Staff cannot continue to carry the burden of systemic failure while employers and the Executive fail to provide the investment needed to deliver safe care.

Congress therefore calls on the ICTU to campaign alongside affiliated unions for the Executive to deliver sustained investment in safe maternity staffing and invest in safe and modern maternity estates, and ensure staff have the time and resources to deliver equitable, high-quality care.

Congress further calls on the ICTU to reaffirm that no healthcare worker should be expected to routinely work beyond safe limits or without breaks, and that protecting the wellbeing of maternity staff is essential to protecting the safety of every woman, baby and family who depends on our maternity services.

RCM

37. Safe Staffing Legislation – Training for Implementation

Conference recognises and thanks the health trade unions, for the sustained work that ensured we had progress towards safe and effective staffing legislation.

Conference further recognises that this legislation has the potential to strengthen accountability, improve workforce planning, support safer services and give staff a clearer

framework for raising concerns about unsafe staffing levels.

However, Conference believes that legislation alone will not deliver safe staffing unless union officials are properly trained to understand what the legislation means, how it should operate in practice, and how it can be used collectively to protect staff and service users.

Conference therefore calls on the NIC ICTU health committee to develop and deliver multi professional accessible training and guidance on the legislation, including how to identify breaches, raise concerns, gather evidence, use reporting mechanisms and hold employers and decision-makers to account.

Conference further calls on the NIC ICTU health committee to monitor implementation across health and social care employers, identify recurring or systematic failures and then co-ordinate an effective trade union response

CSP

38. Defend and renew our public health system

Conference notes with concern the extreme pressures facing our health and social care (HSC) system and the impact of underfunding, outsourcing and structural inefficiency on healthcare workers and the public. The approach taken by healthcare leaders and policymakers has given rise to a continuous series of crises, characterised by kneejerk reactions, passing blame and a lack of transparency with no clear lines of decision making.

Conference notes that previous reviews of the system, particularly the Bengoa Report, have focused on a 'burning platform' analogy which promotes service reduction as the only way to achieve a more sustainable system in the long term. However, no clear plan for transformation or reorganisation has been progressed that would meet the needs of the population across the region as a whole, with piecemeal service closures drawing huge public backlash and resulting in pressures elsewhere in the system.

Conference further notes with concern that the NI Executive's lack of progress on agreeing a multi-year budget has left HSC services unstable, vulnerable to cuts and unable to invest in the long-term transformation necessary to better meet the needs of the public.

Conference believes there is a need for a genuine public debate on the future of our HSC system. This should include views from those who use it, work in it, interact with it, advocate for its founding principles, and have ideas for its future based on those principles. Conference believes that people have the right to understand how decisions are made, who is making them, and how we can influence them in advance. We need a public conversation because people are well aware of what's happening in the HSC system but the silence around it has created a sense that we have no choice but to accept the managed decline of our services.

Conference believes that while government pays lip service to tackling health inequalities, the doors have been flung wide open for those who see healthcare as an opportunity for profiteering. Allowing privatisation to take hold of our HSC

system is widening health inequalities and costing lives. Research shows that privatisation is associated with increased rates of treatable mortality, lower quality services and lower efficiency.

Conference calls on the Northern Ireland Committee to:

- Support, through affiliate unions, the development of grassroots, democratic, public debate about the future of the HSC system, not another top-down review.
- Lobby the UK government to provide a financial settlement for NI that is sufficient to support public services at the appropriate level of need. This requires addressing its chronic underfunding of health and social care in NI that has become entrenched due to decades of shrinking capacity in the public system to pave the way for privatisation.
- Lobby the NI Executive to invest in a transformation programme that provides an integrated, holistic vision for HSC services across the region, grounded in rejecting outsourcing and privatisation; valuing the workforce; and upholding equality, rights and quality of life for the whole population.
- Lobby the Minister for Health to work in genuine partnership with health unions to develop systems and delivery models that can deliver quality health and social care and justice for the workers.
- Mobilise through affiliates and trades councils for a public-facing campaign to restore a universal public health service free at the point of need.

UNISON

TRADE UNION ORGANISATION

39. Defending, Valuing and Organising the Community and Voluntary Sector in Northern Ireland

Conference notes that:

1. The community and voluntary sector in Northern Ireland employs approximately 57,000 workers across hundreds of employers and over a thousand sites, with trade union density below 5%.
2. The sector delivers frontline services to some of the most vulnerable people in society, including youth services, women's aid refuges and women's centres, disability organisations, addiction services, food banks, housing, health and community organisations, ethnic minority support groups, environmental projects, and training and education programmes.
3. These are the services that are the first to identify families in poverty, women fleeing domestic abuse, young people at risk and mental health issues.
4. Since the end of European Social Fund support, each successive replacement funding stream has been reduced by millions of pounds, leaving the sector in serious crisis.

5. Over the same period, local councils have attracted funding to deliver services that were previously delivered by community and voluntary organisations, and new council-led training, education and environmental projects have been established alongside them.
6. The workers delivering these services are among the lowest paid in our economy, often on short-term contracts tied to funding cycles, with little job security.

Conference believes that:

1. Workers in this sector are undervalued relative to the vital work they do, and this is a direct result of chronic underfunding and short-term funding models.
2. The movement of funding and delivery from community organisations to councils reflects a pattern that threatens the survival of independent, community-rooted organisations, and with them the trust, expertise and reach they have built over decades.
3. Cuts to the sector will fall hardest on the communities that depend on it, and on the workers who keep these services running.
4. Short-term funding, late decisions and disproportionate scrutiny cause low pay, insecurity and staff loss, and put frontline services at risk.
5. The sector's low union density, fragmented employers and dispersed workplaces make it one of the most difficult to organise, and it will not be organised without a dedicated, well-resourced and coordinated effort.

The community and voluntary sector acknowledge the support of the trade union movement and the engagement, particularly around May Day that provides a platform to meaningfully engage with our sector.

Conference resolves to:

1. Demand a transparent public audit of funding streams previously available to the sector that have been redirected to or retained by councils and other public bodies.
2. Call on councils and departments to commission services in partnership with the community and voluntary sector rather than duplicating or displacing its work.
3. Campaign for funding conditions that require fair work standards, including at minimum the real Living Wage, secure contracts, full cost recovery, TUPE protection where services transfer, and access for trade unions.
4. Provide support and resources for sector-wide social partnership forum of unions, employers and government, with the aim of establishing sectoral collective bargaining.
5. Commit resources to a dedicated organising strategy for the sector, including an organising team, workplace representative training, and a coordinated approach with other unions through NIC-ICTU to avoid duplication across such a fragmented workforce.

B&DTUC

CHARTERED
SOCIETY
OF
PHYSIOTHERAPY

At the 2024 BDC, Delegates passed a motion from CSP which included the following recommendation:

We also urge all unions to consider how in their communication with members they can continue to spread messages around health improvement – encouraging and supporting members to take part in health screening and vaccination and looking at the opportunities they have as a unions to provide nutritional advice and to encourage activity. We would like to see the ICTU conference brochure include helpful advice such as stretches or local walking routes to combat the amount of time delegates spend sitting.

We encourage delegate to take advantage of the fine advice below from comrades at CSP.

We advise seeking professional advice before starting a new exercise regime. Have a happy and healthy conference!

Everyday movement and stretches

Desk-based exercises:

www.csp.org.uk/publi...rcises

How to fit exercise into your day:

www.csp.org.uk/publi...ur-day

Easy Exercise Guide:

www.csp.org.uk/publications/easy-exercise-guide

Staying healthy at work:

www.csp.org.uk/public-patient/keeping-active-healthy/staying-healthy-work

Video exercises for specific pain

Foot pain:

www.csp.org.uk/conditions/foot-pain/video-exercises-foot-pain

Shoulder pain:

www.csp.org.uk/conditions/shoulder-pain/video-exercises-shoulder-pain

Back pain:

www.csp.org.uk/conditions/back-pain/video-exercises-back-pain

Neck pain:

www.csp.org.uk/conditions/neck-pain/video-exercises-neck-pain

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy provides membership, trade union services and related physiotherapy professional activity throughout the United Kingdom: www.csp.org.uk

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy Registered Office:
3rd Floor South, Chancery Exchange,10 Furnival Street, London, EC4A 1AB

Registered in England No RC000107

STRONGER TOGETHER

CONGRESS

Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Northern Ireland Committee

31-32 Parnell Square West
Dublin 1 D01 YR92

info@ictu.ie

www.ictu.ie

45-47 Donegall Street
Belfast BT1 2FN

info@ictuni.net

www.ictuni.org



Produced by Paul McDonnell – UNITE Member: 20260502
Printed by Trade Union labour.

www.three-creative.com
07818 456539