

WHAT'S HAPPENING.

12 Mar 2019

IT'S TIME TO END POVERTY WAGES AND EXPLOITATIVE PRACTICES IN CARE SECTOR



Poverty wages and exploitative working practices have scarred the social care workforce for decades, UNISON's community service group conference declared in Southport at the beginning of

this month.

At the same time, conference expressed clear doubt over promises from Whitehall that a government Green Paper expected soon will "ensure that the care and support

system is sustainable in the long term”.

That can only happen if “care workers are treated with the dignity and fairness they so deserve,” declared.

Kevin Jackson, for the service group executive, recalled that when he started work in the sector, “I noticed something was wrong with my terms and conditions – I earned less than the other staff members.”

He discovered, he recalled, that “I was on a direct contract. My colleagues were on NHS or local government terms and conditions. I became a steward.”

And now, “in my 20th year in work, we are promised another green paper to make the social care system better.

“But the only people who will deliver for social care workers are this union.”

He called for the sector’s “race to the bottom” to end as soon as possible, so that we can build “a social care system for the many, not the few”.

Conference called for the union’s response to the green paper, when it is published, “addresses the employment issues which are so important to UNISON community members,” including paying the minimum wage for sleep-in shifts, violence at work, not being paid for travelling between home visits, impossible work rotas which include 15-minute care visits, chronically low staff levels and unclear pay slips.

Separately, conference called for a ramped up campaign for fair pay for members working on commissioned services.

One delegate revealed that he and his colleagues had received just one 1% pay rise in nine years while another reported that he is now paid less than he was 10 years ago, when he was transferred from the NHS.

The campaign would include building on

the union-wide Pay Up Now campaign with a specific focus on commissioned services and lobbying politicians for enough funding in contracts to accommodate annual pay rises.