



## LGBT+ Conference 2024 Edinburgh 8<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> November





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## LGBT+ Conference 2024

### Introduction

UNISON LGBT+ City of Edinburgh Branch members were joined by LGBT+ UNISON members from all over the UK at their 2024 LGBT+ Annual Conference early last month at the EICC. Our delegation party of eight was the biggest the Edinburgh branch has sent for many years. The Scottish delegation was dominated City of Edinburgh Branch member who made up almost 50% of the total.

The delegates were: Aisha; Alannah; Barbara; Christine; Ian; Mary & Tom

Our welcome visitor was Julie.

All were Conference newbies and together we represented, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Black and Retired members.



In between all the serious stuff up for debate like mental health issues, discrimination, and harassment (issues which all still proportionally affect the LGBT+ community much more than the general population), all the delegates and our visitor found the energy to have a good time, network & make new friends, and of course have a fun weekend.

Conference ended with a rousing rendition of the Tom Robinson Band's (Sing If you're) Glad to be Gay. And for that day, at that time we all truly were 😊

### Conference Opening – Friday 8 November

Conference opened on the Friday afternoon with events, drop-in sessions, and mini workshops. After meeting for a group coffee and a bite to eat, our delegation entered as a group. The size of our delegation was the subject of admiration in conversations overheard. City of Edinburgh LGBT+ Members Group has truly arrived.





The City of Edinburgh delegates took full part in the events and workshops, etc. In groups and as individuals we attended and contributed to the meeting for Bi+ Members; the how LGBT+ equality organising fits in UNISON information session; the Resourcing and Information on how to organise and campaign in your branch drop-in sessions amongst others.



After a conference orientation session in the main hall, the last Friday discussion session was a meeting of the Scottish Delegation.

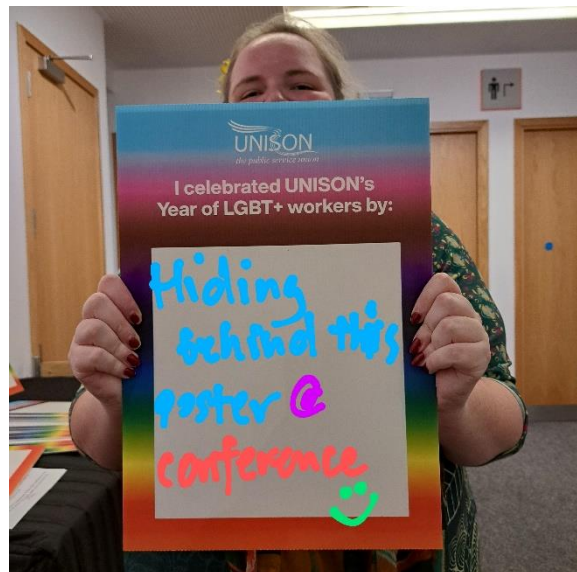
One of our delegates expressed an interest in the plea from Ann Cameron-Burns, National LGBT+ Committee member for Scotland, for more female members. I look forward to meeting her next when Scottish Committee next meet on Saturday 7 December (after Scottish Council).

## First Conference Session – Saturday 9 November

Several hundred more delegates from across the UK joined those who travelled the day before.

Delegates were welcomed by speeches marking the success of 2024 Year of the LGBT+ worker showing how UNISON is the union for LGBT+ public sector workers.

- Thousands of ordinary members trained as a trans ally.
- More LGBT+ Branch officers than ever before
- UNISON as the first UK trade union to establish an asexual (ace) and aromantic (aro) network.
- Largest LGBT+ conference to date
- The significant number of young LGBT+ members in attendance at Conference



## Remembrance

Departed members and especially those victims who lost their lives to LGBT+phobic violence were remembered with a three-minute silence.





## UNISON LGBT+ Annual Report 2024

The UNISON LGBT+ Annual Report 2024 was presented and approved at stages throughout the day. Of note were:

- The successes of LGBT+ motions passed at NDC Brighton 2024
- The growth of the LGBT+ network nationally
- The significant number of young LGBT+ members participating in the regions and at branch.
- The smashing of the target to train 5000 trans allies (over 6000 ordinary members trained)
- The continued fight to ban conversion therapy in Scotland after the UK Government overturned devolved legislation passed at Holyrood.





The Scottish LGBT + committee's contribution to the UNISON LGBT+ Annual Report 2024 highlighted:

- That the Scottish LGBT+ Committee AGM 2023 was Attended by Lillian Macer, Scottish Secretary for UNISON who acknowledged full support to our regional LGBT+ network.
- Committed to take part in Holocaust Memorial Day, to join others to solemnly remember the thousands of LGBT+ lost during the Holocaust and later atrocities.
- Delivering their first LGBT+ Branch Officer Training
- Setting up a LGBT+ Branch Officers support network (yours truly was a founding member, back in June)
- Emergency motion accepted and passed at STUC LGBT+ Workers Conference to prioritise LGBT+ equality under the new Scottish Government leadership.

## Guest Speaker



Super Model Yasim Benoit shared her difficult but liberating experiences as an Asexual & Aromantic person and the discrimination she and others in the Ace community face.

Afterwards she made herself available for Q&A with delegates, not before she had time to chair an interview style debate.

Later she tweeted that it was "Ace in Edinburgh! It was (an) honour to speak at the UNISON LGBT+ Conference! ...Thank you for the warm reception, all of their work into asexual & aromantic inclusion, and for the amazing Ace turnout! A fact sheet is attached.

## Motions

Throughout the weekend all the motions accepted were passed with a vote.

Further work to hold our employers to account in creating workspaces where LGBT+ members can thrive; further work on non-gendered pronouns recognition and use; inclusion for young Black LGBT+ members were typically enthusiastically endorsed while organising and recruitment issues were being debated.

International matters were heatedly supported and opposed from the floor, particularly any involving the Palestinian community at large as well as the Palestinian LGBT+ community. Some boos were heard when one emotive delegate attempted to conflate Palestinians with HAMAS. The Young Members Forum motion expressing "solidarity with Palestine and end





pink washing” was however overwhelmingly passed. An ongoing commitment to engage fully and further with partners in ILGA European & ILGA World communities was also made.

An emergency motion proposed by the Scottish LGBT+ Committee condemning the election of Donald Trump as the next President of the United States of America was not accepted for debate.

There was possibly not a dry eye in the hall, indeed some delegates did need to leave during the section for Campaigning debates. Many young Trans+ delegates spoke very emotionally and shared very personal details about their terrible and sickening experiences growing up, including many thoughts and attempts at suicide after the Yorkshire and Humbershire LGBT+ group proposed their motion on the prevention of young suicide. Such was the emotion; the chair suspended the standing orders on time limits and allowed all who wanted to speak the chance to share.

### **Service Group Meetings**

After the debates in the main hall had finished for the day, most of our delegation attended the Local Government Service Group meeting.

The LG meeting was a heated debate on motions to take to NDC in 2025. A lot of the heat was caused by non-lay members attempting to hijack the vote. Delegates however stood firm and did not allow the various committee members a vote.

### **Second Conference Session – Sunday 10 November**

Main session opened with further campaigning motions including the Scottish LGBT+ Committee motion, Tackling the social determinants of LGBT+ health & wellbeing (motion 29). The motion highlighted the Glasgow Centre for Population Health report, ‘Examining the fundamental drivers of health inequalities among LGBT+ groups within the UK.’ The motion called upon the national LGBT+ committee to (1) work with Labour Link to encourage engagement with UK Labour to resume processing of asylum applications for individuals who have arrived in the UK illegally; (2) acknowledge the unique vulnerabilities faced by LGBT+ asylum seekers; (3) work toward a more compassionate asylum system and disregard methods of entry and to (4) promote understanding of the specific issues faced by asylum seekers in relation to sexual orientation and / or gender, with a focus on the nuances of bi+ identities. The motion was unanimously passed.

An emergency motion titled Uniting Against the Rise of the Far Right was also passed and gave the opportunity for the Scottish delegation to discuss the abomination of Trumps election denied the day before.





## Guest Speaker



UNISON Vice President, Steve North was Sunday's main speaker. Steve revealed the amount of abuse and online hate he had received when he had tweeted in support of trans+ rights. Outlining personal threats of violence to him and his family it had hit him how hard the actual lived lives of the trans+ community and remarking on the considerable trans+ presence he warmly congratulated conference for providing a safe and welcoming space for all what-ever their sexuality or gender, It was a rousing speech that lifted the atmosphere as delegates began to tire late in to the afternoon.

## Discussion groups

The Trans Healthcare discussion group shared information about the lack of Trans+ training for doctors and other health professionals. Large majorities 70 – 80% in some cases were being recorded regarding difficulties in having gender dysphoria acceptance, transphobia, withdrawal of critical services and well publicised problems with the Cass report.

The Political Education Discussion group held a broad debate regarding the ongoing fight against the far right, issues to press the new Labour Government including banning conversion therapy, revision of the Cass report and repeal of anti-union legislation amongst others. They broke into groups to discuss strategies and tactics to tackle these issues.

## Close

As noted above as conference drew to a close and after all the retiring officials received bouquets and heartfelt thanks, the entire attendees were invited down to the podium where we all sang together. The warming feeling of community was palpable.

Ian Ludlam (he / him), LGBT+ Officer (04.12.2024)

