

‘We are Women, We can Fight, We don’t Need the Fascist Right!’

Scottish Women’s Committee Conference and AGM, Saturday 25th April 2026



*Pictured: 6 members from Lothian Health Branch with the SDMC delegate to the Women’s Committee.
All permissions received.*

On Saturday 25th April 2026, 44 Unison women’s members met for their AGM in the Mercure Glasgow City Hotel.

Conference

Following a brief introduction by Devina Rankin as Chair of the Scottish Women’s Committee, there was an in-depth update of changes under the Employment Rights Act (2025) by Karen Osborne, Unison Legal Officer. There still requires to be secondary legislation to implement fully, but there is general agreement the Act will have positive impact on how we operate as a union. We were advised of the FAQs available on Unison’s website.

Discussion centred around the potential impact of the Fair Work Agency. Why pay for a union if this Agency provides the same support for free? The Agency will require to be tested before any

judgements can be made. One hope is that it will substantially speed up the process from the current 1yr+ seen with Employment Tribunals.

There was also discussion regarding the extension of Facility Time.

A short update regarding the creation of the Sub-National Boards in healthcare advised that discussions were still at senior level with Matt McLaughlin supporting the interests of all Health Unions. Progress is not yet at the stage to involve Employee Directors.

The tabled section on The Year of Green Activity (YOGA) was replaced by the attendees visiting an installation at Buchanan Galleries concerning the situation in Palestine. Attendees did however participate in YOGA activities by being photographed holding the YOGA frame created by Tamsin McFarlane, Environmental Steward, Lothian Health Branch.

In a Wellbeing session, attendees learned breathing and relaxation techniques.

Three speakers captured the dangers inherent in the rise of Far-Right politics in Scotland. Pauline from Women Against the Far-Right Scotland¹ campaign informed the conference of significant threat posed by Tommy Sheridan, Reform, etc., which is in essence about them getting richer at our expense. Abuse from the Far-Right is that of men trying to legitimise their threats against immigrants by disguising it as concerning the safety of women when the majority of this violence takes place in the home. There have been and will be Unity marches across Scotland.

Tara from the NASUWT union stated that the Far-Right is a real threat attacking women's rights, that Scotland's exceptionalism died August 2025 with the attacks and hostility towards asylum seekers in Falkirk. Such hostility does not make women safer and poses a real risk of the Far-Right views becoming normalised. She stated that the risks of inaction are great given the targeting of children and young people. Education is seen as a threat to the Far Right. A call to men to step up and call out racism and misogyny is ongoing.

Millie Holroyd 'From Membership to Activism – engaging women in Unison' stated that the finding of scapegoats is not new, but the spread is further and quicker than ever before. Unions are key to the building of connections and of organising collective action. They allow women's voices to be at the forefront of women's events.

AGM

Devina Rankin proposed changes to the Scottish Women's Group constitution. The committee will be a working and campaigning committee of the Scottish Region.

As a part of this remit, it was voted on and agreed that this is the last AGM where the national SOGs proposed a representative on an annual basis. It was recognised that this has led to ongoing issues where representatives have not been re-elected and any work they were undertaking on behalf of the Group has had to be reassigned or abandoned. As of next year, there is to be a call for women to put themselves forward for the Group through their Branch and be signed off by at least one senior office bearer. Future membership period will be three years.

¹ Women Against the Far-Right Scotland is a feminist and anti-racist campaign group which aims to challenge far-right movements and their exploitation of women's safety to spread racism and division. They advocate for a society where all women are safe, supported, and free from abuse regardless of background or origin. Evolved from Stand up to Racism campaign.