Report to Disabled Members’ Conference from Chair of the Disabled Members’ Committee.

Welcome to the Disabled Members’ Annual Conference 2019.

I would like to place on record, my thanks to current committee members Ciara Doyle, Marcia Grant-che, Jan Hutton, Themesa Neckles, Marian Mayer, Andy Shaw, Keith Simpson, Neal Terry, Jim Thakoordin and Chiara Vassell for their contributions and welcome to Lucy Burke, newly elected HE NEC Disabled member representative.

I detail below how the Disabled Members’ Standing Committee have been addressing priorities set by Congress in the last year.

Day of Action for Disability Equality in Education

The DMSC have continued to work with the TUC, UNISON, NEU, NUS, NASWUT, ALLFIE and UKHDM to build on the day of action for disabled members.

I would also like to thank all branches who took part in our first day of action held 21 November 2019 for their excellent work in raising awareness of the issues facing disabled members at work and in supporting our well attended Parliamentary event.

UCU is taking forward the campaign and was fortunate to have had an Early Day Motion (EDM 2617) calling for equality for disabled staff and students in UK education and we thank you for writing to your MP to ask they support our demands. The full text of the motion is outlined below:

That this House recognises the serious challenges and barriers faced by disabled people working in education as revealed by the University and College Union’s survey of its 2,200 members who identify as disabled; pledges its support to enabling positive change, dismantling barriers and improving working conditions for all those with disabilities; and calls on the Government to act in the interests of disabled staff and students in education by: setting time limits for the implementation of reasonable adjustments, initiating a review of building regulations to ensure they are fit for purpose in meeting the accessibility needs of disabled people, implementing a statutory right to disability leave, reaffirming the right for disabled people to access mainstream education and reversing cuts to SEND (Special Education Needs and Disability) provision.

The DMSC have produced resources for the day of action to support all branches and I would encourage you to share any action taken by posting pictures / tweets etc. via the UCU website here https://www.ucu.org.uk/disabilityequality.

The 2019 Day of Action for Disability Equality will be held on Wednesday 4 December 2019.
Congress resolutions

The DMSC have continued to raise awareness on the issues facing unpaid carers by undertaking a survey of members and launching the report ‘Hidden in Plain Sight’ and have been working with Roehampton University on related research. Additional resources for example posters, have also been produced to support and raise awareness for events such as Carers Week.

Mental health continues to be a priority area for the DMSC. The DMSC are working to ensure that reps are given sufficient mental health support and pushing for employers to pay for mental health training for reps. The DMSC have produced wallet sized card providing mental health support for reps – the cards help to raise the issue of mental health in a positive and active way.

The DMSC will produce guidance for members on Neurodiversity at work along with a series of factsheets covering other neurodiverse conditions such as dyslexia.

I am extremely pleased at the DMSC’s work in producing the Reasonable Adjustment Passport and policy. The DMSC have heard of difficulties from members in securing reasonable adjustments in a timely manner and have produced a passport to enable members to keep a record of agreed adjustments removing the need to have to renegotiate whenever there is a change of line manager. You can read more about the passport here https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/1940/Equality-advice-and-guidance#Disability

We have begun the production of a quarterly newsletter highlighting the work of the DMSC and focussing on issues of disability equality. The newsletter is written by Disabled members. I would like to encourage you to send in articles and/or examples of good practice in achieving disability equality at work so that we can share this.

Dying to Work Campaign

UCU has continued to promote and support the TUC’s ‘Dying to Work’ campaign that calls for additional employment protection for terminally ill workers. I am pleased that a number of branches have been successful in getting their employer to sign up this campaign. Further details about the campaign can be found here https://www.ucu.org.uk/equality

Disability Confidence Scheme

UCU has been promoting the Disability Confidence Scheme in which employers make a commitment to ensuring that the talents and needs of disabled people are addressed in the workplace with UCU reps ensuring that the scheme is not used as a tick box exercise and you are urged to support your branches in this.

TUC Disabled Workers Conference 2019

The TUC Disabled Workers Conference took place in May 2019 in Bournemouth. During the conference, UCU held a successful fringe meeting to discuss the 2019 Day of Action. UCU received further support to the Day of Action for Disability Equality from the TUC Disabled Workers’ Committee and have called on affiliates to do the same. Elane Heffernan was UCU’s elected nominee for the TUC Disabled Workers Committee.
UCU Congress 2019

The DMSC was part of a joint fringe with other equality groups at UCU Congress on ‘Using social media apps and digital messaging to campaign on equality’. The fringe heard from Devika Ranjan from Cambridge University, who talked about their online project on ‘ending everyday racism’ from Cambridge University and Riz Hussain, TUC Social Media Officer who provided advice on digital campaigning and accessibility issues for disabled people using social media or apps.

Disabled Members’ Standing Committee 2018/2019

Elane Heffernan, Chair and NEC rep (Hackney College)
Emma-Jane Phillips, NEC rep (Northumbria University)
Ciara Doyle (Greenwich University)
Marcia Grant-che (South Thames College)
Jan Hutton (Novus Prison Branch)
Marian Mayer (Bournemouth University)
Themesa Neckles (Sheffield University)
Andy Shaw (Warwickshire College)
Keith Simpson (City University)
Neal Terry (Newcastle College)
Jim Thakoordin (Bedfordshire ACE)
Chiara Vassell (Croydon College)

Delegates to TUC Disabled Workers Conference 2019

Elane Heffernan (Delegation Leader)
Emma-Jane Phillips
Marcia Grant-che
Jan Hutton
Marian Mayer
Themesa Neckles
Andy Shaw
Keith Simpson
Chiara Vassell

Delegates to UCU Congress 2019

Elane Heffernan
Emma-Jane Phillips
Marian Mayer
Keith Simpson
Chiara Vassell

Observers to UCU Congress 2019

Jan Hutton (FE)
Themesa Neckles (HE)

Branch Observer to UCU Congress 2019

Andy Shaw