



UCU London Region NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to our latest newsletter

WE HOPE that you are keeping safe and well.

There is little doubt that as social distancing measures are likely to remain in place for the foreseeable future, higher, further, and adult education provider employers are contemplating mixed-delivery models, reviewing income, funding streams and staffing structures. The employers will also be contemplating contingency arrangements for a phased return to workplaces. While grant-funding for 16-19 and adult skills is secured in the short term, we need to be vigilant to ensure that employers do not adopt long-term measures in response to the crisis that are ill-thought through, detrimental to further education staff and learners, and involve rushing back to work when it is unsafe to do so.



In the London prison education sector, the union had an important victory ensuring that teaching staff were sent home to work remotely. Many college branches also campaigned to be sent home prior to the official lockdown. In higher education, the government's failure to deliver any guaranteed additional funding is already leading to problems. The regional office has written to all FE and HE employers seeking collective agreements covering furlough of staff, delivery models and future plans. Your local UCU reps are completing a survey about employer approaches to these issues as well as health and safety arrangements for working on site during lockdown.

We want to hear about your experiences, good and bad. Has your employer been meeting regularly with the union? Have they agreed a home-working policy to cover the coronavirus emergency? Are they providing all the equipment and support you need to do your job? Do you feel able to make the decisions you need to safeguard your health and welfare, and that of the people around you?

In this edition, you'll find an article from London further education regional official Adam Lincoln on the housing crisis and how tenants' unions are fighting back, and another on the recruitment of members during the crisis.

As always, you can get in touch with us via the regional office email address – londonregion@ucu.org.uk. Please let us have your views and experiences. In the meantime, stay safe and healthy, and we'll be back with another newsletter soon.

Barry Jones and Adam Lincoln, Regional Officials

Recruiting in the time of Coronavirus



THE SCALE and speed of change has been unprecedented, and we find ourselves in a radically different and rapidly changing situation. This is a critical time for all of us, and a crucial time to recruit, and build branch connections so that we are in the strongest position in every workplace, and in the sector as a whole.

Now is the time to stand together and make our voice heard. There is strength in numbers – don't let the marketplace dictate the terms of our recovery.

Please reach out via your networks so colleagues who are not yet members can join right away. You can forward this newsletter.

Join UCU: <http://join.ucu.org.uk>

STAND TOGETHER, STAND STRONGER



ACORN: A lifeline in lockdown



THE HOUSING crisis in the UK is nothing new. The chronic lack of affordable homes to buy or rent, severe shortages of social housing, falling wages, precarious jobs and the impact of brutal austerity, all add up to a housing crisis. Many are at the mercy of profiteer landlords, charging high rents for substandard accommodation. The current pandemic means many workers are waiting for back-payments of wages from government. Self-employed and casualised workers are relying on a broken universal credit system. Tenants are at risk of missing rent payments and losing their homes. In our communities we are isolated and cut off from each other. The government's response to the crisis has been delayed and full of holes.

In recent years tenants have organised into community unions to build power in their communities, support tenants' rights and fight for economic and social justice. The principal tenants' union is ACORN: <https://acorntheunion.org.uk>

Through their Coronavirus Community Support Network, ACORN has helped over 1,500 households across the country in the last month with deliveries of food and prescriptions; calling residents to combat social isolation and joining with other organisations to provide support and volunteers where needed. This is a staggering achievement under difficult circumstances. ACORN has also been campaigning for better protections for renters, lodgers and mortgage holders, with nearly 45,000 signatures on their petition and the government announcing a three-month break from evictions during the crisis. For current campaigns and more information see: <https://acorntheunion.org.uk>

If you need help, or want to volunteer or donate see: acorntheunion.org.uk/corona
ACORN has partnered with the London Renters' Union which is organising across the city to help residents and workers. If you live and work in London contact them here: <https://londonrentersunion.org/>

UCU'S NATIONAL TRAINING TEAM

AS YOU will appreciate, face-to-face courses are cancelled until it is safe for them to continue. The training team are working on ways to get some teaching online - however setting up quality, online courses can take time.

In the meantime there are some excellent learning materials for reps at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/enotes

More news on UCU online training when we have it. In the meantime, if you need more information please contact: training@ucu.org.uk

MY UCU



WE ARE all adapting fast to new ways of organising and we need all members to update their membership

record at My UCU to include:

- branch
- preferred email
- home postal address
- mobile phone number

This will ensure communications reach you promptly, so we can act fast to represent, defend, and advance your interests. Stay safe, stay in touch, and get organised.

Please check your record at: <https://tinyurl.com/ycodyhuz>

THANK YOU

ABOVE ALL - STAY SAFE

UCU advice on coronavirus can be found at: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/coronavirus>
Information on the coronavirus job retention scheme is here:

<https://tinyurl.com/ydyfx9ec>
And the government's latest guidance on financial support for education, early years and children's social care: <https://tinyurl.com/yd5k4vww>



"Until now, I never understood why you got so excited when someone walked past the house."