

**Meeting of: Women Members Equality Conference**

**Location:** **Manchester Innside Hotel, Manchester**

**Date:** **Thursday 16 November 2023**

**UNCONFIRMED MINUTES**

**Present (attendees):**

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| Louise Alldridge | Plymouth University |
| Gina Bevan | NPTC |
| Julie Blake | University of Birmingham |
| Vicky Blake | University of Leeds |
| Cecily Blyther | Petroc |
| Julie Britain | The Manchester College (The LTE Group) |
| Amanda Brunton | University of Cambridge |
| Peta Bulmer | University of Liverpool |
| Lucy Burke | Manchester Met University |
| June Campbell | University College London |
| Laura Chuhan Campbell | Durham University |
| Anastasia Christou | Middlesex University |
| Jennifer Dods | Leeds Beckett University |
| Nina Doran | City of Liverpool College - Clarence Street |
| Jo Edge | The University of Edinburgh |
| Sofia Eleftheriadou | University College London |
| Janet Farrar | The Manchester College |
| Carla Finesilver | King's College London |
| Matilda Fitzmaurice | Lancaster University |
| Kirsten Forkert | Birmingham City University |
| Jessica Gagnon | The University of Manchester |
| Alison Gaughan | Kirklees College |
| Rebecca Harrison | The Open University |
| Kirsty Harvey | Lakes College West Cumbria |
| Ruth Holliday | University of Leeds |
| Gillian Jack | The Open University |
| Claudia Jefferies | City College Plymouth |
| Mary Esther Jennings | Eastern Region Retired Members Branch |
| Dotlin Kesler | Bradford College |
| Lubna Khan | Bradford College |
| Zoulika Lamamra | University of Teesside |
| Rhiannon Lockley | Birmingham City University |
| Maxine Looby | Oldham College |
| Jacqui Lovell | Liverpool John Moores University |
| Sophia Lycouris | The University of Edinburgh |
| Moona Ma | University of Salford |
| Rubi Mahmood | University of Derby |
| Marian Mayer | Bournemouth University |
| Naomh McKee | NOVUS |
| Paula McLean | Sheffield Hallam University |
| Justine Mercer | University of Warwick |
| Shakthi Nataraj | University of Lancaster |
| Themesa Neckles | University of Sheffield |
| Lorraine Neil | Capital City College Group |
| Lara Norris | The Manchester College |
| Katherine O'Brien | The University of Manchester |
| Ellen Owens | University of Reading |
| Christina Paine | London Metropolitan University |
| Carlie Pendleton | Goldsmiths, University of London |
| Regine Pilling | Capital City College Group |
| Jessica Redway | University of Winchester |
| Kathryn Rimmington | Southern RMB |
| Jennifer Rivas Perez | University of Leeds |
| Patricia Roche | Blackpool and the Fylde College |
| Lisa Rull | University of Nottingham |
| Shirley Searchwell | Walsall College |
| Chris Sheehy | North West RMB |
| Maddalena Tacchetti | University of the West of Scotland |
| Sue Taplin | University of Gloucestershire |
| Jo Taplin-Green | London School of Economics |
| Grace Tebbutt | University of Sheffield |
| Maria Walker | Novus |
| Saira Weiner | LJMU |
| Carol White | Nous |
| Elaine White | Bradford College |
| Wendy Yarde | CapitalCity College/Kings Cross |
| Cecilia Yu | University of Warwick |
| Yashi Yuan | University College London |
| Miriyam Aouragh | University of Westminster/Harrow |
| Lorraine David | University of Bedfordshire |

**In attendance**: Charlotte Nielsen (equality support official)   
 Jenny Sherrard (Head of equality and policy)   
 Tim Cobbett (minutes)

1. **Welcome and Introduction**
   1. Jo Edge (University of Edinburgh and chair of the Women Members’ Standing Committee) welcomed delegates to the Women Members’ annual conference.
   2. The Chair mentioned that no fire drill was planned so please follow the safety measures in place if you hear the alarm.
   3. The Chair referenced regular access breaks and that we would stick to those, and that the Conference is Hybrid so bear with us on any technical issues.

**Role and Function of Conference**

* 1. The Chair read out from the Member Code of Conduct and asked all delegates to bear this in mind during the Conference.
  2. The Chair outlined that the chat function is turned off, but those attending online could indicate when they wish to speak and will be unmuted when called by the Chair.
  3. All voting Members have a voting card, please don’t vote if you are an observer.
  4. The process for Motions will be outlined later when we reach that point.
  5. There was thanks for the 3 outgoing Committee Members and a Welcome extended to 5 new members joining the Committee.

**Conference Business**

**Minutes of the 2022 Women Members Conference**

2.1 No matters of factual accuracy were raised.

2.2 No matters arising were raised.

**Annual Report of the Women Members Standing Committee**

2.3 Pat Roche introduced the annual committee report, referencing the  
 conference theme of autonomy.

2.4 The Committee have highlighted the double standards that exist in access  
 to abortion and related services, there have been some gains on this over  
 the past year.

2.5 Pat drew attention to page 3 of the report and the work on parental leave  
 reform.

2.6 Work is ongoing on sexual harassment – it is still not taken seriously by  
 some employers, but there has been progress on legislation.

2.7 The campaign, with other groups, against rail ticket office closures, has  
 been successful as the Government u-turned on this.

2.8 Pat highlighted that the UCU briefing on supporting safer sex work is  
 available on the UCU website and in paper form for those at the  
 Conference in-person.

2.9 The Chair thanked the Vice Chair for presenting the report.

**Keynote Speakers**

The Chair introduced a short video created by UCU Members at the Teeside Branch, where people were interviewed about what would make the most difference at their institution to promote gender equality. The video explored expectations around gender, the current situation in relation to the gender pay gap, childcare and work and intersectionality.

The Chair introduced the first speaker. Mabel Encinas is a senior lecturer in early childhood education.

**Mabel Encinas, London Metropolitan University UCU branch**

Themes explored by Mabel included:

3.1 How child development interacts with the wider environment.

3.2 How teach-outs and other practices during strikes have been developed to  
 include parents and children.

3.3 Identity being socially informed as a child develops a sense of who they  
 are.

3.4 The nourishing role played by positive relationships during childhood.

3.5 The ways in which the milestones in child development vary across  
 cultures.

3.6 How negative emotional experiences can have physical manifestations –  
 meaning that stress or trauma can hamper development.

3.7 The extent of children living in poverty in the UK, and how inflation is  
 adding to this. Many of these households are single-parent households  
 where the parent is in work.

3.8 The concept of intersectionality and how it arose from the black feminist  
 movement. It can give a much deeper understanding of the barriers and  
 discrimination a person may face.

3.9 The gendered nature of who teaches and carries out research and how  
 this shapes career progression opportunities.

The Chair introduced the second speaker who is a film and media lecturer, on the UCU NEC and involved in activism on a number of issues.

**Becca Harrison, The Open University**

The talk referenced a number of themes, including:

3.10 The overall theme of the talk was ‘Making Autonomous Worlds.’

3.11 ‘Garden paths’ and their link to autonomy, space and rule-making.

3.12 The impact of being without your own space and how borders are  
 managed.

3.13 How systematic discrimination undermines the opportunity for autonomy.

3.14 How our activism is constrained by the wider system and the State, even  
 if we disagree with it.

3.15 The educational institutions in which we all work can often be pitching to  
 the state and to power, turning away from their own workforce.

3.16 Rather than adjust to the system we are constrained in, we need to cut  
 loose and work to bring new worlds about.

3.17 Snails as a metaphor for the outsider, and Mexican ‘Carcoles’ as a space  
 for democratic decision-making by the community.

3.18 Communities that are reciprocal and support each other build the  
 conditions for autonomy. There are lots of examples, from mutual aid  
 groups to Trade Unions.

3.19 Not all spaces can or need to be visible, there is value to the underground  
 spaces too.

The Chair introduced Michelle, who works in prison education and uses art as a tool of education.

**Michelle Vacciana, HMP Nottingham**

Michelle’s talk covered some of the following themes:

3.20 The complexity of the prison education environment.

3.21 There are several layers to negotiate and move through to get to the  
 heart of the work you are trying to do.

3.22 Using art as activism.

3.23 How being in a minority can both make you invisible, whilst at other times  
 leading to you being spotlighted.

3.24 Being presented with challenging behaviour and how art can be a useful  
 tool to explore issues that might not arise verbally.

3.25 Organisational leaders set a tone, but it is important to also set your own  
 tone through your practice.

3.26 When asked to respond in the moment, as a marginalised person, don’t  
 be afraid to put the burden and challenge back onto senior leaders about  
 what they can do – and whether they see discrimination in their  
 organisation.

3.27 The way that people respond to seeing a black women in an educational  
 context, rooted in racism even if it is unconscious.

3.28 The importance of speaking up in your own environment and context, but  
 we need moments of joy as well as struggle.

**Q+A**

There had been due to be a Q+A session taken for the panel of speakers as a whole – but as time was limited, questions were encouraged in-person over the break instead.

**Workshops**

**Workshop: Experiences and Solutions – 5 things we can do to get autonomy**

**[*Conference divided into three groups*]**

**Feedback from workshops**

**First Group (Lisa and Gill)**

4.1 Group 1 had discussed how the inflexibility of the education system makes  
 it harder to combine with caring responsibilities, particularly impacting on  
 women.

4.2 We need to find ways to reclaim our autonomy, and seek to avoid a victim  
 narrative.

4.3 We need to argue to maintain things tried during Covid which made things  
 easier to access, but now are regarded as not being necessary.

**Second Group (Christina and Vicky)**

4.4 The second group discussed how reproductive labour is often invisible.

4.5 The core themes/questions from the discussion were – how do we change  
 what education is for the better? Having and finding a voice. How we often  
 self-police what we actually think and feel, to fit in with managerial  
 cultures.

4.6 Surveillance was felt to pulling people down. The group discussed what  
 autonomy isn’t, and what it would look like and how we create it.

4.7 Could we un-invisibilise the work that women do as part of a campaign  
 that could bring people together?

4.8 All the themes from the speakers were familiar to members, though they  
 play out differently in each sector that UCU represents.

**Third Group (Reggie and Ruth)**

4.9 The third group talked about how professional expertise is regularly  
 undermining staff, as are precarious contracts.

4.10 We need to utilise health/stress assessments.

4.11 PGR’s need to be included as part of this work.

4.12 We should campaign against the use of student evaluation when assessing  
 staff performance and progression – there is a lot of bias in these  
 feedback processes.

**Motions from branches and regions**

The Chair outlined that proposers have 3 minutes to speak, other speeches and the right of reply would have 2 minute time limits.

The Chair explained that Motion 1 and 4 would be taken together last as they are about related topics.

In Motion 2 - drafting wording change from ‘People with disabilities’ to ‘disabled people.’

***Motion 2***

***Buddying up/Mentorship***

***Women Members Standing Committee***

5.1 Christina Paine proposed the Motion and spoke in favour of it.

5.2 Peta Bulmer Seconded the Motion.

5.3 There was a request from the floor to change ‘young children’ to ‘school  
 age children’, this was accepted by the proposer.

5.4 There were no speeches against.

5.5 Voting took place online and in the room.

5.6 The Motion was overwhelmingly carried.

***Motion 3***

***End Intimate Police Searches***

***Women Members Standing Committee***

5.7 Ruth Holliday proposed the Motion and spoke in favour of it.

5.8 Tilly Fitzmaurice formally seconded the Motion.

5.9 There were no speakers against the Motion.

5.10 Voting took place in the room and online.

5.11 The Motion was passed unanimously.

***Motion 1***

***Staff-student relationships***

***University of Leeds***

5.13 Vicky Blake proposed and spoke in favour of this Motion.

5.14 It was formally seconded.

5.15 The vote was deferred until motion 4 on the same topic was heard.

***Motion 4***

***Developing UCU guidance on staff-student relationship bans***

***University of Nottingham***

5.15 Lisa Rull proposed and spoke in favour of this Motion.

5.16 Lisa outlined that the motions are similar, but the Nottingham Motion is  
 more sceptical about the use of registers of relationships.

5.17 Becca Harrison seconded this Motion.

5.18 Questions were asked from the floor about who the 1752 Group is, the  
 role of the task group and what the register would entail. The Chair  
 clarified these issues.

5.19 The proposers were asked to clarify what they’d like to see happen if their  
 Motions were passed when they give their right of reply.

5.20 Christina Paine raised the issue of what role the register would play if   
relationships are consensual and/or if a staff member is casualised and has little power in their workplace.

5.21 Becca spoke about how it is often unclear how the data will be held on such registers, or how long it will be kept for.

5.22 Tina Managhan asked whether a register could actually protect staff by allowing them to have consensual relationships formally on the record.

5.23 Vicky gave a right of reply, clarifying that the Motion doesn’t endorse registers but acknowledges that they are likely to be introduced following the Office for Students consultation, so is focussed on how they should be managed at that stage. Concern is the risk that the registers will be created, but that institutions won’t have the expertise to manage the data well.

5.24 Lisa gave a right of reply, saying that the desired outcome is the reduction of harm in managing these issues.

5.25 A vote was taken on Motion 1, both online and in the room.

5.26 The Motion was passed with 32 in favour, 7 against and 8 abstentions.

5.27 A vote was then subsequently held on Motion 4 in the same way.

5.28 The Motion was clearly carried.

**Close of Conference**

6.1 The Chair thanked everyone for attending and contributing to the conference.

6.2 The Chair thanked all the staff and officials involved in the preparation and running of the Conference, as well as the staff from the host venue providing technical support.