



Meeting of: Women Members Equality Conference

Location: Manchester Inside Hotel, Manchester

Date: Thursday 16 November 2023

UNCONFIRMED MINUTES

Present (attendees):

Louise Alldridge
Gina Bevan
Julie Blake
Vicky Blake
Cecily Blyther
Julie Britain
Amanda Brunton
Peta Bulmer
Lucy Burke
June Campbell
Laura Chuhan Campbell
Anastasia Christou
Jennifer Dods
Nina Doran
Jo Edge
Sofia Eleftheriadou
Janet Farrar
Carla Finesilver
Matilda Fitzmaurice
Kirsten Forkert
Jessica Gagnon
Alison Gaughan
Rebecca Harrison
Kirsty Harvey
Ruth Holliday
Gillian Jack
Claudia Jefferies
Mary Esther Jennings

Plymouth University
NPTC
University of Birmingham
University of Leeds
Petroc
The Manchester College (The LTE Group)
University of Cambridge
University of Liverpool
Manchester Met University
University College London
Durham University
Middlesex University
Leeds Beckett University
City of Liverpool College - Clarence Street
The University of Edinburgh
University College London
The Manchester College
King's College London
Lancaster University
Birmingham City University
The University of Manchester
Kirklees College
The Open University
Lakes College West Cumbria
University of Leeds
The Open University
City College Plymouth
Eastern Region Retired Members Branch

Dotlin Kesler
Lubna Khan
Zoulika Lamamra
Rhiannon Lockley
Maxine Looby
Jacqui Lovell
Sophia Lycouris
Moona Ma
Rubi Mahmood
Marian Mayer
Naomh McKee
Paula McLean
Justine Mercer
Shakthi Nataraj
Themesa Neckles
Lorraine Neil
Lara Norris
Katherine O'Brien
Ellen Owens
Christina Paine
Carlie Pendleton
Regine Pilling
Jessica Redway
Kathryn Rimmington
Jennifer Rivas Perez
Patricia Roche
Lisa Rull
Shirley Searchwell
Chris Sheehy
Maddalena Tacchetti
Sue Taplin
Jo Taplin-Green
Grace Tebbutt
Maria Walker
Saira Weiner
Carol White
Elaine White
Wendy Yarde
Cecilia Yu
Yashi Yuan
Miriyam Aouragh
Lorraine David

Bradford College
Bradford College
University of Teesside
Birmingham City University
Oldham College
Liverpool John Moores University
The University of Edinburgh
University of Salford
University of Derby
Bournemouth University
NOVUS
Sheffield Hallam University
University of Warwick
University of Lancaster
University of Sheffield
Capital City College Group
The Manchester College
The University of Manchester
University of Reading
London Metropolitan University
Goldsmiths, University of London
Capital City College Group
University of Winchester
Southern RMB
University of Leeds
Blackpool and the Fylde College
University of Nottingham
Walsall College
North West RMB
University of the West of Scotland
University of Gloucestershire
London School of Economics
University of Sheffield
Novus
LJMU
Nous
Bradford College
CapitalCity College/Kings Cross
University of Warwick
University College London
University of Westminster/Harrow
University of Bedfordshire

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

1. Welcome and Introduction

- 1.1 Jo Edge (University of Edinburgh and chair of the Women Members' Standing Committee) welcomed delegates to the Women Members' annual conference.
- 1.2 The Chair mentioned that no fire drill was planned so please follow the safety measures in place if you hear the alarm.
- 1.3 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

- 1.4 The Chair read out from the Member Code of Conduct and asked all delegates to bear this in mind during the Conference.
- 1.5 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.
- 1.6 All voting Members have a voting card, please don't vote if you are an observer.
- 1.7 The process for Motions will be outlined later when we reach that point.
- 1.8 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.