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# UCU members challenge bullying at Leeds Met University

A survey of UCU members carried out in March this year at Leeds Metropolitan University revealed a disturbing culture of individual and institutional bullying. It followed repeated claims by UCU members – and furious denials by the Vice Chancellor – that bullying is rife in the university. Last week the local BBC 'Look North' programme featured it. It was the headline item on the programme on Wednesday with an invitation for those working at Leeds Met to contact the BBC. Apparently they were receiving messages all evening. On Thursday and Friday they did follow up reports stating that the overwhelming number of responses supported the claims of bullying and some giving their own stories, including from other universities.

Only three responses were positive to Leeds Met, and one of those turned out to be from within the personnel department. Sally Brown, Pro Vice Chancellor, and 'Champion of the Staff Development Festival', was interviewed trying to defend the university and rubbish the survey. However she had presumably not been told about earlier disclosures under the FoI Act in which the University's senior managers were obliged to admit that nobody had ever been dismissed specifically for bullying and nobody at all had been given a lesser disciplinary penalty for bullying. The Health and Safety Executive have agreed to come in. You can view the extracts of the programmes on the BBC website at:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/looknorthyorkslincs/latest\\_stories/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/looknorthyorkslincs/latest_stories/)

UCU regional official Adrian Jones has asked the VC Simon Lee to personally initiate an investigation as long ago as last February and twice since. UCU also asked him to meet to discuss how he – not we - could lead it from the front in partnership with the union. He didn't reply and he didn't agree to meet. [adrianjones.ucu@btinternet.com](mailto:adrianjones.ucu@btinternet.com)

Guidance on tackling bullying at work is available on the UCU web site at:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm>

The Equality Challenge Unit has produced excellent guidance for employers in the HE Sector on tackling bullying and harassment at work. This guidance, Dignity at Work, was produced in collaboration with UCU and UNISON, and is available for download (no hard copy available) at:

<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/guidancepublications/200612-DAWGoodPracticeGuide.pdf>



**National anti-bullying day** is the **7 November** this year, organised by the Andrea Adams Trust, and supported by UCU. If you'd like to find out more please check out

<http://www.banbullyingatwork.com/main.asp?id=home>.

We know that City of Bristol College UCU branch are actively involved in organising some activity and campaigning on the day and we'll report on what they did in our next newsletter.

If you'd like a copy of the Leeds Met survey to amend for your own use please contact Adrian Jones at

The national equality and employment rights office would be keen to hear of other examples of local anti-bullying campaigns. Please contact Sharon Russell at [srussell@ucu.org.uk](mailto:srussell@ucu.org.uk)

## European Health and Safety Week

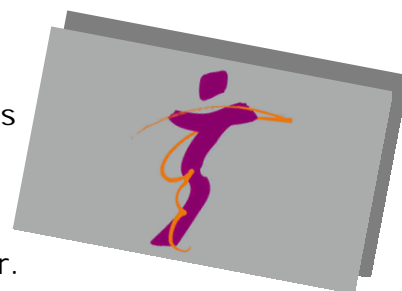
European Health and Safety Week occurs in October each year and is designed to raise awareness of health and safety. It is an excellent opportunity to raise health and safety awareness in your institution.

**Health and Safety Week 2007** will take place between 22-26 October.

The main theme will be musculoskeletal disorders. Across the European Union's 27 member states, 25% of workers complain of backache and 23% report muscular pains. Musculoskeletal disorders are one of the biggest causes of absence from work yet they are also both preventable and treatable.

In addition the Wednesday of European Health and Safety Week is traditionally National Inspection Day when all safety representatives are encouraged to inspect the workplace.

There are a number of resources available for unions for use during the week.



HSE have produced several checklists for safety representatives and these will all be on the campaigning pages by the end of the first week of October.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/campaigns/campaignpack.htm>

These check lists cover upper limb disorders, manual handling, and VDU work. In addition there is material available on slips and trips.

The HSE have also produced a manual handling assessment chart and advice on body mapping. All this will also be on the HSE campaigns website by 5 October.

In addition the TUC is organising a number of short courses on musculoskeletal disorders in London, Manchester, Glasgow and South Wales. Although the London and Manchester courses are now fully booked, there are a number of places available in Glasgow and South Wales. For details please go to <http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/education/learn-1663-f0.cfm>

For National Inspection Day the TUC guide to inspections is still available at <http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/insbooklet30auglowres.pdf> and there are UCU guides to inspections at:

[http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/docs/e/c/hsfact\\_workinspect.doc](http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/docs/e/c/hsfact_workinspect.doc) and [http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/docs/7/d/hsfact\\_workinspect\\_approach.doc](http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/docs/7/d/hsfact_workinspect_approach.doc)

and a UCU-tagged report form at:

[http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/docs/f/9/hsinspect\\_form.doc](http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/docs/f/9/hsinspect_form.doc)

Inspection and report forms are also available on the HSE website at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/workers/safetyreps/index.htm>

## UCU joins campaign to oppose HSE cuts

The campaign to prevent damaging cuts at the HSE reaches its critical stage in the next few weeks. Sally Hunt, UCU GS has written to Peter Hain the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to express UCU's concerns regarding the proposed cuts in HSE budget allocation for the 3 years beginning with the 2008-09 spending round. She points out that:

*"Your department has proposed that the HSE should receive a 5% real terms cut in its budget in each of the spending years to 2011. This is on top of cuts in budget that have already led to considerable staffing reductions. Since 1997, the UK workforce has increased by around 9% and the number of premises that the HSE inspect has gone up by over 20%, yet the HSE's workforce has been reduced to under 3,500 from 4,000 plus. The HSE's own figures show that in the past 4 years the number of inspections fell by 25%, while the number of HSE prosecutions fell by 49%. Last year saw the highest number of workplace fatalities for 5 years".*

*"In education generally, the incidence of stress-related illness is twice the national average for all industries. In 2006 the HSE embarked on a major project aimed at reducing stress-*

*related illness and absence in the tertiary sector. It organised and ran a series of free, one-day workshops for senior managers in colleges and universities in the latter half of the year, aimed to help them implement and carry through stress risk assessments, and thus assist employers to put adequate controls in place to reduce this burden on our members. This was followed by HSE inspectors making workplace visits to help and advise on the implementation of this process; and now a further series of "master classes" are being held this month to give additional support to employers. This activity can only have a positive effect on the working environment and lead to improvement in the working conditions of our members, and consequently their health and wellbeing. We believe that this kind of beneficial pro-active work would have to stop or be severely cut back if the proposed cuts go ahead".*

In conclusion, the letter pointed out:

*"Inspection is a very labour-intensive activity - you cannot replace inspectors with computers. Neither do we believe that self-regulation can be relied upon to deal with the impact of unsafe and unhealthy working conditions. If that was the case, employers would have already done what was necessary. The HSE role remains an absolute necessity to ensure our members health and safety at work."*

*"On behalf of the one hundred and twenty thousand college and university academic and related staff we represent, I appeal to you to defend the HSE budget, and ensure that there are no further cuts to jeopardise the invaluable regulatory and advisory functions the HSE provides."*

**John McDonnell MP put down an Early Day Motion (EDM1320) in April this year, and we have circulated information about this previously. Only 83 MP's have so far signed the EDM, so please, if you haven't done so already, press your MP to sign the EDM. You can check if they have already signed by going to:**

**<http://edmi.parliament.uk/edmi/edmdetails.aspx?edmid=33095&session=885>**

## **New TUC health and safety manual**

The TUC health & safety manual, Hazards at Work, has been revised and the second edition of this work is now available. It contains completely rewritten chapters on all those areas where the law or good practice has changed since the last edition in 2005, including construction, smoking and asbestos, and information on the new Corporate Manslaughter Act.

It is intended as a key resource for safety representatives and those on TUC training courses. The cost for commercial bodies is £45, but for trade unions the cost is £18, although that falls as low as £12 a copy for large bulk orders. Postage is free. Order details on the TUC web site at:

**<http://www.tuc.org.uk/publications/viewPub.cfm?frmPubID=523>**

For those colleges who provide TUC courses through a trade union education unit, or if you are

in contact with your local trade union studies unit, (and all UCU Branches and LA's should be) you can probably get one even cheaper through them.

UCU advice is that this is a facility that safety representatives reasonably require, and so comes under the provisions of the Safety Reps and Safety Committees Regulations; Regulation 4A(2), which places a duty on your employer to provide you with a copy if you request one. If they refuse, have a word with the HSE Inspector responsible for your institution – they now have guidance on how to enforce these employer duties in the SRSC Regulations. You could offer to get one on behalf of the employer at a vastly discounted rate (see above). The HSE enforcement guidance to inspectors is available at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/foi/internalops/fod/inspect/workerinvolve.pdf>

## Fire regulations: new information site

This time last year we suggested all UCU safety reps checked how the new fire regulations in England and Wales were being implemented. To follow up those checks you may find this site is useful for simple and effective information on fire safety issues, including risk assessments etc. This site gives excellent information on the employers' duties under the latest fire safety regulations. It contains examples of a simple approach to fire risk assessment for example, and lots of other easy-to-understand information.

One word of warning; in the section listing the workplaces that the new regime applies to, the only educational premises listed are schools, not FE colleges or universities. In the past, we have been told by UCU reps that some college managements deny that guidance on health & safety matters in educational premises applies to colleges if they are not mentioned specifically, only to schools. Please let us know if your employer tries this one on. More details at: <http://www.fire.gov.uk/Workplace+safety/>

## Regional health and safety courses

A health and safety training day is planned for health and safety reps in each UCU region in 2008 and details will be circulated from your regional office. The first region off the mark is the Western and South West regions who will have a follow up to last year's successful event on 9 November – details (for reps from these two regions only please) from June Green at the South West UCU office on [jgreen@ucu.org.uk](mailto:jgreen@ucu.org.uk)

## National Health and safety courses

For details of national health and safety courses for 2007/8 please contact Linda Ball at [lball@ucu.org.uk](mailto:lball@ucu.org.uk) or visit the UCU website at [www.ucu.org.uk/training](http://www.ucu.org.uk/training) then go to National courses. Travel expenses are reimbursed against claims made. Lunch and light refreshments are provided by UCU.

## UCU Health and Safety Advice Line

UCU's Health and Safety Advice Line for safety reps and branch officers offers information about health and safety legal standards, and how they can be applied and advice on dealing with health and safety issues/problems.

The Health and Safety Advice Line is for branch officers and safety reps only, not for individual members. The advice line will be staffed two days a week only. When you phone the advice line you will be asked to leave a message. You will then be contacted as soon as possible.

The **advice line number** is **0161 636 7558**

**Email** [healthandsafety@ucu.org.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@ucu.org.uk)

**Or by post to John Bamford, UCU Health and Safety Advice Line**

Greater Manchester Hazards Centre, Unit 2.5 Windrush Millennium Centre,  
70 Alexandra Road, Manchester M16 7WD