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1. **New Head of Equality: Helen Carr**

I am really pleased to have this opportunity to introduce myself to you. I started as the new Head of Equality in mid August. I have worked in equalities field as a trade union official and in various services within the public sector and am extremely pleased to be Head of Equality for UCU. I have always made it a priority wherever I have worked and know how much there is to still be achieved and what we must now protect. My priorities will be taking forward the UCU equality scheme, the motions from Congress, ensuring that branches are fully briefed on the Equality Act and that we respond effectively to any changes the coalition Government may make to implementation and approach. I will also be working closely with my team on supporting the equality standing committees to ensure equality issues are very visible in HE and FE and in the wider campaigns that we support.

I am keen to meet activists and members so will be identifying opportunities where I can do this. The four equality conferences take place this autumn (see below) and it would be great to see a strong presence from across the union.

Best wishes Helen hcarr@ucu.org.uk

2. **The Equality Act 2010**

The Equality Act 2010 is by far the most far-reaching and comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation for many years.

In the initial phase of implementation, from October 2010, it will extend the scope of indirect discrimination to cover disability and gender reassignment, extend the powers of Employment tribunals; introduce a more claimant friendly concept of "discrimination arising from disability" and dual discrimination. The Act will also make unlawful pre-employment health questionnaires and gagging clauses preventing employees from discussing their pay with colleagues.

Once implemented, the Act will replace the following legislation (as amended): the Equal Pay Act 1970; Sex Discrimination Act 1975; Race Relations Act 1976; Disability Discrimination Act 1995; Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003; Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003; Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006; Equality Act 2006 and the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007.

The Equality Act 2006 in so far as it relates to the constitution and operation of the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the application of the DDA 1995 (Northern Ireland), will remain in force.

Provisions of the Act

The Act sets out some provisions which extend and strengthen protection from discrimination in the employment field, including:

- Improved protection for people with a disability and their carers
- Extended protection from discrimination to people who suffer because they associate with others who have a protected characteristic
- Permitting employers to take positive action in recruitment and promotion
- Requiring private sector employers, from 2013, to report on the gender pay gap whilst rendering pay 'gagging' clauses in persons' contracts unenforceable
- Extending coverage beyond disability, gender and race, to include age, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief and sexual orientation
- Permitting discrimination cases to be pursued on the basis of a combination of two protected characteristics
- Enabling employment tribunal who find against employers to make recommendations that they should introduce or change workplace policies or practices so as to address discrimination and disadvantage

UCU remains concerned about aspects of the Act including the proposed regulations for the new specific duties which were issued last month. The proposals represent a significant regression in terms of the steps institutions must take in order to show they are meeting the terms of the general duty.

In summary the draft regulations propose:

- From 4 April 2011, public bodies will be required to publish information relating to its performance of the general duty this includes:
 - For organisations with more than 150 employees, information relating to the protected characteristics of its workforce
 - Assessments of the impact of its policies and practices or likely impact of its proposed policies or practices
 - Information that was taken into account when assessing the impact of its policies and practices
 - Details of any engagement it undertook with persons

- From 2 April 2012, public bodies must prepare and publish one or more objectives that it reasonably thinks will help it achieve the aims of the general duty
 - The objectives must be specific and measurable and the public body must set out how it intends to achieve them
 - It must consider the information it published relating to equality in the workforce and public service provision before setting objectives
 - Objectives must be published at least every four years
- Information must be published in a way that is reasonably accessible to the public but it does not have to be published in one document it can be set out in another published document.
- The EHRC in its Code of Practice and Guidance on the new single equality duty will set out what kind of information different public authorities will be expected to publish (the EHRC will consult separately on the Code of Practice).
- The EHRC retains enforcement powers for the specific duties

The following, which were proposed by the previous Government, will not happen:

- There will be no specific duties related to procurement
- There will be no Secretary of State duty to report on equality
- There will be no requirement to action plan and set out the steps a public body will take to achieve its equality objectives
- There will be no requirement to take into consideration national equality priorities set by the Secretary of State.

Next stage: Consultation on the Public Sector Equality Duty

The Government Equalities Office has launched a consultation on the draft regulations of the public sector Equality Duty. The closing date of the consultation is 10 November 2010 and UCU will be responding. For more information go to:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4136> or contact Helen Carr hcarr@ucu.org.uk

3. UCU Equality Scheme

The UCU Equality Scheme was enthusiastically endorsed at Congress. To view the scheme which includes the action points submitted by regional, national and head office operations go to <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4137>. The Equality Scheme Standing Committee will meet during the autumn to progress monitoring and to formulate further advice and guidance. For further information contact Helen Carr hcarr@ucu.org.uk

4. Leonardo Project

UCU is a partner on a two year project on Work-Life-Balance and gender specific career patterns in higher education and science. The other partners of the project are the German Education Union (GEW) and Swedish Association of University Teachers (SULF). The project is funded by the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme Leonardo da Vinci.

Three workshops have been held in Stockholm, London and Berlin between September 2009-2010 with representatives from each of the participating unions.

The overall aim of the project is to encourage successful arrangements for work-life-balance and effective gender specific career planning of academic staff in the European context. A joint strategy has been drawn up which contains a number of improvement proposals, outlining common goals and actions which can be taken. There are suggestions for how to implement actions at European, national and institutional level. The strategy also includes examples of good practice which others can draw from.

The strategy will be launched in the autumn and will be available on the UCU website. To find out more, please contact Charlotte Nielsen cnielsen@ucu.org.uk or Seth Atkin satkin@ucu.org.uk in the Equality Unit. Alternatively, women members are encouraged to come to our women's conference on 26 November where there will be a workshop on work-life balance and how to promote it, using the strategy.

5. Default Retirement Age

The Government has announced that it is finally going to scrap the Default Retirement Age (DRA) in 2011. This will end a currently legal form of discrimination on the grounds of age. UCU welcomes this move and reaffirms its support of the TUC position that everyone should have the right to retire with dignity and a decent pension.

Age UK research shows that an estimated 100,000 workers were forced to retire in 2009. This has caused harm to those who wish to work beyond retirement age, both financially and in terms of life choices.

From October 2011 workers aged 65 and over will have the same job security as younger workers for the first time. Getting rid of the DRA will also help change views about the retirement process, encouraging employers and workers to be more positive about the contribution people can make in their late 50s and 60s. It will change the current 'countdown culture', in which the value of an employee is thought to lessen simply because they are approaching retirement age.

Removing the default retirement age has no impact on the age at which people become entitled to occupational or state pensions. For further information contact Seth Atkin satkin@ucu.org.uk

6. Welfare Rights of Disabled People

Sasha Callaghan, co-opted member of the union's Disabled Members Standing Committee and member of the TUC Disability Committee, has prepared an important analysis of the present government's unprecedented attack on the welfare rights of disabled people. You can get a copy at <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=1938>.

7. Annual Equality Conferences

Registration is now open for the Annual Equality Conferences. The conferences are an excellent opportunity to meet other UCU members, discuss key issues and help formulate policy for UCU on each of the equality strands. The four Equality Standing Committees will also be elected at the conferences. The conferences are free of charge and reasonable travel expenses will be met. You can register online by following the links below, or request a form from Sue Moss at smoss@ucu.org.uk. In accordance with Rules, Branches and LA's will be able to submit nominations and motions for each of the equality standing committees. Nomination and motion forms are also available online or can be requested from eqadmin@ucu.org.uk.

Friday 5 November 2010
Disabled Members' Annual Conference
Registration, nominations and motions:
<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2702>

Friday 12 November 2010
Black Members' Annual Conference
Registration, nominations and motions:
<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2699>

Saturday 20 November 2010
LGBT Members' Annual Conference
Registration, nominations and motions:
<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2700>

Friday 26 November 2010
Women Members' Annual Conference
Registration, nominations and motions:
<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2701>

Places are limited, so register soon to avoid missing out on these exciting events!

8. Other Events

LGBT Education Equality Conference

Saturday 9 October 2010, 10am – 4pm at Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD. This is a trade union conference organised by ATL, NASUWT, NUT, UCU and UNISON, working with the TUC. It is an opportunity for activists to learn about and share good practice in the promotion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans equality in schools and post-school education. Lunch is provided and attendance will be free, but advance registration is essential. To register, email your name, union, institution and access requirements to out@unison.co.uk no later than Friday 1 October. More information can be found at: http://www.unison.org.uk/out/pages_view.asp?did=11615

9. UCU Equality Reps Training

UCU Equality reps and officers will work within branches to promote equality with the employer and union members. This could include looking at issues such as flexible working, absence management, discriminatory practices, equal pay and equality impact assessments. This course will give reps an introduction to the knowledge and skills that they will need to carry out their role. This course is delivered as two 1-day sessions and participants should attend both days:

- **London:** 4 & 15 November 2010
- **Birmingham:** 15 December 2010 & 12 January 2011
- **Gateshead:** 31 January & 6 April 2011
- **Glasgow:** 2 March & 6 June 2011

For more information and to register go to:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4093> or contact Abbie Jenkinson
ajenkinson@ucu.org.uk

Get involved

If you would like to join one of our networks, please send an email to eqadmin@ucu.org.uk stating your preferred email address along with the name of the network you would like to join. You should note that these networks are not discussion forums, but that you will be sent information relating to the area of equality. The networks available for joining are:

Black Members Network
Women Members Network
LGBT Members Network
Disabled Members Network