
SPEAKER NOTES

All in it together?

YOUNGER PEOPLE AND THE CUTS

'This is a government at war with our young people and therefore at war with our future. It is betraying an entire generation. Our young people deserve better. They have every right to feel cynical and let down. They have been failed again and again by politicians who promised before the election to vote against a rise in fees and to keep college grants. It is not right that the next generation is being asked to pay the price for a financial crisis they didn't create.' **Sally Hunt, UCU general secretary**

I am [name of speaker] from the UCU at [name of institution]. I'm going to talk today about:

- 1 the way in which cuts in public funding and social spending are affecting younger people
- 2 how cuts in education funding and employer attacks are falling heavily on younger people as students and as education professionals
- 3 how UCU is working to build our membership among younger members and our campaigning in defence of early careers members
- 4 what you can do to help.

1 These are some of the many areas where younger people are disproportionately shouldering the cuts burden:

HOUSING

The cuts will make it more difficult for many young people to find affordable accommodation. The social housing building budget has been slashed by 60%. Private sector house building has also ground to a halt and overall, building rates are at their lowest since the 1920s.

HOUSING BENEFITS

It will be more difficult for younger people to keep their own flat with the less generous 'shared room' rate of benefit now being extended from under-25s to everyone under 35. In many areas this rate will not cover the rent for available properties. Charities have warned this will lead to increased homelessness.

SOCIAL HOUSING TENANCIES

The government plans to change tenancy rules for newcomers into the social housing sector which will mean new tenants – many of whom will be young people – will be offered less stable and more expensive contracts.

JOBS

Unemployment has soared to 20% among under-25-year-olds. Despite this, one of the first actions of the coalition government was to scrap the Future Jobs Fund programme for younger people. There are an estimated 70 graduates for every job vacancy.

CHILD BENEFIT

Tax changes and cuts to child benefit will hit families with children hardest. The under-30s are the most likely age group to have children in the next five to 10 years.

2 The cuts are also closing down access to educational opportunity and are falling heavily on young people at the start of their careers as education professionals.

STUDENT FEES

In England the cost of university tuition is set to rise to up to £9,000. Alongside this, the higher education teaching budget has been slashed by 75% – the highest cut in any departmental sector. Taken as a whole, this could be presented as a tax on the youngest generation to promote a benefit – a better trained workforce – that everyone will gain from.

EDUCATIONAL MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE (EMA)

These £30 weekly payments designed to encourage and support young people from lower income families to stay on in education have been scrapped. Without EMA the numbers of NEETs, those not in education, employment or training, could rocket beyond their current all-time high.

YOUTH SERVICES

Many councils have concentrated financial savings in this area. The Connexions programme for example, which provides a range of advice to young people, from careers to housing, has been drastically cut in many local authority areas. Government funding cuts to youth volunteering organisations mean 400,000 fewer young people will be given the chance to volunteer.

YOUTH SOCIAL WORK

Many of the organisations dealing with some of the UK's most disadvantaged and vulnerable young adults are losing funding as a consequence of local authority cuts. A survey by the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services found that a fifth of youth charities fear they will have to close next year as a result of funding shortfalls.

Finally, the cuts in further and higher education funding are also having a disproportionate effect on younger members of staff and those at the beginning of their careers in further and higher education.

CASUAL CONTRACTS

Younger tertiary education staff are statistically more likely to be employed on fixed-term or hourly-paid contracts. In a recent national survey of our members aged 35 and under, 'difficulty obtaining a full-time permanent contract' was given as the biggest problem experienced in their careers so far. Defending and increasing job security was cited as the most important task for UCU. The unprecedented scale of education funding cuts threaten thousands of jobs, and younger workers, often on casual contracts, are rightly feeling vulnerable.

WORKLOADS

A large number of young members responding to our survey said that workload was a major issue, with staff – often with young families – struggling to reconcile long hours with an acceptable work/life balance. As funding cuts translate into job losses, staff who survive the cull could have larger class sizes, less time to spend with students and considerably heavier workloads to deal with.

HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK

In the current financial climate employers are likely to be tempted to take short cuts with health and safety measures. Less safe workplaces would impact more on younger staff as HSE research shows this group is more at risk from accident or injury due to being less experienced, sometimes less confident to ask questions or seek clarification, and more likely to be on a casual contract (another factor that adversely affects health and safety at work).

PROFESSIONAL EQUALITY

In the current climate of cuts, increased workloads and more vulnerable employment, younger staff may not feel confident about challenging unfair treatment. In our survey of young members a common complaint was of discrimination on the basis of age – respondents reported suffering adverse treatment such as being given the less desirable admin work to do, or the dumping of unwanted teaching onto ‘junior’ staff

FINANCES

College and university staff pay may be frozen but the cost of living continues to rise and younger workers are again among those suffering the most. Starting a career with student loans and other debts to worry about can be a real problem for those in tertiary education. As well as being brought in on the lower grades, the use of casual contracts often means that hourly-paid staff do not get paid over the summer break.

PENSIONS

Employer proposals for the USS and TPS are particularly threatening to the interests of young members and those likely to be employed on insecure contracts with enforced breaks in service. If a break is for more than six months, the member will lose their entitlement to a final salary pension and be placed in the massively inferior ‘career average’ section.

3 In this context, it’s not surprising that more and more staff are turning to their union for help, and membership of younger workers is growing faster than that of any other group. UCU is standing up for younger members against the cuts:

NATIONWIDE CAMPAIGNS WITH NUS

UCU has forged an alliance with the NUS which has allowed us to build vibrant mass participation campaigns against the rise in tuition fees and against the abolition of the EMA. In November, we brought more than 50,000 staff and students onto the streets of London while 6000 students and trade unionists marched for younger people in Manchester in January.

DECENT PENSIONS FOR YOUNGER PEOPLE

We are fighting hard to ensure that younger people are not locked out of access to decent pensions in the USS scheme and also in TPS.

AGAINST CASUAL CONTRACTS

We’ve campaigned hard for years against the use of casual contracts. In campaigning for researchers, for example, we’ve begun to win some good local agreements and to recruit more research staff than ever.

REFLECTING NEEDS

We’re working hard to build our organisation among early careers and younger staff and to make sure that UCU reflects their needs.

EARLY CAREERS GUIDE

We’ve produced an Early Careers Guide to steer young people through the early days as staff in the further and higher education sectors. So far 3,000 copies have been distributed.

4 Here’s how you can help

JOIN THE EARLY CAREERS NETWORK

Those who sign up to the Early Careers Network receive a monthly bulletin containing news, information about events and new resources. **Please contact: ebailey@ucu.org.uk if you wish to register or if you would like to know more about UCU’s Early Careers or young members initiatives.**

A number of UCU members are establishing a network of activists who are prepared to support and encourage other younger members who want to get more involved in UCU in their workplace.

If you want to be part of a steering group to help other younger UCU members recruit, run campaigns or hold events then please email your details to: ebailey@ucu.org.uk

RECRUIT A FRIEND

In order to build the collective strength necessary to fight the cuts we need more younger staff to join UCU. If everyone recruits a friend to the union it will be a massive boost to our strength and to

our ability to look after staff in colleges and universities.

UCU's recruitment materials can be downloaded from: <http://bit.ly/hAukxJ>

For UCU's model recruitment presentation go to: <http://bit.ly/e8JQWP>

Another useful recruitment tool is our UCU Early Careers Guide – a invaluable resource for new staff which contains professional guidance on finding the right job, what to expect when you start work, tips on getting the most from your career, and practical advice on what to do if you have a problem at work.

UCU Early Careers Guide: <http://bit.ly/b1SKXn>

GET ACTIVE IN YOUR UCU BRANCH

UCU is fighting hard to protect jobs and defend education but we need more young members to get active. The best way to get involved is through your branch. A local committee will always welcome offers of help. They will discuss with you what you might be interested in doing and can advise you on ways of becoming active. In addition to becom-

ing a workplace or department contact, you can help in more informal ways. We provide full training and also run professional development courses for younger members. See our website for details.

THE EARLY CAREERS CHARTER – GET YOUR EMPLOYER TO SIGN UP!

UCU's Early Careers Charter gives information about practical ways in which employers can support new staff in their careers in further and higher education. It describes good practice in the induction process and in ensuring professional equality for new and younger staff.

MARCH FOR THE ALTERNATIVE ON 26 MARCH 2011

Recent months have seen a surge of activism among young people angry about the cuts and, in particular, the rise in university tuition fees and the scrapping of EMA. Join the TUC demonstration for jobs, growth and justice on 26 March 2011. This is your chance to make history and join the national mobilization to say no to unfair and unnecessary cuts.

Assemble 11am Victoria Embankment.
<http://marchforthealternative.org.uk>