

In this issue:

IACL Consultation

Pensions

Petition and Lobby of Parliament 26 October

Choose Youth

NIACE Online Survey

Review of Professional Development and IfL Announced

Funding Changes

ACL Careers

• September

2011

UCU ACE speaks out

"Like the majority of people who work in my sector I work part-time. This is not a matter of choice. Despite the lip service paid by successive governments to Lifelong Learning, over the last few years literally thousands of courses in adult ed have been closed, and opportunities for employment have shrunk" said Annie Holder UCU Branch Secretary at Lewisham Adult and community education at the rally on 30th June when UCU and other teaching Unions NUT and ATL joined with PCS in a one day strike to protest against Government attacks on public sector pensions. At the time of writing this Newsletter UCU is making arrangements for the next strike scheduled for 30th November following a decision passed by the TUC unanimously to defend Public sector pensions (see below for more details).

At UCU's Congress in May, Annie successfully moved a motion reminding UCU that the union needs to be more representative of all its members in its public pronouncements and activities. She pointed out that Adult and Community Education members rarely get a mention and that even if the sector was now very small after all the cuts over the years, members needed to be recognized as being part of the Union and also have a vital role to play in the post 16 sector.

In this newsletter we bring news not just about developments in the sector but also publicise how we wish to consult and involve you in the work of the Union.

IACL Consultation

As part of the New Challenges, New Chances consultations on the FE sector, BIS has published a consultation on the review of Informal Adult and Community Learning (IACL).

The document sets out the BIS intention for IACL to 'continue to contribute to people's quality of life, health and well-being'. As a result, and to everyone's surprise, the Adult Safeguarded Budget which funds much of this learning, wasn't cut in the Comprehensive Spending Review last summer. But as part of the protection it received, BIS stated that it would review its use to maximise its contribution to wider policy objectives, such as building the Big Society; deliver value for money by focusing public funding on people who would not otherwise have access to learning and maximising income from learners who can afford to pay; and support progression, including to further learning, training and employment. BIS ran a series of consultation meetings for stakeholders on various aspects of IACL delivery, funding, data, quality assurance and infra-structure. This has resulted in this latest consultation. The full document can be found on:

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/Consultations>

Following the consultation BIS will publish details of key implementation milestones in the skills investment statement for 2012/13, planned for publication autumn 2011. The consultation sets out six key challenges for BIS funded IACL:

- to clarify government objectives for spend on IACL and its role in supporting wider government policy objectives, including the Big Society, localism, wellbeing, social inclusion and digital inclusion;

Continued...

- to ensure that government funding is sufficiently focused on the most disadvantaged. *'Comfortably-off, educated learners'* are currently over-represented. However they pay fees which can cross-subsidise those who cannot afford to pay;
- to provide robust evidence for IACL. Social and economic impact measures for BIS-funded IACL are *'under-developed'* and government does not collect data on non-government funded IACL;
- to address funding anomalies and make funding fairer. *'Funding is currently based on an historical, and in many cases inequitable, distribution'*;
- to create the conditions that will enable a much wider range of informal learning to thrive, whether this is supported by government, self-organised in local communities, delivered in the private sector or enabled through harnessing the power of the internet; and
- to ensure that workforce training and quality assurance arrangements support the new vision for BIS-funded IACL.

Consultation questions include:

- Do you agree that BIS-funded IACL contributes to the development of the Big Society and complements the delivery of other government policies, and if yes, which policies and how might IACL's contribution be measured?
- Should BIS funded IACL be aimed solely at supporting specific outcomes such as progression to training and employment, or enable progression in a broader sense? If the latter, what other types of progression are relevant and how could they be measured?
- What should be the respective national and local roles in relation to IACL?
- What (if any) steps could facilitate the changing role of central Government in IACL?
- What are the implications of seeking a wider local provider base?
- Should BIS-funded IACL be targeted or universal, and why?

- What are the key challenges to generating fee income and what associated solutions would encourage more sophisticated approaches to income generation?
- What core information should recipients of BIS investment have to provide in relation to learner characteristics and learning activity?
- How can administrative data be used effectively to map fee income and learner disadvantage?
- Should BIS IACL funding be used to fund capacity building and innovation? If yes, how should funding be balanced and what type of activity should be funded?
- Is there a need for quality assurance arrangements to be changed in light of the potential changes to BIS funded IACL? If yes, in what way?

The consultation will close on 21 October 2011. If UCU members working in IACL want to contribute to UCU's response to the consultation, they should send any comments and thoughts to Dan Taubman dtaubman@ucu.org.uk and attend a series of briefings organised by our Regional Offices.

Briefing Meetings

1st October

UCU Head Office Carlow St London NW1 2.30pm –for members in London, South East, Anglia, Southern, South West Regions. Contact Noreen Lee nlee@ucu.org.uk

5th October

UCU Manchester Regional Office Lancastrian Office Centre, Talbot Road, Old Trafford Manchester M32 0FP 12 noon for members in North West and Yorkshire and Humberside Regions. Contact Rob Crowther rcrowther@ucu.org.uk or Neva Blakesley nblakesley@ucu.org.uk

28th October

UCU Birmingham office 2nd Floor, Alpha Tower, Suffolk Street Birmingham B1 1TT 11am to 3pm Contact Lesley Foley lfoley@ucu.org.uk or Jennette Estridge jestridge@ucu.org.uk

Pensions

The campaign to defend pensions steps up significantly with the announcement that a TUC co-ordinated day of action is to be held on 30 November. This follows the failure of the government to engage properly in negotiations over plans to worsen public sector pensions including the Teachers Pension Scheme. It is the first day of action and unions will be discussing further action if there is no movement from the government.

Over 10 trade unions are balloting members for industrial action on that day. UCU and the other unions who have had successful ballots, and took action on 30 June, will join the protest, giving the possibility of over 3 million trade unionists taking action together. UCU will be calling on members in FE, AE and Post '92 Universities in England and Wales to take a one day strike and is planning to ballot members in Northern Ireland and Scotland to do likewise.

In announcing the action the TUC said:

"This call reflects the huge anger of public service workers over the threat to their pensions and the deep frustration over difficulties of securing government engagement in meaningful negotiations. This planned day of action will be an unprecedented coming together of the whole public service workforce and the communities they serve in a united demand for pensions justice."

On top of this, unions have been told to expect a government decision by the end of the month on the overall cost ceiling available for new pension schemes, followed shortly by the cost contribution, ie the maximum employers will be asked to pay.

The government refuses to honour agreements made in 2005 on the sharing of such costs but is insisting that these are to be based on what it calls a "reference scheme" which includes linking normal pension age to the state retirement age and moving from a final salary to a career average based scheme.

Whilst the government continues to shackle the talks in this way meaningful negotiation is proving impossible. As the TUC made clear last week:

"The government is urged to bring new proposals to the table urgently to make progress possible. ...The TUC and unions remain absolutely committed, in good faith, to seeking a fair negotiated settlement of this dispute so that this action will not be necessary."

Imposition not Negotiation

David Cameron and other ministers are making much noise about trade unions being irresponsible in taking action whilst negotiations are still underway. The simple fact however is there have been no meaningful negotiations. A number of meetings have been held since May between the government and the TUC and now separate scheme discussions have begun. However, so far the government has refused to give an inch on the key elements either on its plans for short term savings or changes to schemes from 2015. Whilst talking about negotiations it refuses to budge from its decisions to:

- Switch the indexation of pension increases from the Retail Price Index (RPI) to the lower consumer Price Index (CPI) leaving lecturers thousands of pounds worse off over the average retirement;
- Phase in increased pension contributions of around 3% between April 2012 and 2014/15 in order to make 2.8 billion savings;
- Change the formula by which future pension liabilities are measured (Discount Rate) – meaning that future pension schemes appear more expensive.

Balloting Arrangements

Branches/members already balloted for the strike on 30th June will not have to be balloted again. UCU will inform your employer that we are calling you out on strike on 30th November.

Where we did not ballot members we will do so this time.

There is a strict process to follow and at the heart of it is the accuracy of our membership information.

Continued...

By law the Union must give employers enough information about the staff/union members called to take action in a way that they know what part of their business will be affected and presumably also to enable them to make arrangements to cover the work and undermine the impact of the action. What the Union does is to ask Branches and reps to check the information on our data base so we can turn this into a schedule (matrix) that summarises the numbers of staff in certain categories e.g. teachers, managers, trainers etc and also identify their work location. We need you to make every effort to let us know where members' main work location is. Sometimes we hold records of work locations that no longer exist and this sort of error is sufficient to invalidate a ballot. So we will be asking you to check this in the next few days.

The timetable for the ballot is:

Membership checks completion 19 October

The ballot opens on 31 October

Ballot closes on 18 November

If you know of any changes to your membership please let the membership department know or ask members to enter the changes on line.

Petition and Lobby of Parliament 26 October

Seven educational unions (ASCL, ATL, NAHT, NASUWT, NUT, UCAC and UCU) are organising a lobby of parliament on 26 October under the slogan 'Decent Pensions: Securing the Future For All'. The intention is for one representative from every school, college, adult education branch and new university to lobby their MP urging a rethink by government and a call for proper negotiations.

The unions have also launched a mass petition to accompany the lobby. You can sign up online at:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/tpspetition>

Choose Youth

UCU is a member of the National Joint Negotiating Committee for Youth and Community Workers. The Staff Side Unions – UNITE, UNISON, NUT and UCU, are campaigning against the massive cuts up and down the country.

Since coming to power this government has done all it can to alienate young people; one million young people are unemployed, hundreds of thousands have been priced out of education as the Education Maintenance Allowance is scrapped and tuition fee hiked.

And now it is presiding over the destruction of the youth and community support young people need to help them on the right path.

Staff Side Unions have linked up with Choose Youth, a coalition of 30 youth and community organisations defending young people services and its workers from government and local government cuts, and has joined forces to preserve the right of all 13-19 year-olds to open-access youth service provision.

A mass lobby of parliament to save young people's services will be held on 25 October. For more information on the campaign, please visit:

<http://www.chooseyouth.org>

NIACE online survey

As part of the IACL consultation, NIACE have been funded to undertake an on-line survey for Learners and other members of the public to have their say about the future of informal adult community learning. The survey is on <http://www.niace.org.uk/current-work/the-iacl-review> and is sponsored by BIS as part of its review of Informal Adult Learning. NIACE believe that this is a real opportunity for individuals to influence policy regarding the future of informal adult community learning. It is urging learning providers and others in the sector to encourage and support people to access and complete the survey.

The closing date for response is **October 31st 2011**.

Review of Professional Development and Institute for Learning Announced 7 September

Following more talks between UCU and the other FE unions, BIS, AoC and IfL after the last UCU ballot on IfL. The minister John Hayes has announced the setting up of:

Continued...

"an independent review of at the arrangements for achieving a professionalised workforce and how this is facilitated by the Institute for Learning and other partners in delivering the regulations and other policy initiatives aimed at supporting a professional workforce, professional development for college lecturers that will involve looking at the role and effectiveness of the Institute for Learning (IfL)."

UCU has welcomed the government's decision to hold an independent review. Responding to the announcement by the further education minister, John Hayes, UCU said it was essential that the review did not shy away from asking awkward questions and that it heard directly from staff teaching in colleges.

UCU has now suspended the current legal proceedings against IfL but **the boycott of fees remains.**

This step forward has been achieved by the determination of members in maintaining the action and it is vital that we continue to stand firm. Please continue to report any difficulties to your regional office in the first instance.

We will now be involved in the determination of the precise terms of reference to the review which is envisaged to take 2/3 months. Further information will be provided as soon as possible on this but we will be arguing for: the fullest involvement of practitioners within the review, all aspects of the current arrangements to come under close scrutiny, including fees and the service provided by IfL, and the consideration of alternative arrangements.

[For more information check the UCU website.](#)

Funding: changes to who gets free provision 2011-2012

BIS had proposed changes to which FE students would have to pay fees for their courses. Some of these proposals are about the statutory entitlements that all adults have had to a 1st full level 2 course and those under 26 to a 1st full level 3 course. Proposals currently before Parliament would have restricted these entitlements to those under 24. More immediately it was from proposed that only those students who are 'active' benefits, Job Seekers Allowance and Employment Support Allowance would be eligible for full fee remission.

This would have affected all students on what is termed 'inactive' benefit. Up to the last academic year, those students on income support, incapacity, disability and housing benefits and those on working tax and pension credits were able to learn for free. The main group of students who would have been hot by this were ESOL students. This was the impetus for the Action for ESOL Campaign launched in January 2011.

Due in no small part to the magnificent campaign that ESOL teachers and students have waged there has been a U turn by the Government. In August there was a change of policy by the SFA around who can access free FE provision. This is in new guidance from the SFA publication 'Learner Eligibility and Contribution Rules 2.1'. Now providers will be free not to charge fees for those on 'inactive' benefits if those students made a declaration that they would be seeking employment. The colleges will be fully funded if they enrol. The decision however is left to colleges. UCU FE branches are urged to seek meetings with their management and ask them if the college will use this new flexibility, If not the reason why they will not use it; which students and programmes will be covered by this change; Will programmes that had been cut in anticipation of these new rules on eligibility be restored ; whether jobs lost as a result of the anticipated changes can be restored and how will last year's inactive claimant students who may have been deterred from returning to the college be contacted to inform them of this change in policy. Please let Dan Taubman know the results of any discussions with management dtaubman@ucu.org.uk

ACL Careers

Research on adult educators' careers: UCU has received a request for research participants A UCU member at the University of Birmingham is undertaking research exploring adult educators' careers, their philosophy and practice, against the background of changing adult education policy in England. She is keen to make contact with adult educators working in England who would be prepared to be interviewed as a part of the project, particularly those newer to the field or those working in the voluntary sector, or in community or work-based settings. If you are prepared to take part in an interview (face to face, by phone, Skype or email) please contact: Marion Bowl University of Birmingham School of Education m.bowl.1@bham.ac.uk