

# Disabled Members' Newsletter

No 5 ● May 2014 – Congress Special

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## **1. New Equality Administrator**

The Equality Department has a new Equality Administrator. Swati Patel joined the team on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 (April Fools Day!). Swati is very pleased to join the Equality and Participation Unit, as she wants to support an organisation which is campaigning for a fair deal for staff working in colleges and universities, within the current economic and political environment.

"I am looking forward to working with the team and providing support to the standing committees".

You can contact Swati at [spatel@ucu.org.uk](mailto:spatel@ucu.org.uk)

## 2. Congress 2014

This year's UCU Congress runs from 28 – 30 May 2014 in Manchester.

There will be an Equality Stand within Congress. Please do come along and pick up various publications.

In addition the Equality Committee with Disabled, LGBT and Women Members Standing Committees will be running **a fringe event on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> May between 1.00pm – 2.00pm in Exchange 11**, which will focus on the impact of the austerity and the anti-equality agenda on our employment rights and access to services which support equality.

We have the following speakers:

- Jo Seery of Thompsons will speak about the impact of changes to our equality and employment rights.
- Sally Carr of LGBT Youth North West will speak on how the cuts impact on LGBT youth services.
- Clare Laxton of Women's Aid will speak on how the cuts affect support for domestic violence services.

If you are attending Congress please do come along and take part in the debate.

### *Racism and anti-Semitism fringe meeting*

In accordance with Congress Resolution 69 (2013) Anti-Semitism and Racism, there will be a Unite against fascism fringe meeting entitled:

**'Racism and Anti-Semitism'**

**on Friday 30 May in Exchange 4 and 5**

**Chaired by Laura Miles, UCU NEC**

**with invited Speaker**

**Weyman Bennett, Joint Secretary, UAF**

On 22 May 2014, elections were held across Europe as part of the European Elections. With the results still being digested, this fringe will examine where we are now in the aftermath of the elections and how we can strengthen our current anti-fascist campaigning with the focus on anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

*Black Members Fringe Meeting Congress*

Mental Health in the Black Community will be held on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> May, 1.00pm – 2.00pm in Exchange 4 & 5.

Please come and join us at the event.

The event will be:

Chaired by Jim Thakoordin  
(UCU Black Members' Standing Committee)

Guest speakers are:



Matilda MacAttram  
(Black Mental Health UK)

and

Davidson Chademana  
(UCU Black Members' Standing  
Committee)

Expanding on the good work of the Equality Unit around mental health, the Black Members' Standing Committee (BMSC) will be holding a fringe event highlighting mental health issues within the black community. The event will be of interest to all UCU members, as we will be exploring how such issues impact on staff and students.

### **3. TUC Disabled Workers Conference 2014**

This year's TUC Conference will be running from 28 – 30 May 2014. The Conference will be held at Congress House in London. There is a delegation of 12 people from UCU with Sharon Sweeney (Deputy Chair of DMSC) as the delegation leader, attending the conference.

UCU has submitted a motion supporting the global campaign for education for all disabled children. Access to education not only robs children of the future benefits of an education but also other rights such as better access to jobs, health and other services. UCU has ensured that the attacks on our own education system will also be highlighted.

Motions for debate cover a wide range of issues notably disabled benefits, access to work, reduced funding for interpreters and cuts to mental health services. A full round-up of Disabled Workers TUC conference will be in the next newsletter.

### **4. Changes to Disabled Student's Allowance from September 2015**



The Government has announced cuts in the Disabled Student's Allowance (DSA). These cuts mean that disabled students will have to make do without the necessary support, leading to higher drop-out rates and lower education attainment.

In particular, DSA funding will no longer be provided for non-specialist non-medical help (NMH) support. At present the DSA can pay for specialist equipment and note-takers or readers among other things.

Research has shown that students who receive DSAs perform at the same level as non-disabled students. The cuts threaten to undermine their academic achievement and future careers.

Hannah Paterson, NUS Disabled Students' Officer, said in the NUS press release: "The prospect of deeply unfair cuts to support disabled students should concern us all."

She added: "It is arrogant and out of touch to assume that disabled students can access 'basic' equipment or that universities' will accept the new responsibilities ministers are seeking to place on them."

The NUS is organising a national constituency based lobby of MPs on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2014.

UCU nationally will raise this issue with the appropriate sector bodies and work with other organisations to campaign for this change to be dropped. UCU is also submitting an emergency motion about cuts to DSA to TUC Disabled Workers Conference.

Please sign the petition using the link below which is calling on the government to withdraw this policy statement.

<http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/63748>

Please let us know of any campaigns or initiatives which we can publicise or if your institution has responded in any way.

## **5. TUC launches new guides to disability in the workplace**

The TUC has recently launched 2 New Guides covering Autism and *Dyslexia* in the workplace:

[Autism in workplace by Janine Booth](#)

This is the first guide which TUC has launched on autism. Only 15 per cent of adults with autism are in full-time employment and only 9 per cent are in part-time work.

This guide aims to inform union reps and workers of the facts around autism and advice on how to support autistic staff to ensure they get the adjustments they require and are legally entitled to. The guide explains the difficulties autistic people can face at work,

with suggestions which employers can implement to make the workplace more autism-friendly.

These include:

- a relaxing workplace
- reduction in distractions and easy control of light and temperature
- information about autism and support services available which all workers can access
- training for managers about autism, including recognising positives and skills
- all changes to working practices to be negotiated with the union, and proper notice given before they are introduced.

You can download the guide using the link below link.

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Autism.pdf>

*Dyslexia in the Workplace: a TUC Guide by Brian Hagan (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)*

Several million people who are of working age suffer from dyslexia. This has an impact on performance and time management. If appropriate adjustments are not made in the working conditions and environment, workers can face real difficulty. The guide outlines how union reps can play a vital part in supporting work colleagues with dyslexia and negotiating solutions with employers. The new edition is a rewrite of the original handbook, which takes into account the changes in law and in good practice. The guide outlines the main issues around dyslexia, how to identify whether an employee is dyslexic, how to undertake proper workplace assessments and how companies can do more to support staff with the condition.

TUC General Secretary **Frances O'Grady** said: "All too often, workers with dyslexia can find themselves facing disciplinary action over perceived failures, when early awareness of the condition could have led to sensible solutions being identified".

You can download the guide using the link below.

[http://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Dyslexia In The Workplace 2013 LR.pdf](http://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Dyslexia%20In%20The%20Workplace%202013%20LR.pdf)

## **6. Reasonable Adjustments**

The duty to make reasonable adjustments is embedded in the Equality Act 2010. It states that it is unlawful to discriminate against workers because of a physical or mental disability or to fail to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate a worker with a disability. This relates to both current disabled employees and employees who become disabled. It also relates to any prospective employees, meaning employers must make reasonable adjustments in the recruitment and employment of disabled people.

UCU has produced a guide to the provisions of the Act, which is available on the UCU website.

[http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/s/a/Reasonable\\_adjustments.pdf](http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/s/a/Reasonable_adjustments.pdf)

Following the launch of the guide, members of the UCU Disabled Members Standing Committee 2013 raised the following additional issues.

- ensure appropriate treatment of sensitive medical and other information by those involved in the discussions
- agree time limits for agreeing and implementing adjustments
- monitor the process for agreeing the adjustments
- raise the issue that adjustments are often paid for by individual departments rather than centrally which puts added pressures on individuals requiring adjustments.

Branches are asked to provide feedback on this guide.

The intention is to provide further guidance and updates on these issues and others that may be raised so all feedback, comments, case studies or examples of good practice are very welcome.

## **7. Disability Leave**

UCU has produced a briefing paper giving guidance of good practice in dealing with Disability Leave.

In summary, absence from work due to a disability should be treated differently and distinctly to regular sickness absence, and have a separate agreed policy relating to it. It should protect disabled employees from any discrimination related to absence caused by a disability that would otherwise be treated as sickness absence. Without a separate policy on disability leave a disabled person may experience disability-related discrimination in a multitude of ways. Disability leave is not a legal term with a specific obligatory framework, but the Equality Act 2010 does oblige institutions to provide reasonable adjustments to disabled employees. UCU's Higher Education Committee has prioritised disability leave for local negotiation.

If you have negotiated an agreement on disability leave at your branch please send details to [egadmin@ucu.org.uk](mailto:egadmin@ucu.org.uk)

The briefing can be found at:

[http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/m/l/Disability\\_Leave.pdf](http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/m/l/Disability_Leave.pdf)

## **8. Mental Health update**

### Training

The New mental health awareness training will take place on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2014. The training course will be held in Carlow Street.

Individuals with mental health conditions and issues may need little or no different support from UCU reps but understanding these issues and being able to advise and support members appropriately is paramount to ensuring that the stigma, stereotypes and discrimination associated with mental health are addressed.



This course is aimed at UCU reps working in branches who want to learn more about how to support members with mental health issues and conditions.

The course will help to:

- Develop your understanding of mental health conditions and issues
- Identify how people with mental health conditions and issues experience discrimination in the workplace
- Represent and support members with mental health conditions and issues
- Discuss the role of trade unions in dealing with mental health conditions and issues.

## **9. Government reviews hate crime progress**

The Government has reviewed 'Challenge it, Report it, Stop it' to assess progress on tackling hate crime.

The progress report (issued May 2014) provides both an overview of achievements and case study examples, which demonstrate how work is being carried out locally.

It also highlights areas that have evolved since the plan's launch in 2012, and what is being done to deal with those issues.

The review is generally positive about the progress made but acknowledges that more needs to be done in line with the three objectives. The three objectives are:

1. Preventing hate crime happening by challenging the attitudes and behaviours that foster hatred, and encouraging early intervention to reduce the risk of incidents escalating.
2. Increasing the reporting of hate crime that occurs by building victims' confidence to come forward and seek justice, and working with partners at national and local level to ensure the right support is available when they do.

3. Working with the agencies that make up the criminal justice system to improve the operational response to hate crime. We want a more effective end-to-end process, with agencies identifying hate crimes early, managing cases jointly and dealing with offenders robustly.

You can download the review and the original report below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hate-crime-action-plan-challenge-it-report-it-stop-it>

Read more about hate crime progress – see link below.

<http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2014/may/govt-reviews-hate-crime-progress>

## **10. Trade unions and disabled people fighting austerity**

Hate Crime cannot be tackled when there is such a fierce attack by Government and the media on disabled people's rights.

Below is a link to a new TUC briefing, "trade unions and disabled people fighting austerity". It contains a summary of key facts as well as suggestions for action by unions campaigning on austerity, encouraging alliances with disabled activists and an inclusive approach. Many people have fallen for government lies that all people forced to rely on benefits are scroungers, with particular negative impact on many disabled people.

The TUC Disabled Workers' Committee is keen that all unions discuss the integration of these issues into their general campaigning and Committee members can make themselves available to come to discuss the campaign if invited to do so.

Here's the link.... <http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality-issues/disability-issues/disabled-people-fighting-austerity>

## 11. Disability History Month



Disability History Month takes place every year from 22<sup>nd</sup> November to 22<sup>nd</sup> December and celebrates the lives and achievements of disabled people.

This year the theme will link into the centenary of World War 1 and focus on **War and Impairment: The Social Consequence of Disablement.**

Go to <http://ukdisabilityhistorymonth.com/> to find out details of events as they are released.

UCU has produced a film ([see link below](#)) as a contribution to last year's Disability History Month. The aim was to make this film accessible to all members and feedback is still welcomed. This film is to highlight the importance of the social model of disability and can be used as a trade union and teaching resource to raise awareness and campaign on disabled workers issues.

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

**If you would like to be added to the UCU Disabled Network and receive updates on disability issues, please contact [egadmin@ucu.org.uk](mailto:egadmin@ucu.org.uk) with your email address.**

**Disabled Members' Resource Centre:  
<http://www.ucu.org.uk/disabres>**

**If you would like to give us any feedback on any issues around disability or any local issues in your branch please email [egadmin@ucu.org.uk](mailto:egadmin@ucu.org.uk)**