

NEWSLETTER



AN INFORMATION BULLETIN FOR MEMBERS IN LONDON REGION

December 2015

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to another edition of our occasional London Region newsletter. Hopefully you will find these communications useful, and we would be glad to hear any feedback or suggestions you may have.

Firstly, we want to thank all branches for your contribution to UCU's first National Recruitment Week. We have seen members joining the Union as a result of your efforts, which obviously helps us to increase the influence of your Union at your workplace. The next Recruitment Week will take place in the week beginning 22 February 2016, and we will be in touch with every branch to discuss preparations and resources in due course.

You will see within this newsletter details of a meeting to take place on 15th January 2016 aimed at building a network of BME members in London. This meeting is an important opportunity for us to create a forum within which members can discuss, share ideas and address the concerns of BME members across the capital, and we would encourage anyone with an interest in these matters to do your best to come along. If you are not able to make it, but would like to register an interest, please contact your Regional Official.

Finally, we want to record our sadness at the recent death of Cliff Snaith, long-standing NATFHE/UCU branch officer at London Metropolitan University, and secretary of the London Regional Committee. Cliff was an exceptionally committed activist and campaigner for UCU members, and he will be missed by us all. We offer our sympathies to Cliff's family and friends.

In solidarity,

Barry, Greg and Una

London Black Members' network inaugural meeting 15 January 14.00 – 16.00

Guest Speaker: Dave Muritu, Chair UCU Black Members' Standing Committee, UCU NEC member

Come and meet other Black Members in the region, share your experiences, and discuss how we can increase our representation in our branches and the UCU's democratic structures. All self-identifying black members welcome. Light refreshments will be served.

The network aims to provide a space for UCU's black members; to provide support and guidance for black members who wish to become more involved and to share information. The meeting will also be an opportunity to plan for UCU's *Day of Action Against Workplace Racism* planned for Wednesday 10 February 2016

Did you Know...

Recourse, the support organisation for UCU members, has now joined with those of other educational unions to become the Educational Support Partnership?

It still offers a 24-hour helpline and support for members as before. Details are on the UCU website.

Contact Number: 08000 562 561 (helpline) / 07909 341229 (text)

Email: support@edsupport.org.uk

Website: www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk

Area reviews of post-16 provision in England

In September the government announced a review of further education provision in England. The document is called 'Reviewing post-16 education and training institutions' and represents the start of a process of area reviews which, if implemented, are likely to mean the biggest change within the sector since colleges were removed from local government control and incorporated in the early 1990s.

Overview

The government's view is that while each area review will be different to take account of local circumstances, the overall brief will involve 'fewer, larger, and more financially resilient Institutions which are viable, sustainable, and efficient, and deliver maximum value for public investment'. It is UCU's view that in fact it may lead to narrowing of provision and further reduction in funding, inevitably resulting in job losses and loss of curriculum for students.

The reviews themselves will be led by steering groups consisting of chairs of governors, local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) and local authorities, FE and sixth form college commissioners.

The London formal reviews will start in early 2016. A number of colleges have declared their intention to work in collaboration with other colleges, including full mergers, in advance of the review. Those UCU branches already affected are making it clear to their employer that they will oppose ill-thought-out proposals and are calling for full and proper consultation with the unions and the communities affected.

Further and more detailed information can be found here:

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/k/1/ucu_briefing_post16areareviews_oct15.pdf.

Christmas parties

As the season of workplace and/or union Christmas socials approaches, we hope you won't mind if we share a few points drawn in part from ACAS advice regarding office parties...

Remember that employment laws apply even when a party takes place somewhere other than in the workplace.

Alcohol-related behaviour is the root cause of several workplace disciplinary cases each year, and all staff are advised to be aware of what constitutes unacceptable behaviour at staff social events.

If organising a workplace or UCU branch Christmas social event...

- all colleagues should be invited, including Hourly Paid Lecturers, Visiting Teachers and employees on fixed term contracts
- think about making the event as inclusive as possible, so that everyone can enjoy it, remembering that some people don't drink alcohol or eat certain foods
- consider briefing any speakers or entertainers in advance to ensure that their material is suitable and won't give offence.

On the occasion, enjoy yourself (responsibly of course) and remember to avoid putting a post on Twitter, Facebook, or anywhere else, that might be seen to reflect badly on you, or your employer - it may come back to haunt you.

Try to avoid over-indulging: If you are sick or absent from work the day after a work Christmas party normal sickness policies and disciplinary procedures will apply.

Finally, whether or not you have a work party, don't forget to take your holiday! When your College or University is closed you are on holiday; rest and relaxation are appropriate holiday activities, preparation and marking are not. If you want to calculate your holiday entitlement, you will find a useful link at: <https://www.gov.uk/calculate-your-holiday-entitlement>

Finally, have an enjoyable break.

Best wishes from all at London regional office

Recruitment week

The first national recruitment week took place this November. 180 branches participated in NRW with activity including door knocking, leafleting, stalls, social events and open meetings.

Recruitment was 87% higher than for the same week last year, including many new members from the national mailshots and regional and branch activity.

The hard work continues. We will judge the success of NRW1 by its overall impact on the period from October to December and report in our next newsletter. We have had a great start but we want to do even better so if you have any ideas or feedback on what went right and what went wrong please share it with us.

Useful dates

Regional Committee 6th February 2016

Casework training: 4th February 2016

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/london/casework>

Communications training: 6th March 2016

For details of UCU training see:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/4797>