

# Health & Safety **UCU**

University and College Union

## FOR MKC PRISON EDUCATORS

AUGUST 2017

### **Which issues do you want raising at the new H & S Committee?**

UCU are now meeting with MKC every three months to discuss H&S issues within OLASS. We are pleased that MKC agreed to our request to set up these meetings.

Those attending include the Heads of H&S and People Services at MKC, Gina, UCU branch chair, Adam, UCU's national H&S official, Jane, a UCU H&S rep, and Ian who is H&S convenor on your branch committee.

The next meeting is mid-October so please let me know if there is anything you wish to be brought to the attention of the committee. However, please contact us immediately if there is something which is causing you concern in case we need to escalate it straightaway to MKC H&S. To contact your branch please email [mkcprisonbranch@ucu.org.uk](mailto:mkcprisonbranch@ucu.org.uk)

### **Escorting (Accompanying) Learners**

It has been agreed by all prison providers and HMPPS(formerly NOMS) in the OLASS 4 contract that contracted staff do not escort prisoners.

Escorting, whether it is to the library or back to the wings, if it involves unlocking and locking gates and counting prisoners, it is the responsibility of trained prison staff. This is not a recent decision but something that has been in place for many years although it has been ignored or not realised by some establishments, managers and staff.

If you are asked to escort you should refuse. If you escort or accompany prisoners you are unlikely to be covered if there is an accident or a prisoner goes missing. It is understood that this might make it difficult for your learners to get to the library if you cannot escort them there but it is your Health and Safety which is paramount.

### **Excessive Workloads**

It has been noted that the increase in workload is taking its toll. Whilst UCU believes that this is a H&S issue affecting staff well-being, it will be discussed at the JCC in September.

### **Body Cameras**

MKC have sent guidance to all managers regarding the wearing of body cameras as they are increasingly being used across all establishments. A body camera records a snap shot and should not be used as a control measure.

Neither MKC or UCU encourage the wearing of body cameras but if someone wants to wear one they can having completed the appropriate training at their establishment and that they recognise the legal implications of wearing a camera. Body cameras do not replace any other safety measures and as they are optional are not mentioned on risk assessments.

Please let us know if you are asked to wear a body camera or it is suggested with a body camera you could work in area which may be considered unsafe.

**Not a member yet? Here's how to join:**  
**[www.ucu.org.uk/join](http://www.ucu.org.uk/join)**

## **Red flagged learners and Allocations**

Different prisons will have different systems of how a prisoner is assessed as suitable for Education. Some prisoners have a record which can be referred to but this is unlikely to happen in a remand prison.

It is important that your manager has a process on how your learners are risk assessed before they attend classes. Ask what this process is.

It is also very important that poor or erratic behaviour is put in the Observation book and IRed so a record can be kept if there is a need to remove a learner from Education.

## **Green Buttons**

When green buttons are checked there is a record of this near the control panel and the prison will keep a log of checks. If a green button is not responded to then it is highly unlikely that it is not working but down to response times. If this happens it should be reported as a near miss.

## **Reporting of Accidents, Incidents and Near Misses**

It is imperative that these forms are completed, at the moment the numbers of reports are very low.

In June, there were 3 accidents reported and 5 near misses. Whilst reports are increasing this really is a very low number and not reflective of what is being seen in prisons at present. You could, for example, press the green button for a near miss if a door fell off its hinges. All reports are followed up by MKC to check what has been undertaken as a result.

It is vital that you report things so action is taken and improvements made.

All establishments should have details of these forms so that they can be accessed and filled in quickly as soon as something happens.

## **Behaviour Between Staff**

It was extremely concerning that when asked what issues were affecting H&S in your establishments the biggest response was how staff felt they were treated by managers in the way they were spoken to.

This included general attitudes in how staff interacted with each other. This will be taken to the JCC (Joint Consultative Committee). MKC has recognised that more work needed to be done on this to improve staff relations.

If there are particular examples that are causing concern these should be brought up so it can be dealt with informally initially. Remember to treat each other with respect.

## **Smoking Ban**

As the smoking ban is rolled out in prisons, please remember that all smoking items are deemed contraband and if anyone is found with them in their possession they could be dealt with very harshly and possibly face exclusion. There have been no instances yet but please be aware as to how seriously this could be seen.

## **Excessive Heat**

British weather is true to form and we go from very cold classrooms to excessive heat within weeks. There is no upper temperature in which you are expected to work but a common sense approach should be taken by your manager. Ventilation should be used where possible, water should be provided and breaks where possible. Some managers have been very supportive and cancelled classes when the heat is too much as it not only uncomfortable but also can inflame tempers!

## **Reasons to join UCU**

- UCU has almost 110,000 members.
- Members can get support and representation from UCU reps, supported by full-time UCU officials, and legal advice if appropriate.
- UCU represents your profession to Government ministers, MPs and professional organisations. We campaign for safer prisons.

To join: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/join>