



UCU South West Equalities Newsletter - Autumn 2024

UCU South West Regional Equalities Conference - Online

**Wednesday 2nd October from
5.00pm to 7.00pm**

You are invited to attend the **1st UCU South West Equalities Conference** and do invite your colleagues to attend as well. ALL UCU members in the South West are welcome.

We are delighted that UCU President, Maxine Looby, has agreed to open the conference



At our first UCU South West Regional Equalities Conference we want to explore how we can work together to make Equalities a part of the DNA of our Colleges and Universities as well as in Prison Education and Adult & Community Education.

We want to communicate with you in your workplaces and branches.

We also want to be able meet with you online to talk about our experiences and share best practice.

One way of achieving this is through establishing members networks for each of the Equality strands which are as follows:

- Black members
- Disabled members
- LGBT+ members
- Migrant members
- Women members



We would like to invite you to get actively involved in these networks and in promoting Equalities. If you would like to be actively involved in one or more of these networks please do contact me -

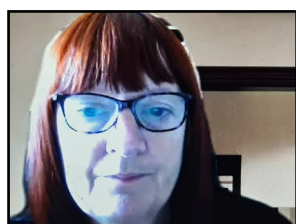
kevinndaws@outlook.com

The Regional Conference is taking place on Teams - a copy of the link will be included in the e-mail accompanying this Newsletter

We look forward to meeting you online on 2nd October - please display your name

Menopause Webinar

Congratulations to Laura Blight and the Women's Member Network for the fantastic webinar on Thursday. Thanks also to our speakers—Tracy Walsh who is one of UCU's CPD Team; Claire Manser who spoke about the Menopause Café; and Alison Foster, Trade Union Students Programme Manager at City of Bristol College and she oversees the deliver of trade union training across the South West for the TUC and many trade unions including UCU



Did you know that 1 million women are forced out of the labour market due to menopause? Whilst menopause is not a protected characteristic this does not mean that the Equality Act does not support women in the workplace because age, disability, sex and gender reassignment are. So union members have successfully taken employers to employment tribunal using one of those characteristics where they feel that they have suffered less favourable treatment because of the menopause and that is when women are either being denied promotion, denied training opportunities, or just left out of decision making.

It is estimated that between 75% and 80% of people who experience the menopause are in work in the UK. It is therefore imperative that workplaces have a workable, informative and robust policy in place that is fully consistent with UK legislation.

Research suggests that the extent and impact of discrimination, bad practice, and general lack of awareness regarding menopause is forcing women out of the workforce. BUPA research estimates nearly 1 million women have been forced out of the labour market due to menopausal symptoms, or perhaps more accurately due to the lack of workplace support for them as they try to manage their symptoms and cope with a natural but often difficult process.

There will be a fuller report in the next Equalities Newsletter but do send us copies of your workplace Menopause Policy so that we can share them kevinndaws@outlook.com

UCU Equality Groups Conference at the Aston Hotel in Birmingham

from Thursday 28 November - Saturday 30 November



All conferences will be held in a hybrid format using Zoom.

The conference will hold four separate half-day conferences for migrant, LGBT+, women, black & disabled members, and a plenary session for all equality strands. Not all delegates will need to be at the conference for the full three days. You can register for any conference where you have self-identified with one or more equality strands and this must be recorded on your UCU membership record.

<https://ucu.wufoo.com/forms/the-annual-groups-equality-conference-2024/>

If you have any queries or questions please contact Sue Bajwa, UCU Conference Officer sbajwa@ucu.org.uk

We hope to see you there - do come and say hello



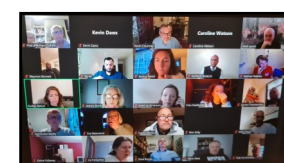
Extended redundancy protection periods

In April 2024 the redundancy protection periods for those on maternity / adoption / shared maternity leave were significantly extended. This means that employers have a special duty to offer alternative employment to many prospective and new parents who find themselves in a redundancy situation - including at the end of a fixed-term contract. Branches are encouraged to read and share our new guidance and ensure that employers have the necessary systems in place to meet their obligations.

You can access the full UCU briefing on the UCU website but you will need to log in

Stand Up To Racism Trade Union Network Launch

Thursday also saw the launch of the Trade Union Network of Stand Up to Racism (SUTR) which was attended by over 300 people include a number of Trade Union General Secretary's including Patrick Roach of NASUWT who is the Chair of the TUC Anti-Racism Taskforce and Fran Heathcote of PCS. There is a SUTR South West WhatsApp Group that you can join if you wish - let us know and we will send you an invitation via WhatsApp



'Accessibility as Standard' checklist

Last year's UCU Annual Equalities Conference was held in Manchester from the



16th to 18th November last year. At the Disabled Members Conference we held debates on UNCRPD, Inclusive Conferences and meetings, Rail Ticket Office Closures, the 4 Day Week, and Accessible and Inclusive

Conferences and Workplaces—this motion was linked to the launch of the 'Accessibility as Standard' checklist which you can download from the UCU website by following this link

chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/14352/Accessibility-as-standard-checklist---master/pdf/Accessibility_as_standard_checklist_-_master.pdf

The checklist is a long document but we would ask you to download it and carry out an audit of the buildings on each campus. If you can please do share out the responsibility for this audit amongst your reps and do use it as an opportunity to involve our members.

If you are asking what are we trying to achieve through the Accessibility as Standard Checklist then I would say we are trying to achieve 3 things:

1. We want to develop a clear picture of how accessible our colleges, universities, prison education sites and adult & community education sites are for both learners and staff
2. We want to gather this information so that we can include this both in our local negotiations with our employer as well as any negotiations at the national level
3. The Accessibility as Standard checklist is also a tool for raising awareness; involving members and potentially recruiting new members. It can also enable us to engage with our students.

Disability Employment Charter

In 2022 through a motion to UCU Congress we declared our support for the Disability Employment Charter and we subsequently managed to persuade the TUC Disabled Workers Conference to send the UCU and Unison



Composited Motion to the TUC Congress in 2022 where the TUC also supported the Disability Employment Charter

We do not say that the Disability Employment Charter is perfect but it provides us with something concrete and coherent for us to negotiate for at both the local and national level.

We would encourage and urge all branches to:

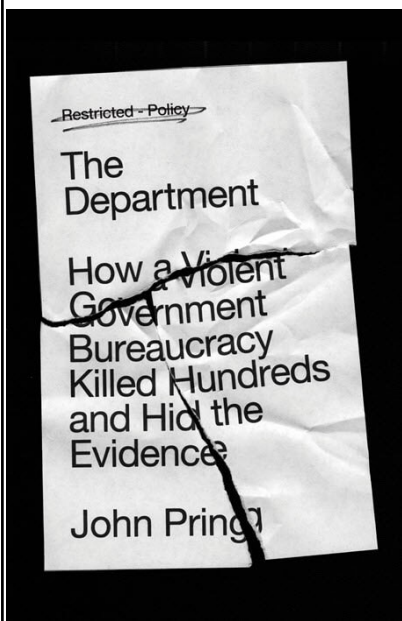
1. To invite your Branch to pass a motion in supporting the Disability Employment Charter and agreeing to place it on the local negotiating agenda
2. Ask your Branch to invite your employer sign the Disability Employment Charter and to adopt all of its provisions
3. If your branch is affiliated to one or more local Trades Union Councils also known as Trades Councils then we would ask you to submit a motion for debate at their next meeting and encourage them to declare their support for the Disability Employment Charter

UCU have produced a briefing on the Disability Employment Charter which provides details of the 9 demands of the Charter as well as model motion that you can use. Please follow this link to the briefing:

chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/13495/Disability-Employment-Charter/pdf/Disability_Equality_Jan23.pdf



Institutional Inhumanity



You may think that using the term 'Institutional Inhumanity' is just to grab your attention but read on and you will, hopefully, understand that 'institutional Inhumanity' is something that we need to confront, challenge and conquer.

In 2017 the United Nations (UN) published a report which was highly critical of the UK Government's treatment of disabled people and stated, "austerity and welfare reform measures were responsible for grave and systematic violations of disabled people's rights."

This condemnation of the UK may have, initially, appeared surprising, but the recently published book 'The Department' by John Pring provides the backdrop to this statement from the UN.

Let us be clear that these 'grave and systematic violations of disabled people's rights' has been taking place over many years under Labour, Conservative and the Liberal Democrat/Conservative Coalition Government.

'The Department' – to quote the publisher, Pluto Press – is 'A thoroughly researched exposé of bureaucratic violence and hostility of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) over the last 30 years.

When you sit down and read 'The Department' do allow yourself time to take much-needed breaks, because you will not only be shocked and horrified by what you read, you will be appalled at the inhumanity of the DWP and Government ministers towards disabled people. You are left in no doubt that both civil servants and politicians believe that the lives of disabled people are dispensable and are of no real value.

So how did we get here?

In 'The Department' John Pring tries to give an historical perspective to this systematic abuse of disabled people and suggests a number of different options as to when this institutionalised inhumanity started. It could have started with the creation of the Welfare State in 1948; or the introduction of Invalidity Benefit in 1971, or even further back in history to the early welfare reforms of the Liberal Governments of the early 1900s.

The creation of the Welfare State based, on The Beveridge Report, was intended to be the start of moving towards the goal of providing all citizens with security from the cradle to the grave.

The Conservative election victory of 1979 with the onset of Thatcherism saw the start of the attack on the welfare. It took nearly 10 years before the Tories turned their attention to disabled people.

We would suggest that the introduction of Care in the Community was an important part of the process of vilifying disabled people. This transferred the cost of providing support to 'disabled people' from health and social services over to the Department of Social Security, responsible for managing the benefits system.

In early 1989 the then Secretary of State for Social Security, John Moore, sent a memo to John Major the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, saying:

"...I think it would be sensible to discuss the general approach to disability benefits."

The memo from John Moore is important, because it set the policy direction of successive Governments which "lead to the deaths of hundreds, and probably thousands of people."

Once the attack on disability benefits started, it became relentless and it appears that it is going to continue under the new Labour Government.



John Pring spent 10 years undertaking the research for this book which included interviewing former Government Ministers and issuing requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act. However, most importantly, he spoke to the families of some of those disabled people who had died due to what can be described as

'Institutionalised Inhumanity. These

personal stories are moving; they are deeply personal and cannot fail to both shock and appal you.

Running through 'The Department' are the accounts of the life and death of 12 people, but there are many more accounts that could have been included but these accounts powerfully demonstrate the institutionalised inhumanity of the DWP and the predecessor Departments towards disabled people.

We can only agree with the Guardian journalist and author of Crippled: Austerity and the Demonisation of Disabled People, Dr Frances Ryan when she says that 'The Department' is:

'A must read expose of one of Britain's biggest hidden scandals. Every politician, civil servant and journalist in the country should have this on their bookshelf.'

If you need more reasons to order your copy of 'The Department' then let us conclude with the quote from Paul Lewis, freelance financial journalist and presenter of Money Box, BBC Radio 4:

'John Pring's indefatigable research has revealed how successive Conservative, Labour, and Coalition governments have not only failed to provide the money, help, resources, and understanding that disabled people need, they have gone to great lengths to hide the truth about what they have done. It would be a strong person who could read this disturbing book in a sitting. But it must be read.'

You can order your copy here:

<https://www.plutobooks.com/9780745349893/the-department/>

If you have reached this far and have read the review in full we would ask you to contact your MP to confirm that they have received their copy of The Department – every MP was sent a copy

Ask them if they have read it or if not, will they or one of their staff read it and brief them on its contents

Kevin Daws

