

# Day of Action for Disability Equality in Education

---

## Wednesday 25 November 2020

---

The Day of Action for Disability Equality in Education will be held on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020. Whilst the campaign is promoted as a day of action, we know that some branches might find it easier to do action on a different day, so feel free to take action on any or all days in the week of 23<sup>rd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

This is our third year of action and our theme is '**Organising for Disabled Workers**'. Covid-19 has brought new barriers and challenges for disabled workers. We know that this virus can attack anyone and we are all in this together to defend our lives and our livelihoods. But we also know that Disabled people have been hard hit by this crisis with two-thirds of the dead being Disabled people. But we also know that it is an unequal crisis in which structural inequalities have caused disproportionate deaths among Black and disabled people and emergency legislation has dismantled some of our rights, including to inclusive education.

Many of us are more at risk from the virus itself and this creates risk if forced to return to the physical workplace which some employers refuse to recognize; but our lives are also impacted by ableism which, according to a recent report by the CAB, means we are more likely to be made redundant, and especially if we were shielding during the national lockdown. All workers in post-16 education have seen our workloads increase and work stress rise exponentially, and for disabled members, this is compounded by barriers such as trying to sort out reasonable adjustments for blended teaching, and compressed hours on campus with back to back teaching. Members who have caring responsibilities are also more likely to be selected for redundancy and to find the return to face to face teaching a source of constant stress.

With these new barriers and challenges, it is increasingly urgent to organise disabled workers to defend and extend our rights and equality at work.

We hope this campaign will involve a whole union and intersectional approach in tackling these and many other barriers and challenges facing disabled members at work, the impact on careers, mental and physical health and well-being, accessing reasonable

adjustments in the workplace to making workplaces accessible and ensuring those who need to continue to work from home or to get disability leave where not possible.

Our day of action is also supported by the TUC Disabled Workers' Committee and by education trade unions and Disabled People's Organisations. We would encourage branches to engage with disabled members and to hear concerns being raised, seek collective means of resolving work place issues and to work with campus and student unions on joint initiatives.

I would like to thank the Disabled Members' Standing Committee (DMSC) for their work in campaigning and supporting members in working toward achieving disability equality and wish all branches a very successful day of action. Please remember to let us know how your branch will be marking the day – email [egadmin@ucu.org.uk](mailto:egadmin@ucu.org.uk).

Elane Heffernan  
Chair, Disabled Members' Standing Committee  
NEC FE Disabled Members Rep

---

## **Background to the Day of Action**

UCU represents over 120,000 workers in higher education, further education, prison education and adult education, including over 2,200 members who self-identify as disabled<sup>1</sup>. In May 2015, the union undertook a survey of its members to find out more about the key issues they face in the workplace. The majority of members reported that they were confident about disclosing their disability at work, and that their colleagues and students were supportive. However, disabled members still face a number of challenges in the workplace, including:

- delays and issues with reasonable adjustments
- barriers to career development
- poor access to disability leave
- bullying and discrimination
- narrow range of support

This campaign has been initiated by UCU's Disabled Members' Standing Committee, and is supported by the TUC Disabled Members Committee, other education unions and Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) and is about organising against disability discrimination with a focus on the challenges and barriers faced by disabled people in education.

Our key campaign demands are:

- time limits for the implementation of reasonable adjustments
- a review of building regulations to ensure they meet the accessibility needs of disabled people
- a statutory right to disability leave
- the right for disabled people to access mainstream education and a reversal of cuts to SEND provision

## **Suggested actions and activities**

This campaign is inclusive. It is important for branches when planning activities and supporting disabled members to look through the different lenses of intersectionality and to include disabled members who span all protected characteristics (Black, LGBT+, women etc.) as their perspectives will be different and these voices are more likely to be marginalised and not heard.

### **Nothing about us without us!**

Branches should ensure that the planning of any event involves disabled members. This is important as the lived experiences of disabled members can strengthen branch organisation and participation, and disabled members can feed their perspectives into all UCU campaigns, locally and nationally.

### **Every day is a day for action!**

The Disabled Members Standing Committee encourages branches to take action on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> November and, if possible, throughout the week commencing 23<sup>rd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> November 2020. We are calling for branches to use the day to organise and support disabled workers, by highlighting the challenges and barriers faced by disabled people as well as the gains made. The following actions and activities are suggested:

### **Fund the Future webinars**

As part of the Fund the Future campaign, we will be hosting two webinars. Further details will be circulated via the weekly campaign news in due course. Please visit the Fund the Future website to view past equality events <https://fundthefuture.org.uk/>.

- **Day of Action for Disability Equality, Wednesday 25 November 2020, 1pm – 2pm**

Covid-19 has disproportionately impacted on disabled workers from being denied reasonable adjustments to being the first to be made redundant and in line with our theme, we would like for you to talk about the importance and the need for disabled workers' to organise in the current climate.

- **Everyday ableism, Friday 27 November 2020, 1pm – 2pm**

To end our week of action for disability equality, this webinar will look at the topic of ableism - what it is, how it manifests in the workplace and society and what can be done to challenge it.

### **Social Model of Disability**

UCU follows the social model of disability which looks at the ways in which society is organised and the social and institutional barriers which restrict disabled people's opportunities.

The social model sees the person first and argues that the barriers they face, in combination with their impairments, are what disables them.

Barriers, including attitudes and perceptions around disabilities can make it impossible or very difficult for disabled people to access jobs, buildings or services. Removing these barriers is the best way to include millions of disabled people in our society.

Watch our film on the social model of disability and discuss how branches can adopt the social model <https://youtu.be/Do6U1j1vRYU>

### **Health and Safety**

Work with H&S reps to conduct Covid-19 risk assessments of your institution to address issues of inaccessibility. Read out latest information sheet on disability and health and safety here: [https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/11159/Return-to-work---information-sheet/pdf/Return to work - information sheet.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/11159/Return-to-work---information-sheet/pdf/Return%20to%20work%20-%20information%20sheet.pdf) and UCU's Health and Safety guidance in relation to Covid-19 here: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/coronavirus>.

### **Branch negotiations**

Disability Pay Gap Day was held on Sunday 1 November. The pay gap has increased by **4.5%** on last year's finding and is now 20%. This means disabled workers are now paid **£2.10** less an hour than their non-disabled peers. This is based on a 35 hour work week, is equivalent to being paid **£3,800** less a year.

Branches are encouraged to review disability monitoring policies and practices and to negotiate for mandatory disability pay gap reporting and to sign the petition calling for mandatory disability pay reporting <https://www.megaphone.org.uk/petitions/we-need-mandatory-disability-pay-gaps-reporting>.

### **Branch meetings**

Host meetings / talks to discuss how branches can:

- Address and challenge negative stereotypes including ableism in the workplace
- Establish whether branches can address the issue of reasonable adjustments collectively rather than on an individual basis
- Include disabled members when reviewing policies / procedures that will impact on them
- Establish a disabled worker network and/or electing a disability officer to support the work of the Equality Rep
- Work with campus and student unions to work on joint initiatives

Use our resources here to find out how to map your workplace to ensure that your branch is fully representative of its membership [https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/1682/Workplace-mapping/pdf/work\\_map\\_1.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/1682/Workplace-mapping/pdf/work_map_1.pdf)

### **Disability equality resources**

Use our disability equality resources to campaign and understand the issues facing disabled people – this (and more) can be found here at <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/1940/Equality-advice-and-guidance#Disability>.

- **Reasonable adjustments: removing barriers to disabled people at work**  
[https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/6091/Reasonable-adjustments---removing-barriers-to-disabled-people-at-work-UCU-guidance/pdf/Reasonable adjustments.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/6091/Reasonable-adjustments---removing-barriers-to-disabled-people-at-work-UCU-guidance/pdf/Reasonable%20adjustments.pdf)
- **Reasonable adjustments – Making adjustments work: passport**  
[https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10225/Reasonable-adjustment-passport/pdf/ucu adjustment passport apr19.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10225/Reasonable-adjustment-passport/pdf/ucu%20adjustment%20passport%20apr19.pdf)
- **Reasonable adjustments – Making adjustments work: policy**

[https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10226/Making-adjustments-work-adjustment-passport-policy/pdf/ucu\\_adjustment\\_passport\\_policy\\_apr19.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10226/Making-adjustments-work-adjustment-passport-policy/pdf/ucu_adjustment_passport_policy_apr19.pdf)

- **Disclosing a disability** [https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/5445/Disclosing-a-disability-UCU-guidance/pdf/Disclosing a disability.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/5445/Disclosing-a-disability-UCU-guidance/pdf/Disclosing_a_disability.pdf)
- **David's Story: Disability awareness toolkit**  
[https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8828/Disability-awareness-toolkit/pdf/DA toolkit 4equality officers Aug17.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8828/Disability-awareness-toolkit/pdf/DA_toolkit_4equality_officers_Aug17.pdf)
- **Campaigning for accessible and inclusive workplaces**  
[https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8599/Disabled-Members-Toolkit/pdf/Disabled members toolkit Mar17.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8599/Disabled-Members-Toolkit/pdf/Disabled_members_toolkit_Mar17.pdf)
- **Enabling not disabling** [https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/1625/Enabling-not-disabling-UCU-Nov-15/pdf/ucu\\_enablingnotdisabling\\_nov15.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/1625/Enabling-not-disabling-UCU-Nov-15/pdf/ucu_enablingnotdisabling_nov15.pdf)
- **Challenging discrimination: how to build an effective case**  
[https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10706/Challenging-discrimination---how-to-build-an-effective-case/pdf/Challenging discrimination toolkit 22Oct19.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10706/Challenging-discrimination---how-to-build-an-effective-case/pdf/Challenging_discrimination_toolkit_22Oct19.pdf)

### **Display our range of posters and wallchart**

- **Disability equality statistics** [https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/9942/Disability-stats-poster-November-2018/pdf/Disability equality stats A4 poster.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/9942/Disability-stats-poster-November-2018/pdf/Disability_equality_stats_A4_poster.pdf)
- **Poster 1**  
[https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/9945/Disability-Day-of-Action-Poster-1/pdf/DoA A4 disability people poster11.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/9945/Disability-Day-of-Action-Poster-1/pdf/DoA_A4_disability_people_poster11.pdf)
- **Poster 2**  
[https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/9944/Disability-Day-of-Action-Poster-2/pdf/DoA A4 disability people poster2.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/9944/Disability-Day-of-Action-Poster-2/pdf/DoA_A4_disability_people_poster2.pdf)
- **Poster 3**  
[https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/9946/Disability-Day-of-Action-Poster-3/pdf/DoA A4 disability people poster3.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/9946/Disability-Day-of-Action-Poster-3/pdf/DoA_A4_disability_people_poster3.pdf)
- **Poster 4**  
[https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/9947/Disability-Day-of-Action-Poster-4/pdf/DoA A4 disability people poster4.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/9947/Disability-Day-of-Action-Poster-4/pdf/DoA_A4_disability_people_poster4.pdf)
- **Disability wall chart** [https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/4260/International-Day-of-Disabled-People---UCU-wall-chart/pdf/ucu\\_disposter.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/4260/International-Day-of-Disabled-People---UCU-wall-chart/pdf/ucu_disposter.pdf)

### **Celebrate disability**

Highlight, celebrate, discuss and help shape the agenda for disability equality during and at the following annual events:

- **Disability History Month, 22 November – 22 December 2020**

UK Disability History Month (DHM) will take place from the evening of 18 November with an online launch. The month creates a platform to focus on the history of disabled people's struggle for equality and human rights. The theme for 2020 is '*Access: How far have we come? How far have we to go?*' For further information on activities being planned for DHM, visit <https://ukdhm.org/>.

- **International Day of People with Disability, Thursday 3 December 2020**

The UN International Day of Persons with Disabilities is held annually on December 3 and is focussed on issues that affect people with disabilities worldwide.

### **Trade Union Disability Solidarity event**

The TUC Disabled Workers' Committee is organising a zoom meeting for disabled trade unionists and allies on 3 December (5:30–7pm) to mark UN Day of Disabled People. Details of speakers are being confirmed. Access support will include British Sign Language and speech to text captioning.

Visit this link to register

[https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_uL8EED3HT\\_elzvtJyZVPug](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_uL8EED3HT_elzvtJyZVPug)

- **UCU Annual Equality Conference, Thursday 3 -Saturday 5 December 2020**

Registrations are open for UCU's annual equality conference.

This is an opportunity for you to discuss and agree strategies to progress equality issues at work. This year's conference is taking place online - find out more and [register here](#).

- **TUC Disabled Workers' Conference, 10-11 March 2021**

The annual TUC Disabled Workers' Conference will be held 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020. This will be an opportunity to hear key issues facing disabled workers across the wider trade union movement. Due to local restrictions being imposed in some areas, the conference will be held online and registration details will be circulated in due course.

### **Social media**

Use your social media accounts to help spread the day of action by tweeting and/or retweeting support of the day of action using **#Includeus**. Visit <https://www.ucu.org.uk/disabilityequality> for selfie ideas and to upload your pictures!