

University and College Union

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To

Action **for information**

Summary **Unconfirmed minutes of the UCU Annual Prison Education meeting, Friday 5 March 2001 (on-line via Zoom)**

Contact **Bargaining & Negotiations Official**

1 Introduction and welcome

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed delegates and introduced herself and the day's speakers.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from the President, who was needed in another meeting.

2 General Secretary UCU

- 2.1 The GS talked about the union's successes in the prisons sector. She noted a 23% increase in membership since the beginning of last year. She thanked branch officers and workplace reps for all their hard work.
- 2.2 The GS talked about the success of UCU's joint work with POA. The GS said she believes the ballot that opened 15 March would be a success.

3 General Secretary POA

- 3.1 The GS of POA congratulated the GS on her Question Time appearance.
- 3.2 The GS of POA reported that Public Health England have done some modelling and determined that as many as 3000 prison staff/prisoners could die from COVID.
- 3.3 The GS of POA talked about ways of moving forward, stressing that we can't go back to the way things were pre-pandemic with assaults, self-harm, and suicide all being regular occurrences. Prison educators are key worker who turn peoples' lives around and need to be treated with the respect they deserve.
- 3.4 The GS of POA asked UCU for the dossier sharing of risk management failings in Stage 4.

ACTION: UCU will provide a copy of the dossier.

4 Update of Safe Inside Campaign and the work of JUPA

- 4.1 UCU's Prisons Official discussed UCU's H&S strategy.
- 4.2 The Prisons Official said we were in the process of refreshing the Safe Inside charter with JUPA.
- 4.3 UCU's H&S Official said COVID has magnified existing H&S concerns, making

hazards that were already there even more significant.

- 4.4 The H&S Official noted that there has been an increase in H&S reps. She believes we can build more capacity into branches and ensure we have even more active reps on the ground to ensure ongoing and meaningful consultations.
- 4.5 Links to H&S documents were provided to attendees. UCU's Prisons Official said members would be issued the Gold Command briefing in due course.

5 Health & Safety Q&A

- 5.1 Members discussed H&S matters as they affected their branches.
- 5.2 Members asked for clarification of close contact/bubble rules and shared that the rules were being ignored or broken in their branches. Staff were being mixed across wings, mass testing was still not in effect, promised vaccines weren't being administered. Advice was given to report safety breaches to line managers in the first instance, then to raise the matter with UCU.
- 5.3 A branch H&S rep asked if she could help non-union members at her branch. Marianne explained that, as H&S rep, she could. Brian Hamilton believes we shouldn't be repping non-union members as this will lead to people not joining the union.
- 5.4 A rep asked if we could establish a threshold for testing to calculate workplace safety. UCU's Prisons Official said it would be impossible to find an agreed calculation because of the unreliability of lateral flow tests.

6 Branch Meeting Break outs: MKC/PP/Weston/NOVUS

- 6.1 Members were asked to join breakout rooms.

7 Prison Education – a strategy for the future

- 7.1 Reference to UCU's response to the Education Select Committee Inquiry: Are prisoners being left behind. There were a number of recommendations that were proposed in that report and which members can view [here](#). These recommendations and objectives will be a focus for UCU lobbying in the coming weeks and months a) nationalisation of a prison education service and a 'national contract' b) prison education returned to the auspices of Department for Education with delivery of education within prisons being coordinated centrally. Local FE colleges becoming more involved in delivery of prison education, which is especially important for through the gate services c) a comprehensive review of the recommendations from the Coates review and a review of the current operation of Prison Education Framework and the prison education curriculum which should inform future strategy d) amplifying the voice of professional educators in prison education.

8 Congress 2021 Prison Education Motions received from branches

- 8.1 The Chair directed members to a document that provided instructions for writing motions and amendments to Congress. She reminded members that the

deadline for submitting motions this year is 19 March.

8.2 **Motion 1: Build back better** was moved as follows:

This Branch Notes that during the pandemic Prison Educators have had to adapt their ways of working at short notice to carry on supporting students. Lessons learned from this need to shape how future blended learning will look, ensuring that this works for both students and our members.

This branch believes we must prioritise the following areas when discussing future provision:

- *Job security and maintaining terms and conditions*
- *Health, safety and wellbeing of staff*
- *Government investment in tech and digital infrastructure*
- *Training and professional development of staff*
- *Intellectual property rights*
- *This branch resolves to:*
 - *Ask NEC to commission research into Blended Learning in a custodial setting*
 - *Mandate their negotiators to focus on pursuing with the employers and commissioner a solution that addresses the areas listed above.*

A vote was taken on **Motion 1**. The motion was unanimously **CARRIED**.

9 Organising for the challenges ahead

9.1 The Chair plugged the UCU CPD course, Your Union, Your Voice, which takes place on the 30th and 31st of March. Also, the Reps 2 training course, which takes place on the 19th April and the following four Mondays.

9.2 UCU Officials spoke, encouraging members to push recruitment at their branches and in stepping forward to become a rep where there wasn't currently a rep.

10 Zarah Sultana, MP. Raising the profile of prison educators in Parliament

10.1 Zarah acknowledged that prisons are a high-risk environment for infection. She extended solidarity to those who work in such environments, and said she had recommended the vaccination of all prison educators, though government already rejected the proposal. Zarah has put forward an Early Day Motion about increasing investment for in-cell technology which can be viewed [here](#). Members were encouraged to write to their MPs asking for them to sign or support the EDM if they couldn't sign by writing to the Minister.

10.2 Members engaged in a Q&A with Zarah that covered such topics as: how she got started in politics, the question of why prison educators aren't recognised as keyworkers, and the right way to approach MPs to get help and support.

10.3 The Chair thanked Zarah for her time, and encouraged a continued collaboration

with UCU and its members.

10.4 The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting, and gave thanks to the speakers and staff.

The meeting closed at 15:53.