

Prison educators health & safety



prisons@ucu.org.uk

April 2017

UCU demands safe systems of work in prisons

UCU are extremely concerned at the reports from prison educators around breaches in Health and Safety in their workplace. We have had numerous complaints recently regarding attacks at work, lack of risk assessments and members being asked to Lone work or escort prisoners.

Adam Lincoln, UCU National Health and Safety Official, and Marshajane Thompson UCU National Bargaining Official have responded by visiting prisons to carry out our own health and safety inspections and raising the issue with the national providers at the OLASS forum.

Winning in prisons

Our interventions have resulted in many wins with prison educators stopping escorting and wandering, classes being changed health and safety equipment being issued – however we are still concerned that there are bad practices occurring throughout our prison service.

We are also concerned that there has been a rise of attacks on prison educators and an inconsistent approach to management supporting members in this situation. UCU now have a dedicated email for you to report incidents to – please let us know any concerns from your prison: prisons@ucu.org.uk

Health & safety - near misses: report them!

A near miss should be reported in exactly the same way as an accident. Your prison should have 'near miss' forms.

The Health and Safety Executive states that an incident includes all undesired circumstances and a 'near miss' is defined as an event that, whilst not causing harm, has the potential to cause injury or ill health.

A near miss which could include, over allocation of a class, green button pressed, something falls off the wall, or if you are verbally threatened.

Talking of green buttons we are often told 'I wasn't sure whether to press the green button'.

If you are thinking about it - press it!

Any issues email us!

Escorting of prisoners

It has always been the case that teaching staff **do not** take on the role of prison officers and one of these roles is escorting prisoners.

Some prisons seem to think there is some flexibility in this.

There is not - whether it is termed accompanying or supervising, taking prisoners from one place to another or checking them in, is not considered to be part of a teacher's responsibilities.

Let us know if you are being asked to do this.

Body Cameras

Some prisons are issuing guidance on teaching staff wearing body cameras, as apparently some staff have requested them.

Prison officers wear them to record evidence in an altercation. UCU is opposed to anyone wearing body cameras as it not only can damage the relationship between teacher and learner, it has the potential to alter a situation. If a situation starts to escalate then the green button should be pressed immediately.

Guidance states that the wearing of a body camera should be up to the individual, and it is certainly not be used as an additional form of protection enabling someone to work in an unsafe area.

Please let us know if you are asked to wear a body camera in a particular situation IR environment, and how do you feel about wearing one?

Attacks on staff

Please do get in touch if there has been an incident in your prison.

UCU are concerned that members are not being supported by management when incidents happen.

Any incidents should be reported to the police and UCU will support members.

UCU LEGAL SUPPORT

Personal injury claims can be made that cover work-related accidents. Members get 100% of any compensation won and won't be charged a penny whether or not their claim is successful.

UCU's legal scheme also covers employment rights, police enquiries and immigration employment advice.

Unless you joined UCU at the earliest opportunity you could, you must have been a member for 90 days before seeking legal support.

Congress motion

A motion is being put to UCU's annual congress at the end of May to gain union support.

Prison educators and the fight for prison safety

Congress notes:

1. The chaotic privatisation of our prison service and resulting failure to staff and run prisons safely
2. The systematic dismantling of prison education including reduction of staffing to levels which routinely compromise safety and the short-sighted vandalism of the prison curriculum through privatisation and cuts
3. The dangers prison educators work with, including pressure to work with large groups and individuals known to be intimidating or violent, failure to listen to staff concerns around safety, and regular failure to risk assess learners
4. The December riot at HMP Birmingham, and the failure of G4S and the government in managing this or resolving the conditions which created it

Congress resolves:

- To launch a high profile national campaign for a full prison curriculum for long term safety within prisons
- To work with the POA and any other relevant groups to fight for the safety of all prison workers

UCU need a health and safety rep in every prison. Full training will be provided

JOIN UCU TODAY

TEL: 0333 207 0719

www.ucu.org.uk/join-prisons@ucu.org.uk