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# Equality Conference 2017

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## Introduction

The annual UCU Equality Conference took place in Birmingham 23<sup>rd</sup> November to 25<sup>th</sup> November 2017. The conference is comprised of five sections; disabled members conference, women members conference, black members conference and lgbt members conference and a joint plenary for everyone. To attend any part of the conference, apart from the plenary, you must self-identify as part of that equality group.

At the four conferences, the respective equality standing committee are elected as well as the opportunity for branches to submit motions. Motions to the equality conferences are advisory which means that they go back to the NEC who consider whether to take them forward to Congress to become policy.

## Joint plenary

The theme of the plenary was how we address the issue of intersectionality in how we organise and campaign. It also discussed class and the move by the Scottish Parliament to bring in the socio-economic duty which has not been enacted as part of the Equality Act. The speakers were Kalwant Bhopal, Professor of Education and Social Justice and Wanda Wyporska, Executive Director of the Equality Trust. The plenary broke into two workshops: one for members working in Higher Education and one for members working in Further Education. It was an opportunity to discuss equality issues facing each sector with the Head of Further Education, Andrew Harden and Head of Higher Education Paul Bridge.

The Further Education workshop was briefed on pay, mergers, impact of Brexit and the priority of developing further education branches. The discussion focused on using the public sector equality duty, the disproportionate disadvantage for those from equality groups, bullying and abuse at work including through social media and high workloads.

The Higher Education workshop focused on the gender pay campaign, anti-casualisation 'stamp out casual contracts, promotion discrimination, workload and

flexible working. All these issues had a disproportionate impact on those from equality groups and pay data needed to include black members, disabled members and LGBT members.

During the three days of the Conference members had their photograph taken holding a card which described their own identity. This was to support this session and further work on intersectionality which is now developing.

## **Black Members Conference**

The Black Members conference theme was 'getting organised' and the guest speakers were Linda Bellos and Aliyah Hasinah. Linda's long history as an equality activist was warmly welcomed as Linda's activities and experience had made a huge difference to equality and visibility. Aliyah is a freelance poet and producer. The conference also broke into workshops on networking; anti-deportation and surviving the workplace (protecting yourself against management tactics).

Key achievements for the Committee this year were:

**Networks for Black Members:** Assisted with the development and growth of regional networks in the Yorkshire and Humberside, West Midlands, London and the South East regions. Work next year will principally cover Wales and Scotland.

**Work with the National Union of Students:** Worked with students and formed closer links with the NUS working with the former NUS President Malia Bouattia and NUS Black Students' Officer Aadaam Siciid Muuse, particularly in countering the Prevent agenda on campus. The current NUS Black Students' Officer, Ilyas Nagdee is working on revisiting the student guidance around 'Prevent' and their 'Anti deportation handbook' which will be shared and distributed with the BMSC.

The UCU **Day of Action Against Workplace Racism** which will be held this year on Wednesday 28 February 2018 and the theme will be 'Decolonising Education'.

**Race Equality Charter Marks:** The Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) continues to roll out its Race Charter Mark in the higher education sector. The BSMC has considerable reservations about the robustness of the procedure and the looseness of the attendant consultation framework. It continues to engage with the ECU. There is no equivalent scheme in further education. It is also to be noted that there is no monitoring body in further education similar to the Higher Education Statistics Agency in higher education. Discussions are ongoing with stakeholders such as the Education and Training Foundation to work with UCU to address these clear

deficiency in the FE sector.

**Cross committee working:** The BMSC have worked with many of the committees across the union. The UCU position on freedom of movement and the defence of our members who hail from EU states and beyond, stems from the committee progressing a motion passed to last year's black members conference and then through the National Executive Committee on to TUC Congress. The committee has influenced the industrial work of UCU, working with the Further Education Committee to collect data outlining the racial profile of colleges' workforce, and with the Higher Education Committee exploring ways of challenging the new TEF and the problems of discrimination it throws up. Collaboration with the LGBT+ Committee looks at the experiences of those at the intersections of the protected characteristics. The next steps involve working with the Anti-casualisation Committee seeing how race influences the propensity of members to be casualised and their experiences.

## **Disabled Members Conference**

Disability History Month took place from 22 November to 22 December. The theme was art and disability. The Disabled Members Conference used the theme for its conference. Guest speaker was William Longden from Joy of Sound who aims to make music accessible to all. There were workshops on disclosure and reasonable adjustments based on the 'david's story' toolkit. Simone Apsis from Alliance for inclusive education also addressed the meeting.

Key achievements for DMSC this year:

- UCU attended the Disabled People's Summit organised by TUC which has led to development work on a day of action for disabled members in UCU.
- The DMSC produced a disability toolkit 'David's story' which will support branches in progressing disability issues.
- The DMSC also produced more resources to support reps supporting members with mental health conditions and issues. The DMSC also updated the Carers guide to cover UCU's support for paid Carers (and their unions) whose work goes unrecognised in terms of pay and status.
- DMSC was part of a joint fringe with other equality groups at Congress on supporting migrants and challenging discrimination and hate crime. Fariha Bhatti, a disabled refugee and campaigner with 'Positive about disability' addressed the meeting.

- UCU has been promoting the 'Dying to Work' campaign. This campaign is calling for additional employment protection for terminally ill workers and to implement a terminal illness policy. The campaign is also calling for a terminal illness to be made a protected characteristic.
- The DMSC has been involved in related activities including campaigns against changes to Access to Work, Disabled Students Allowance and Additional Support Allowance. UCU affiliated to ALLFIE which is the campaigning group for inclusive education.

## **LGBT Members Conference**

The LGBT Conference had three guest speakers. Dorota Obidniak from the European Trade Union Congress Education Committee who spoke on LGBT+ Rights in Europe, Simon Ware, Amnesty International speaking on LGBT oppression in countries like Chechnya and how UCU can help challenge and Beth Douglas, National Union of Students who spoke about non binary facilities including sports facilities at University and elsewhere.

- Guides to Gender Identity, Non-Binary Gender, Europe & LGBT Rights, and LGBT Language in Use were published.
- LGBT MSC considered, advanced and proposed a change in name to LGBT+ in order to be more inclusive.
- The 5th triennial research conference was hosted by the UCU University of Manchester branch. Around 30 people attended this one day conference. Six papers were presented. Angelia Wilson, University of Manchester, was the main speaker. Angelia talked about using intersectionality in research.
- The UCU LGBT members conference (November) was addressed by Dorota Obidniak (ETUCE) about ETUCE actions for LGBT equality, Simon Morley (Amnesty International) about campaigns Amnesty is engaging with internationally including in Chechnya and Egypt, Beth Douglas (NUS) about Trans in sport in the post school education sector.
- Pride stalls were organised in Birmingham (27 May) Black Pride / Pride in the Park (9 July) and Manchester (26 and 27 August). There was considerable interest in the stalls, particularly in the petition supporting Amnesty action in Chechnya. UCU joined the march at London Pride on 8<sup>th</sup> July.

## **Women members conference**

"A woman's place is in the resistance – empowering women to empower change". Shen Serefe, a McDonald's striker, gave a really powerful and inspirational speech. Unfortunately Ellen Clifford from DPAC (Disabled People Against Cuts) had to pull out due to ill health, but she sent in a written contribution which was read out by Christina Paine. Saffiyah Khan, the activist who made headline news when standing up to EDL demonstrators, joined the conference in the afternoon for the plenary following the workshops. The conference split into 3 groups for workshops which all focussed on planning for International Women's Day activities and taking equality issues forward back in the workplace.

The women's conference passed the following motions. Motions to the equality conferences are advisory which means that they go back to the NEC who consider whether to take them forward to Congress to become policy.

### **1) Trans-inclusivity**

Women's conference notes:

- The right of women to participate in activism and democratic debate without the threat or actuality of violence.
- That the number of transphobic hate crimes in the UK reported to police in the last 5 years has increased by 170%, but that the number of prosecutions for these offences is falling.
- The specific vulnerability of black trans women to violence
- That state legislation and local policy often systematically puts trans women at risk in our hospitals and prisons.

Women's conference reaffirms:

- That our women's structures within the union belong to all self-identifying women.
- That our movement must be a safe space for all women.
- That our strength is our collectivity in fighting the structures that oppress women and that there is vital work to be done in building and channelling our collective strength

Women's conference asks:

- That the women's standing committee work with the LGBT+ standing committee and any other interested structures within our union to develop a plan to build and channel this collective strength.

**ACTION: Women's Committee to work with LGBT Committee on guidance**

## 2) Maternity Pay for Casualised Lecturers

Women suffer disproportionately on casualised contracts with regard to career progression; secure work; pay and maternity provision. This exacerbates already well identified inequalities. Casualised lecturers often work only in term time and for less pay than their permanent comparators. The need to meet a qualifying pay of £113 between April and June. Not being paid over the summer or having a fair system to account for the fluctuating earnings in any one year which do not always coincide with the timing of pregnancy has a detrimental impact on their ability to claim maternity pay and many lose out. Many hours worked by casualised lecturers are not accounted for.

Conference resolves:

- Produce guidance for branches on this equalities issue
- Pressure universities and colleges to allow fair tailored payment plans which positively help casualised lecturers to claim maternity pay regardless of the time their pregnancy falls.
- Campaign for fairer pay for work actually done by casualised workers

**ACTION: UCU has a new guidance 'Parents at Work' which will support this motion**

## 3) Intersectionality \*

As UCU strives to embrace and consider the various strands relating to equality it would be best placed to consider using the lens of intersectionality to ensure that all dimensions of oppression are routinely included in the working lives of women who work in FE or HE. The purpose of the motion is for UCU to work towards using an intersectional lens to consider policy, process and procedures.

The conference resolves:

The language of intersectionality is used proposing gender related actions.

**ACTION: a version of this motion to be submitted to Congress**

The WMSC has continued to work and campaign with a number of external organisations on improving employment rights of parents at work, as part of the Working Families Coalition, chaired by the charity Working Families.

UCU developed a Working Parents guide for branch representatives which is a policy and negotiating toolkit to support parents at work. It was launched at the annual equality conference in November.

Following the launch of guidance last year to assist branches in how to deal with sexual harassment in the workplace, UCU developed a training course aimed at branch reps. The course has run three times so far and has been well received. New campaign materials were produced, including travel mugs and wristbands. UCU has also been in discussions with UUK and the 1752 Group about joint working around tackling sexual harassment.

UCU produced a briefing on gender based violence and supported the "16 days in 16 ways" campaign, a global campaign consisting of 16 days of activism against gender based violence. We asked branches to participate in this initiative, in particular encouraging them to raise the model policies on sexual harassment and domestic abuse in their institutions.

UCU produced a briefing, "Abortion – a trade union issue". Two members from the WMSC attended an event held in October to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Abortion Act. We have continued to support the "Back off" campaign which seeks to establish protest free zones outside centres so that women can access services without being subjected to harassment and intimidation.

UCU sent a delegation to TUC Women's Conference and submitted two motions on: Career progression and the gender pay gap; and education, inclusion and safe communities for migrant women. Vicky Knight has been nominated to TUC women's committee which she also chairs.



## Dates for your diary

### **UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**

March against Racism, UN Anti-Racism Day, Saturday 17 March 2018 - Central London.

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was established six years after the Sharpeville tragedy or Sharpeville massacre, which captured worldwide attention when police opened fire killing 69 people at a peaceful demonstration against the apartheid "pass laws" in Sharpeville, South Africa, March 21, 1960.

Marches will be taking place across the country in London, Cardiff and Glasgow as well as in cities across Europe. To make a stand against racism, contact Stand Up To Racism <http://www.standuptoracism.org.uk/march-racism-un-anti-racism-day-saturday-17-march-2018/> for further details on how you can take part.

UCU supports these events.

### **UCU Day of Action against Workplace Racism**

The Day of Action Against Workplace Racism on Wednesday 28 February, is the opportunity for your branch to highlight its opposition to racism in the workplace. The theme of this year's Day of Action is '**Decolonising Education**'. Further information [CNicolas@ucu.org.uk](mailto:CNicolas@ucu.org.uk)



## News update

### **Equality reps conference Friday 16th February 2017: 11.00 – 4.30pm.**

Registration is now open for UCU members to attend the 2018 Equality Reps Conference. The conference is for registered branch and regional equality reps.

This is an opportunity to network, share successes and challenges and work together on UCU equality bargaining and policy priorities. This conference will focus on progressing equality locally. Main sessions will be:

- Overview of equality priorities of UCU and an update on new resources
- Open discussion sessions on equality and social media and making a difference with equality networks
- Challenging sexual harassment
- Identifying practical actions to progress gender identity and sexual orientation at work
- How do we effectively support carers and parents at work with a focus on negotiating flexible working
- How to run a successful campaign using the day of action against racism and the new disability toolkit 'David's story'.

### **Branch and regional committees – equality on the agenda**

Branches and regional committees are encouraged (Congress policy) to have equality as a standing item on their agendas. This will ensure all issues are picked up by the committee including UCU's priority areas. Members of the equality and participation team are able to attend meetings to support or lead discussions and training events. Please contact [eqadmin@ucu.org.uk](mailto:eqadmin@ucu.org.uk)

Good practice is contained within this publication:

[https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8370/Diversity-in-Participation/pdf/Diversity\\_in\\_participation.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8370/Diversity-in-Participation/pdf/Diversity_in_participation.pdf)

## Sexual harassment helpline

Following the statement from the National Executive Council condemning sexual violence and harassment <https://www.ucu.org.uk/sexualviolence> , a helpline to *provide support to those experiencing sexual harassment and any reps who may want counselling support in supporting members is now launched.*

This is a dedicated service for UCU members which any UCU member can reach on 0800 138 8724. The helpline is in collaboration with Education Support Partnership (Ed Support). Any member who has concerns or is experiencing sexual harassment can call 0800 138 8724 in confidence, free of charge and 24/7 to talk about their experience, discuss options, receive counselling (if clinically appropriate) and details of further sources of support, if necessary.

This is in addition to the workplace support from your branch. The helpline is an opportunity to discuss confidentiality your experience and talk through what you want to do next which may include asking your branch to support you take action against your employer. Many branches are now creating a named contact for sexual harassment cases and we are urging branches to adopt this approach and the model policy.

[https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8373/Dealing-with-sexual-harassment-in-the-workplace/pdf/Dealing\\_with\\_sexual\\_harassment\\_in\\_the\\_workplace\\_guidance\\_Nov\\_2016.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8373/Dealing-with-sexual-harassment-in-the-workplace/pdf/Dealing_with_sexual_harassment_in_the_workplace_guidance_Nov_2016.pdf)