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More information and news can be obtained from these websites. We suggest you have a browse.

UCU National Website:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk>

AgeUK: <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/>

68 is too late: www.68istoolate.org.uk

National Pensioners Convention (NPC):

<http://npcuk.org>

Your branch has its own website at

<http://www.ucu-em-rmb.org.uk>

Follow your Branch on Twitter:

@ucu-em-rmb

Branch meeting Wednesday April 24th 2019

11.00 – 13.00
(Speaker at 12.00)

Speaker: Angie Mindel

**“Palestine - problems
and solutions.”**

The Gothic Warehouse,
Mill Road, Cromford, DE4 3RQ



1. End casualisation – secure employment for all staff



Casual contracts for teaching have become endemic across both the HE and FE sectors in recent years; according to the UCU survey, 46% of universities and 60% of colleges use zero hours contracts for teaching staff. Even staff 'lucky' enough not to be on zero hours contracts face the insecurity of term-only sessional pay and, until recently, 'rolled up' holiday pay, where holiday entitlement was incorporated into hourly rates and staff received nothing during the holidays. This latter became unlawful after an appeal to the European Court last year, but casualisation has led to a greater number of our colleagues in universities and colleges with poverty pay and poor conditions. UCU has done extensive research on 'insecure' contracts of work – defined as variable hours with guaranteed minimum, hourly paid, term time only, agency staff. There are college teaching staff whose pay, when considered against the teaching, preparation, assessment and administration work involved, works out at less than the minimum wage. Such precarious contracts lead to staff needing to take on extra jobs to make ends meet, becoming a part of what Guy Standing and others have called the new 'precarariat' – workers with little or no job security living in consistent fear of losing their job and being unable to afford the next bill or mortgage payment.

This has been an issue for years; for example, some college lecturers have been on casual, fixed-term contracts for a decade or more without being moved on to more secure full-time or fractional contracts. This has gone alongside the employers' general push to reduce pay and worsen conditions, making staff carry the burden of central government cuts and the long-term financial squeeze on the sector. Of course, this pay restraint has not generally applied to senior management, with at least one local college rewarding its highest paid senior managers (and not including the even

more inflated earnings of principals) with a salary nearly £100,000 more than its lowest paid full-time staff.

Casualisation also has a knock-on effect with respect to teachers' pensions – some staff are employed by agencies or subsidiary companies of the college or university and are not included in the TPS or USS; others will see their pension contributions become too erratic and reduced to guarantee any sort of future security. Clearly this appalling state of affairs, coupled with the increased state pension entitlement age, will impact on retirement poverty. As we know, a significant number of teachers are already resorting to using food banks on a regular basis.

There has been some success in fighting casualisation; Capital College Group and United College Group, which cover a number of London colleges, both came to terms with UCU over casual contracts and agreed to move staff who had worked at the colleges for two years onto permanent contracts. This is a good model of what we have to achieve in the Midlands and elsewhere, where, in the FE sector, in particular, recent college mergers have resulted in staff now working for the same employer having 57 varieties of legacy contracts with widely varying conditions; the move to stamp out casualisation can also be combined with a need to standardise pay and conditions at a decent level across the sector.

UCU branches have taken up the union's Anti-Casualisation Pledge and have made a priority of negotiations over greater job security for precarious staff, elected anti-casualisation reps and groups and held recruitment events aimed at precariously employed staff – leading to an increasing number joining the union, from an area where UCU have been under-represented. Retired Members can, and should, continue to use our collective experience to support the struggle our working colleagues are facing.

Judy Wills

2. FE Fighting Back

Recently retired members from the FE sector will have felt very keenly the impact of years of pay cuts in the last 8 years or so. We will be paying for that for years to come in our reduced pensions as a result of final salaries being around 20% less than they should have been if index-linked. For those still working in the sector the problem of low pay has been compounded by huge increases in workload and the increased use of hybrid and zero-hours contracts. That's if they've been lucky enough to avoid redundancy in a sector which is

being dismantled at every turn. And that's if they are lucky to have even survived the stress and demoralisation that has become 'naturalised' in the job.

What's more, the gender pay gap in FE is 24% higher across the sector than the national average, (UCU 30 March 2018) which means UCU also has to fight structural inequalities on top of hard cash. Meanwhile [the latest college accounts](#) show 17 college principals earned over £200,000 in 2016/17 and over a third enjoyed a pay rise of 10% or more. And all this despite the AoC's own Workforce Survey in 2016 identifying low pay as a major barrier to recruitment in the sector while 61% made compulsory redundancies in that year. What has become abundantly clear over the last decade or more is that the bargaining mechanisms are fundamentally broken. UCU reports that only 40% have paid up last year's miserable 1% offer from the AoC and of course many are claiming that they have no cash to settle this year's measly 1% either. Those that did pay up cite the AoC offer as a barrier to making any higher offer (note, no such constraints when it comes to senior exec pay) - all of which means that UCU has been forced into a strategy of having to open negotiations with their specific bargaining units, ie college by college.

The situation hasn't been helped by the impact of the Tory anti-union legislation on strike action and ballots. Reaching the 50% threshold has always been an uphill struggle in the context of secret postal balloting but the issue is compounded further by overstretched lay branch officers who are being denied realistic union facility time on top of their increased workloads. Branch officers in one East Midlands college report that their time is now routinely taken up with massive increases in casework as well as handing a permanent round of redundancy and restructuring. It is not surprising that many branches are therefore somewhat stymied in their efforts to do the level of campaigning need to get the vote out. For many members the daily struggle to survive professionally against all odds is probably contributing to concerns over pay being suppressed.

Despite this there are some encouraging signs. Last November, staff at three London colleges that make up the Capital City College Group (CCCG) voted to accept a new pay deal worth 5%. UCU members at City & Islington College, College of Haringey Enfield & North East London and Westminster Kingsway College had taken eight days of strike action between February and May last year. 13 other college branches have embarked on rolling programmes of strike action, with two day strikes in January being followed by a further

two days in March. At the time of writing there have been well-supported three-day walk-outs at several colleges including Bradford, Croydon and Lambeth. The proposed 3-day strike at Swindon College has been called off in favour of a deal worth 2% plus accelerated progression up an improved scale. Several other branches have suspended action as their colleges have offered improved deals or talks.



Leicester UCU on the picket line.

These examples, echoing the scaled disruptions which saw the union successfully defeat the HE sector's attempts to destroy USS, show that concerted action by UCU branches can bring employers back to the table. Several other branches have ballots in the pipeline, while some others have managed to secure negotiated deals. In the meantime UNISON reports that many FE members, who will also feel the inordinate impact of the gender pay gap, are now resorting to food banks and are reliant on state support. UNISON has recently been doing indicative balloting in several colleges over their 3% claim, following last year's largely ignored claim for 5%, opening up the possibility of co-ordinated action in some colleges further down the line. Retired members are encouraged to do what they can to support members in working branches in these febrile times.

BATTLE LINES BEING DRAWN AT NOTTINGHAM COLLEGE

Proposals for a new contract were slapped on the table at Nottingham College in mid-March. Having slashed and burned their way through the curriculum and staffing levels management's plan is now to radically overhaul terms and conditions, following a non-negotiated job evaluation process which led to proposals aiming to tear up all

currently agreed scales and bands. Initial analysis by the branch shows that although there may be more immediate gainers than losers in the new pay structure the impact in some cases could be a salary swing of plus or minus £1500 and progression up the scale will be determined by the state of annual college finances rather than merit and experience. Pay aside, management proposals aim to cut sick pay entitlements to half their current level with a 5 year qualifying period, cut holidays and provide no formal limits on weekly teaching hours whilst increasing the annual figure to 864, amongst other 'dilutions'.

UCU's immediate response has been a 120-strong branch meeting, described by one branch officer as 'very, very angry', at which a resolution was unanimously passed instructing branch officers to proceed to negotiations on the basis of 'no overall detriment' and committing the branch to a ballot for industrial action if this cannot be achieved.

In the same resolution the branch has also requested to be included in a re-ballot over pay after very narrowly missing the 50% threshold last time round, reflecting a level of increased anger on both fronts.

Encouragingly, branch reps report a surge in UCU membership applications and palpable anger in the corridors and staffrooms. We await developments with interest.

RMB SUPPORTS GTVO.

The new balloting rules, designed to weaken unions' ultimate bargaining tool and fundamental right, ie the right to withdraw labour, has been biting hard. Without the right to conduct electronic balloting and the depressive impact on postal balloting on returns, hard pressed branches need all the support they can get to reach the required 50% thresholds. It has certainly hit the union hard in recent ballots in FE and HE. UCU has been trying to face this through its Get the Vote Out campaign and to that end East Midlands RMB members offered assistance to the branch at Nottingham Trent University last month in a pilot scheme. This involved working with branch officers and the Regional Office in contacting members by telephone to urge them to participate in the ballot. It is difficult at this stage to assess the full impact of our involvement but anecdotally it was a valuable exercise which at the very least improved the visibility of the union through personal contact. In the event the turnout fell just short, but the exercise did show that there are ways in which RMB members can directly support working branches where requested to do so.

[Paul Wilkinson](#)

3. Cut in Pension Credit

Pension Credit is a benefit, created in 2003 by Labour Prime Minister Gordon Brown, to help pensioners in poverty. It is split into two parts: Guarantee Credit tops up weekly income if it is below £163 (for single people) or £248.80 (for couples); Savings Credit is an extra payment for people who saved some money towards their retirement, for example a pension. Since it is not a universal benefit, take up is low amongst this particularly vulnerable category; only 60% of those to whom it is applicable actually apply.

It has also been argued that this should be the threshold over which "wealthy" pensioners should be deprived of their bus passes, and winter fuel allowances. So the future of pension credit potentially might impact on the vast majority of pensioners.

Amber Rudd, you know – the caring and liberal Minister, has further cut the eligibility to Pension Credit. The Government very quietly published a policy change which will have huge ramifications for some of the most disadvantaged older people in this country, many of whom are also likely to be hit by the issues complained about by Waspi, by having to wait considerably longer than they had expected to be eligible for their State Pension.

From May 15th 2019 'mixed age couples' – where one partner is of working age and the other is above State Pension age – will no longer be entitled to put in a new claim for Pension Credit. Age UK is warning that this could leave some of the poorest pensioners paying a hefty price for having a younger partner, with mixed age couples potentially losing out on around £7000 per year. If the change is allowed to go ahead many of the poorest older people in the country could be a staggering £140 worse off a week. A few could lose even more. The change is only supposed to hit new claimants but if a couple's claim for Pension Credit is interrupted by just a day, or if they move area, they will lose it forever and suffer this big and immediate drop in how much money they receive as a result. Pension Credit can passport a pensioner onto other benefits. If eligibility is lost then the pensioner is downgraded to the lower paying notorious Universal Credit.

A trend towards rising pensioner poverty has already started to emerge in the last two years - this could well be increased by changes to Pension Credit.

[Julian Atkinson](#)

4. The Social Care Crisis Increases

At the time of writing, the long-awaited Green Paper on Social Care still has not arrived; only the Yeti and Loch Ness monster have been as elusive. But the crisis in Adult Social Care increases.

New figures show more than half of councils do not insist that agencies pay staff for their travel between appointments. According to freedom of information requests by public sector union Unison, 54% of local authorities do not make it a contractual condition that the care agencies they commission pay their care workers for the time spent travelling between visits. That means many homecare staff end up earning less than the government's [£7.83 an hour minimum wage](#) for over-25s, rebranded in 2015 as the "national living wage". Although the minimum hourly pay for over-25s will rise to £8.21 from April 2019, it's still a lot less than the [Living Wage Foundation's real living wage](#), which is £10.55 an hour in London and £9 an hour for those working outside the capital. The findings underline previous research by the union last August which found that nearly [two-thirds of care workers](#) are only paid for their contact time, not the time spent travelling between appointments. Even when councils do pay travel time, it is often not enough. Many pay for just 10 minutes' travel time, when, according to the UK Homecare Association, care workers spend 11.7 minutes per hour of their working day travelling. Homecare staff say that is a significant underestimate.

A kite has been flown about a proposal to be included in the tardy Green Paper of a proposed £100,000 limit on Care Home costs. Only one pensioner in 20 would live long enough to benefit from the proposed cap of £100,000 on the cost of social care because it does not cover accommodation bills. A typical pensioner could have eight years of care before reaching the limit — but the average care home stay is less than 22 months, according to research by the accountancy firm Grant Thornton. In a letter to the chancellor, Philip Hammond, George McNamara, the director of policy at the charity Independent Age, said the proposed cap "would only benefit around 20,000 people — fewer than 5% of the 421,000 people in residential care".

Julian Atkinson



5. Gender and Human Rights Issues after Brexit

Will EU policies be lost, and is Brexit a Feminist Issue?

"The EU has long championed women's employment rights, (though not always for feminist reasons)" says Roberta Guerrina (of LSE). "The presence of senior women at the European Commission has helped ensure the equality agenda is not forgotten" as her blog points out: "Europe has been promoting equality since 1957, it's part of the European Union's DNA"

However, later she says "Rather than engaging women in a constructive debate about the future of Britain in Europe, economic and political rationalities currently dominating the debate will ultimately crystalize political binaries that relegate women's concerns to the area of social policy and low politics."

In January 2018 the Independent Newspaper reported how "ministers were facing a parliamentary enquiry amid concerns that Brexit would allow them to sidestep implementing tough new laws on equal pay and the gender pay gap".

The Equality and Human Rights Commission state ways in which Brexit will affect UK Human Rights law: apparently leaving the EU does not affect our rights under ECHR (European Council of Human Rights) as this comes from the Council of Europe not the EU, so Existing Law in place at the point the UK leaves the EU will be preserved *wherever possible*.

The Commission also explains many ways in which European Law has led to positive changes in UK Law in the past, for example laws about Human Trafficking, Data Protection, Disability Rights, Workplace Discrimination and Equal Pay. These are now part of UK laws. But it also states: "The Charter of Fundamental Rights will be removed from UK Law." if/when we leave. So as with everything to do with Brexit at the moment, there is a little light in the darkness but also much complication and confusion about the implications and aftermath.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission website has much more detail on the issues and concerns about the impact of Brexit, including whether the government's plan to exclude the EU Charter of Human Rights from the Brexit Bill will lead to a reduction in our rights.

Rowena Dawson

6. UCU Retired Members Branch

Our branch has been meeting since 2008 and now has over 300 members. Our aims are listed below.

We meet three times a year, often in places of interest to make part of a day out. Meetings focus on important issues for UCU pensioners and provide a chance to talk with other retired members.

A termly newsletter with articles of interest to retired UCU members is e-mailed to all branch members for whom we have addresses and to UCU branch secretaries in the East Midlands and to other RMBs.

Please let us have your personal e-mail address and let us know if it changes.

RMB Roles and Functions

- To represent the interests of retired members within the union.
- To represent the interests of retired union members within the wider union and pensioner movements.
- To provide a forum within the union for retired members to come together to consider and debate matters of mutual interest.
- To provide a resource of collective memory, advice and expertise in support of the union, in particular to those still in active employment.
- To provide active support, where appropriate, by involving the broadest section of the branch

in support of the wider interests of the union and its members, including support for those still in active employment.

For more information

please contact Julian Atkinson

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East Midlands Branch officers and committee

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Vice-Chair: Rowena Dawson vice-chair@ucu-em-rmb.org.uk

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East Midlands regional UCU committee representatives: Brian Hambidge, Rob Kirkwood



Nottinghamshire, Mansfield & Nottingham
Trades Union Council
An injury to one is an injury to all

Celebrating May Day in Notts

Join the fight!

Saturday May 4

Assemble from 11.00am, Brian Clough Statue, Nottingham
March to Sneinton Market, for rally at 12 noon



42nd People's Gala & Demonstration

MAY DAY

Monday 6th May 2019



Chesterfield TUC

Assemble:

Town Hall 10.30am

March off at 11am

Rally: New Square 11.45am

Music from 12.30pm

at New Square:

- Ajay Srivastav
- Ian Prowse and Friends
- The Vile Assembly

*Market Stalls & Street
Entertainment in New Square.*

Speakers:

John McDonnell MP

Mark Serwotka General Secretary
Public & Commercial Services
Union & President of the Trades
Union Congress.

Nita Sanghera Vice President
University & College Union (UCU).

Julia Felmanas Workers Party
Brazil & Brazil Solidarity Initiative.

Not to be hypostated

Further information: Chesterfield TUC, c/o 34 Glumangate, Chesterfield Tel: 07870 387 999
or Email: tucchesterfield@gmail.com Find us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ChesterfieldMayDay/>

Free parking to Chesterfield Borough residents displaying the RESIDENTS FREE PARKING permit on the DONUT car park.

- 25% real terms pay cut since August 2009.
- College staff are paid 13% less per hour than teachers.



PAY US SOME RESPECT!



www.ucu.org.uk/FEfightsbac