

UCU NEC BY-ELECTION REP OF DISABLED MEMBERS FE VOTE ELANE HEFFERNAN

Ballot open until 10 October



I am a welfare officer at Hackney College, where I am also UCU Equality Officer. Before working in FE, I was an Equality Officer in local government working with refugees. I was a leading organiser in the campaign that beat Nick Griffin's BNP in Barking and Dagenham.

I have been a senior union negotiator. I am on Women and Disabled Members Committees. I was part of the fight for adult education funding, which won some protection. I work within the Social Model of Disability—an important step forward in creating a culture of entitlement and dignity for disabled workers in universities and colleges.

My priorities:

- * Extending disabled members' right to reasonable adjustment, disability leave & equality
- * Building unity between all UCU members against attacks on pay, pensions and jobs
- * Actively supporting branches taking action to defend teachers' pay and conditions and students' education
- * Working with Disability Campaigns to defend DSA's and ALS

- * Making the union relevant to young & hourly paid teachers
- * Increasing the number of workers with impairment who become activists
- * Defending migrant members and students
- * Closing the gender pay gap

We face unprecedented attack from a government out to: Break trade union rights; destroy our pay & pensions; "rationalise" and privatise via Area Reviews and the HE Bill; force students to pay unaffordable fees or to join apprenticeships that are too often low quality with minimal real teaching.

In this climate, disabled workers are often intimidated out of asking for equipment or adjustments to policies needed to sustain dignified employment, or face sickness disciplinary or capability proceedings. Many disabled employees with hidden impairment dare not disclose because through fear of being targeted. Hackney UCU has won significant improvements in relation to reasonable adjustments and separate recording of disability leave, as part of our general fight to defend members' rights. I have been at the forefront of this -- which has not always been pleasant or easy. But it has been worthwhile as more of our members have been able to declare and seek support.

I believe that we can change things through our resistance. I am a product of further education. I am strongly driven by a sense of social justice and by my belief that education can be a real force for liberation.

I am a member of UCU left. I support Corbyn.

Like many disabled workers, I fear for my job every day and know that my only hope is a strong, united union. There will be no victories for disabled members or for equality, except in so far as we unite to defend all of our jobs and conditions. I will do all I can to build our movement.

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