

Fight for the rights of disabled members

Election runs from 29 January - 2 March

UCU NEC elections: Vote Marian Mayer, for Representative of Disabled Members

A physically disabled woman, I was diagnosed late in life with ADHD and dyspraxia. I therefore have personal insights into the challenges and barriers faced by neurodiverse and physically disabled people working in Post 16 education, including those with hidden disabilities.

Working in Bournemouth University for the past 15 years as a Senior Lecturer in Learning Development, I have witnessed the ways in which disabled staff and students experience discrimination daily.

Far too often it falls to union representatives to protect people from ongoing discrimination that has done harm to our members.

Succeeding in casework alone is not enough. Whilst we can achieve significant benefits for individual members, for example flexible working, phased return to work, and reasonable adjustments, case-by-case work could, and should be translated into national action and policies

As a member of my branch's executive committee I have served as the Equality Officer.

In that capacity I ensured that the Equality Act 2010 was at the forefront of all of the work done by my university's Diversity and Equality committee.

It is disappointing to reflect that, more than 10 years since the act was passed, we have made such little progress on disability rights.



Our union is in a position to effect significant improvements for people with disabilities; we have done much but there is more to do.

My current UCU roles include:

- Disabled Members Standing Committee – Co-Vice Chair
- National Pay Negotiator
- Co- Chair, Bournemouth University UCU and Health and Safety officer.
- Southern Region Chair
- Women Members Standing Committee

Examples of recent work as a disability activist within UCU:

- As a DMSC member, branch, and regional delegate to Congress I have successfully proposed motions focusing on disabled members, including several to enhance accessibility at UCU meetings and events.
- At branch level I have negotiated numerous policies which directly benefit disabled members, including: Absence Management (this includes clauses protecting disabled workers), Home and Mobile Working (with specific clauses to benefit disabled workers). I ensure disability is factored into all policies.

- As Health and Safety officer I introduced the UCU Adjustment Passport in 2019 to branch members, this year I negotiated its piloting as a mandatory feature of appraisals and reasonable adjustment discussions for all staff.
- As a National Pay and Equality Negotiator, I advocate inclusion of provision for disabled members in future claims. I would continue to put this case at NEC level.

Disabled members often also experience discrimination on grounds of sex, race and casualised status, indicating the importance of intersectionality for our understanding.

Covid poses greater risks for disabled members and those who care for people with disabilities. This must be better reflected in Risk Assessments, we must press employers to allow staff who need to shield to do so, and collectively we, UCU, must turn our attention to the work necessary to prevent Covid from becoming a long term threat to our health and livelihoods.

UCU could be at the forefront of lobby and campaigning for long Covid to be recognised as a disability and therefore a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

We must also ensure that disabled workers do not suffer detriment to their careers as a result of Covid, either because they shielded or been absent from work.

I am member of UCU left, and ask for your vote so that I can continue to do the important work needed for disabled staff in post 16 education.

For more information about the UCU Left platform and candidates [click here](#).