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No. 53

APRIL/MAY 2021

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Stephen Lawrence Day

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VOICE UPDATE

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

Coronavirus resources & information

We continue to provide regular news updates on our website, by email and on social media to keep you informed.



See www.voicetheunion.org.uk for resources including:

- > the **latest information and government guidance** from across the UK (www.voicetheunion.org.uk/coronavirus); and
- > your **FAQs** (www.voicetheunion.org.uk/help-and-advice/coronavirus-covid-19/covid-19-faqs).



Social media

You can also follow Voice on **Facebook** (www.facebook.com/Voicetheunion) and **Twitter** (@Voicetheunion, @VoiceCymru, @VoiceScotland) for news, shared content and resources.

Advice and support

If you need **advice or support with a workplace issue**, we cannot do this via Facebook or Twitter, so please **contact us and ask for the duty officer: www.voicetheunion.org.uk/contact-us**.

You can also contact us there if you have an enquiry about **membership subscriptions, receiving our email updates, or updating your details**. (Direct messages sent via Facebook, including out of office hours, may not be seen until the next working day.)

DO YOU KNOW WHAT A STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE) IS?



Did you know that Voice Community held an online SACRE Day of Action to encourage members to join their local SACRE?

Find out more:

- > **Your SACRE needs you!** by Professional Officer Craig Thomson
- > **Why not join your local SACRE?** by David Levien, retired teacher and Voice Community member
- > **Why are SACRES important?** by Jay Wardill, Voice Community member
- > **Concerns religious education being neglected** by Craig Thomson

www.voicetheunion.org.uk/sacre

VOICE COMMUNITY NEWS

COMMUNITY NEWS & VIEWS



'Let's move forward together and get vaccinated, so we can contain this virus, protect ourselves and our communities and get our lives back.'

Chris Knight, who sits on Community's National Executive as the BAME representative and on the TUC Race Relations Committee, talks about his vaccination story: <https://community-tu.org/my-vaccine-story>



The difference equalities policies can make

Lisa Francis: 'Equality is something that I have been passionate about for some time... As a Learning Organiser I have the opportunity to increase other people's awareness through training funded through the Welsh Union Learning Fund (WULF).

After becoming trained as an equalities rep I have the knowledge and skills to promote more equalities issues in the workplace. Menopause and domestic violence are the key areas that I have been looking to publicise as a start. From my experience you can

bring around a change in culture and practices with the implementation of a workplace policy': <https://community-tu.org/the-difference-equalities-policies-can-make>



How my apprenticeship opened up opportunities

Megan Edwards: 'I thought that I would share my own experience of what it was like to be an apprentice, why I applied for an apprenticeship and the reason why I would recommend the experience to others': <https://community-tu.org/how-my-apprenticeship-opened-up-opportunities>



VOICE SECTION COUNCIL ELECTION NEWS

Teresa Bottomley (pictured) has been elected as Voice Vice President. She takes up office in June.

When she becomes Voice President in June 2022, she will serve for two years, following a decision by Council on the future term of office for national officers.

www.voicetheunion.org.uk/national-officers-and-council

SAVE THE DATE:

Look out for details of our new virtual open member meeting on 19 June.

EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS CALENDAR 2021 (MAY – SEPTEMBER)

May

6th	Deaf awareness week
10th to 16th	Mental health awareness week
17th to 23rd	Learning at work week
21st	Sexual harassment training for reps

June

18th	Equality law, the basics – training for reps
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July

1st	Domestic abuse training for reps
16th, 23rd, 30th	Equalities reps training (spread over Friday mornings)

August

	Belfast Pride
tbc	Glasgow Pride
6th	Equalities reps training (spread over Friday mornings)
20th	Sexual harassment training for reps Pride Cymru

September

10th	Disability discrimination training for reps
11th	London Pride

If you are interested in hearing more about any of the equalities training or workshops, or would like to register, please email us at equalities@community-tu.org.
<https://community-tu.org/equalities-calendar>

www.voicetheunion.org.uk/events

STEPHEN LAWRENCE DAY

COMMUNITY PARTNERS WITH STEPHEN LAWRENCE DAY FOUNDATION

Community has partnered with the Stephen Lawrence Day Foundation to support educators to promote racial equality and keep the legacy of Stephen Lawrence alive amongst children and young people.

The partnership is already working to support teachers to take the lessons from Stephen's life of tolerance and anti-discrimination and deliver them to young people.

General Secretary Roy Rickhuss said: 'Stephen Lawrence Day reminds us all of the role we all have to play in creating a society free from racism and prejudice. We are very clear that racism is a trade union issue. It affects people inside and outside the workplace – whether that be their experiences of discrimination, access to decent jobs, equal pay or the disproportionate deaths that BAME communities have suffered from coronavirus.

'Last year, the tragic death of George Floyd once again brought systemic and structural racism to the forefront of the public imagination. It showed us that, despite the progress made over the past few decades, there is still so much more to do.

'We are immensely proud to be partnering with the Stephen Lawrence Day Foundation. This work will enable teachers to effectively have what can sometimes be difficult conversations around race and discrimination in the classroom, as well as equipping them with the tools to teach young people about tolerance and antiracism to create a better and more equal future for us all!'

Baroness Doreen Lawrence – herself a Community member – said: 'Today's schoolchildren are perhaps the most engaged generation there has ever been – keenly aware of injustices around them and with a strong desire to root them out. Britain has to continue to work towards a fairer society – there remains progress to be made and now is not the time for complacency.

'Not all schoolchildren today may have heard the name Stephen Lawrence or know his story. But the last year has shown us that Stephen's story – unequal treatment because of skin colour, and exposure to embedded prejudice in systems, structures and institutions – is as relevant today as it has ever been.

'I look forward to working to empower educators across the country to have those conversations in the classroom, share Stephen's legacy and work with young people to build the kind of society we all want to see.'

Background

Baroness Lawrence, Stephen Lawrence's mother, inaugurated the first annual Stephen Lawrence Day in 2019 to mark the 25th anniversary of Stephen's death in a racist attack. The day allows people to reflect upon the part we all play in creating a society in which everyone can flourish.

Resources

Around this year's Stephen Lawrence Day on 22 April, Community staff held a series of webinars for members:

- > Anti-racism in education and beyond with Doreen Lawrence and an expert panel; and
- > Hate crime.

The Stephen Lawrence Day Foundation also held a virtual school assembly focused on the themes of friendship, respect and difference.

Having difficult conversations, with Hope not Hate, will be held on 27 May, aimed at combating racism, xenophobia and all forms of prejudice. The session will offer effective methods for changing the minds of people who have deeply-held, irrational views that are racist or xenophobic, without relying on "myth-busting" techniques. Details via link below.

The webinars can be viewed on our website, where you can also download teaching materials and other resources, including a new range of special Voice Community resources:

www.voicetheunion.org.uk/sldf-partnership

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY'S VOICE/STEPHEN LAWRENCE DAY

RETURN, RECOVERY AND RACISM

By Deborah Lawson, Assistant General Secretary (Voice Section)
(DLawson@community-tu.org)

Return and recovery

April 2021 saw the return, in stages, to full face-to-face teaching and learning for members across the UK. Many of you have told us how much it meant to you, and the children, to be back in person.

We continue to support members with workplace issues and concerns. If you need advice or information, do let us know.



Podcasts

I am pleased to announce the first two episodes of the new Education Policy Podcast are now available to download at <https://ctueducationpolicy.podbean.com>.

Each month we will be recording a new podcast to update members on policy activities in the education sector.

The first episode (for England) looks at teachers' pay, NQT induction, education recovery and exams for 2021, and the second face coverings in schools and colleges, behaviour hubs, teacher resignation dates, employment references and myth-busting lesson plans for Ofsted.



Free childcare qualifications

Free childcare training is being offered by the Government in England as part of a £95 million package of measures aimed at supporting economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The fully funded training includes a number of level 3 courses, including Early Years Educators diplomas, such as early years workforce and children's learning and development courses, plus the level 3 NVQ in playwork, and City and Guilds level 2 Technical Certificate in healthcare, care and childcare.

The cost of courses has been a barrier for many students and employers so this is welcome news.

The full list of free courses can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/qualifications-in-new-funded-offers



Racism

The report of the **(Sewell) Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities** has proved highly controversial (see page 9).

We welcomed its recognition of the powerful impact that education has in transforming the lives of both individuals and society, but there is no room for complacency or self-congratulation on the part of government and our institutions.

Racism still exists and affects people every day, and despite the significant progress made over the last few decades, much remains to do.

There is also the wider issue of socio-economic deprivation – linked to poverty of expectations, fewer extracurricular activities, and reduced educational opportunities – which is a major and endemic factor in poor outcomes in many communities. Community and other unions have written to the Prime Minister calling for an end to workplace exploitation for all working people.

It is because of the key role of education in building a fair, inclusive and civilised society that values difference, that Community has partnered with the Stephen Lawrence Day Foundation to promote racial equality.

www.voicetheunion.org.uk/race-report

Because of our concerns about the report, Voice Community has proposed an emergency motion for the May General Council Meeting of the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU):

'Conference welcomes the recognition of the role that education plays in advancing equality but believes that the Government's Race and Ethnic Disparities Commission Report fails to acknowledge the reality of systemic racism in the UK.'

'Conference calls upon the GFTU to:

- > support staff in education settings to mark Stephen Lawrence day on 22nd April each year and support the work of the Stephen Lawrence Day Foundation to share Stephen's story and work to educate all pupils about the part they can play in creating a fair society where everyone can flourish;
- > support member unions to campaign against racism;
- > call upon the Government to end its divisive rhetoric that seeks to deny the reality of racism in the UK; and
- > call on employers to advance anti-racism work and to improve their strategies for recruiting and retaining workers from diverse backgrounds.'

www.voicetheunion.org.uk/GFTU-motion-racism

STEPHEN LAWRENCE DAY



FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

By Roy Rickhuss CBE, General Secretary of Community

An investigation carried out by *The Guardian* earlier this year found that over 60,000 racist incidents took place in UK schools over the past five years. This number, as shocking as it is, is likely not a true reflection of the extent of the problem, as schools aren't obliged to report racist incidents to local councils.

Yet schools are tackling this problem head on, with hundreds signing up to reform their curriculum to reflect the achievements of black and ethnic minority people and address the legacy of colonialism. These schools are partnering with charities and other organisations to do so, in the absence of national government-led change for schools (although the Welsh Government is now taking action – see page 21).

Despite this lack of government-led change outside Wales, we know that education and early years settings are already major players in helping to tackle racism and discrimination. The Government's own Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities also found this in their recently published report (see page 4).

Stephen Lawrence Day

If children and young people learn tolerance within their education and early years settings, this can change our whole society for the better. It can reduce racist tendencies amongst the adult population, reduce racist incidents, discrimination and even bias within workplaces, lead to a reduction in race-related hate crime and help to create a less racist culture that gives everyone the opportunity to succeed.

It is because we know and value the importance of education in building a fair and inclusive society that we have partnered with the Stephen Lawrence Day Foundation (SLDF). As educators, you help children, young people and adult learners to be more tolerant and to celebrate difference on a regular basis. These conversations can be challenging, particularly if less tolerant views have already begun to be shaped outside the classroom. Our partnership with the Stephen Lawrence Day Foundation aims to give you the skills and confidence you need in having these difficult conversations and tackling racism and discrimination.

As a result of our partnership, we have been running webinars on having difficult conversations, hate crime and more. These webinars have been developed to help you to

tackle racism and discrimination in the classroom and beyond, and so you can play your part in creating a more tolerant and accepting society.

We have also developed a range of age-appropriate materials which include:

- > a staff briefing;
- > suggestions for assemblies; and
- > a suite of other resources which allow for different curriculum entry points.

These materials are all available on the SLDF website (stephenlawrenceday.org) and can be used flexibly to support the children and young people in your school to understand the part they play as individuals in creating a fair society in which everyone can flourish.

Find out more about how you can get involved on page 3 (or at www.voicetheunion.org.uk/sldf-partnership) and to get the latest information, register your interest with us here: <https://community-tu.org/stephen-lawrence-day-2021-get-involved>

Please do get involve as, by working together, we will change our society for the better, and create a place where every adult and child is given fair and equal opportunity to succeed, regardless of the colour of their skin.

COMMUNITY MEMBER BENEFITS



COMMUNITY: THE CAMPAIGNING UNION

By Melantha Chittenden
Head of Communications and Media

Community is a campaigning union. With tens of thousands of members all joining together for a common cause, we have a strong collective voice. Together, we campaign on issues that affect you and that you care about.

We use our resources and strong collective voice to secure better, safer and more equal workplaces across the UK.

This includes campaigning for workplaces to have better policies and practices around things like mental health and the menopause, and proper health and safety practices that keep our members safe.

We use our collective voice to persuade government of the things our members need and want at work, too. Take our recent campaign to secure **vaccine priority** for all essential workers, or our lobbying of government to introduce the **self-employed income support scheme**. Whatever your role within the education and early years sectors, we are striving to make your experiences at work and beyond better – to give you more rights, better pay and the respect and treatment you deserve.

Our strong collective voice allows us to campaign on issues that you care about, that affect you both inside and outside of work. Issues like the **skills gap** in the UK, or the ways that **technology is changing how we work and how we interact** with the services we use, and even our friends and families. We want to ensure workers are equipped for these changes, consulted when changes are made in their workplace, and that you have the skills you need to succeed in a changing working environment.



Equalities

Our campaigning around equalities is another example. While equalities issues affect people at work, they reach beyond the classroom and other education and early years settings, out into our communities and wider society too.

That's why we've been working in partnership with **Maternity Action** and **Pregnant then Screwed** to ensure that women workers aren't disadvantaged, because if women workers face disadvantages, it affects their families, their communities and even our economy.

It's also why we've joined forces with the **Stephen Lawrence Day Foundation** to help you tackle racism and inequality within your education or early years setting (see page 3). We know that these settings often sit at the centre of communities, so we hope this work will have a wide-reaching impact.



Beyond our workplaces

Our campaign to end **veteran homelessness** is an example of us reaching beyond our workplaces to campaign on an issue that is important to our members.

This campaign was born at our last biennial conference as an issue that our members care deeply about. The member-led campaign has now raised over £6,000 for homeless veterans, and provided access to learning and training opportunities to get veterans into good quality work that suits their skill set.

Getting involved

There are plenty of opportunities for our members to get involved in our campaigning and lobbying work. Just keep an eye on your emails and Community's social media platforms (**@CommunityUnion** or **facebook.com/CommunityUnion**) or feed in through our structures any ideas you have about issues we should be campaigning on.

By working together, and using our collective voice, we want to create a fairer world for each of us and for the next generation.



SAVINGS ON HOME/DIY ESSENTIALS FOR VOICE COMMUNITY MEMBERS!

Voice Rewards has merged with Community Offers to bring members exciting benefits and discounts. Please visit Community Offers from now onwards to access the offers available to you. Highlights include:



HOTPOINT PRIVILEGE PURCHASE CLUB

Get spring-cleaning ready with the Privilege Purchase Club and choose from over 850 different products at members-only exclusive prices, including great brands such as KitchenAid, Whirlpool, Hotpoint and Indesit. All appliances have already been pre-discounted from washing machines, fridge freezers and dishwashers etc. All prices include FREE UK delivery*.

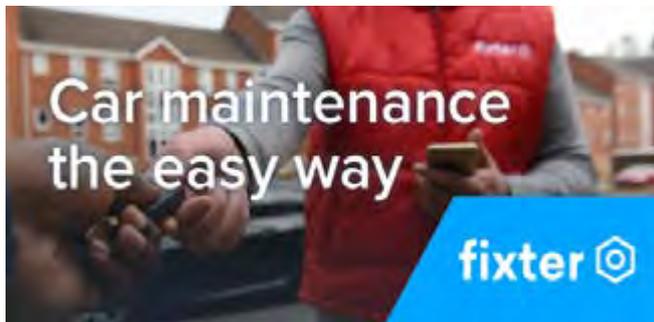
[CLICK HERE TO FIND OUT MORE!](#)



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SAVE ENJOY, SPEND TODAY WITH BLACKHAWK NETWORK RETAIL OFFERS

Save £100s on big brand retailers through Blackhawk Network. Whether you are looking to save on your supermarket shop, updating your wardrobe, dining out or on Home and DIY – you will find savings available through the Blackhawk Network platform. Visit Community Offers now to create an account with Blackhawk Network and start saving today.

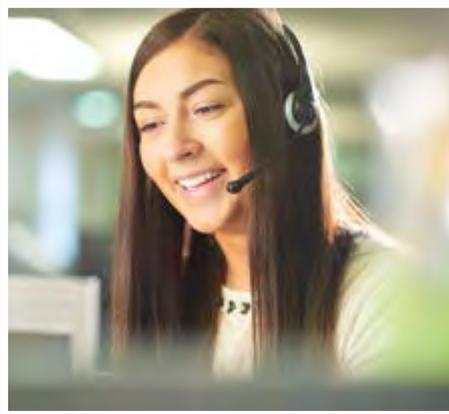
[CLICK HERE TO FIND OUT MORE!](#)

TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THESE AND OTHER FANTASTIC DEALS VISIT COMMUNITY OFFERS TODAY!

*Terms and conditions apply to all benefits. See website for details. Offers subject to change without notice and correct at time of print. Hotpoint Privilege Purchase Club - The next day delivery order cut off time will be at 12:00. Community Offers is managed and run on behalf of Community by Parliament Hill Ltd.

LEGAL SERVICE FOR MEMBERS

Pattinson & Brewer provide legal support and representation to Voice Community members and their families for non-workplace related issues.



Established in 1890, Pattinson & Brewer have always been firmly on the side of working people, helping them to fight for justice. With an ethos that access to justice is a basic human right, Pattinson & Brewer are proud to defend it.

Their teams of lawyers are leaders in their field supporting members with:

- > personal injury, union members keep 100% of their personal injury compensation;
- > clinical negligence;
- > wills, probate and elderly client issues;
- > conveyancing and matrimonial problems; and
- > 24/7 free non-employment free legal advice.

Pattinson & Brewer's lawyers want to work with trade unions and help people like Voice members and their families, and are ready to 'go the extra mile' to help.

As a matter of fundamental principle, Pattinson & Brewer do not act for employers or their insurers and are 100% committed to being on the side of working people. With offices in London, York and Bristol, and close partnerships in Scotland, they provide a truly national service.

They promise that everyone who needs help will be treated as a valued individual, each one a personal client not a file name or number.



To contact Pattinson & Brewer today



0800 3077980

For wills



VoiceWills@pattinsonbrewer.co.uk

LEGAL FOCUS: STEPHEN LAWRENCE DAY

RACE EQUALITY MUST BE MORE THAN AN ASPIRATION

By Catherine Scrivens, Solicitor and Head of Legal Services, Community (CScrivens@community-tu.org)

As we remember Stephen Lawrence, it's an opportunity to consider what the racial landscape is like in the UK in 2021.

The MacPherson Report was commissioned in 1997, following Stephen's death, and published two years later with its headline finding that the Metropolitan Police were 'institutionally racist'.

A 2018 report found that the Metropolitan Police were four times more likely to use force against black people compared with the white population (www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-44214748). Home Office data showed Thames Valley officers carried out 12,245 stop and searches in the year to March. Population estimates for the area showed 15.5 per 1,000 black people were stopped, compared to just 3.2 per 1,000 white people. But the problem runs deeper.

In 2020, the death of George Floyd in the US put the spotlight on racial inequality around the world. At the same time, it was becoming apparent there was a disproportionately higher number of deaths in BAME communities. The disproportionate impact of stop and search by the police was also widely reported. This led to the Government setting up the Sewell Commission to investigate race and ethnic disparities.

Racism still a lived reality

In 2021, racism is still a lived reality for most ethnic minorities in the UK. As recent reports highlight, the gap isn't narrowing, and the pandemic has highlighted gaping differences.

In February 2021, the TUC reported on the **Office for National Statistics (ONS) Labour Market Status by Ethnic Groups** figures, which revealed that the BAME unemployment rate shot up from 5.8% to 9.5% between the final quarter of 2019 and the final quarter of 2020. This increase of nearly-two thirds is staggering when compared to

white workers, where it rose from 3.4% to 4.5% – an increase of just under a third.

Unions and campaigners subsequently signed a joint statement calling on the Prime Minister to take the action he pledged in 2020 to end structural racism and inequality.

Young black workers have been hit disproportionately hard during the pandemic, according to Guardian analysis, reported in *The Observer* of 11 April 2021 (www.theguardian.com/society/2021/apr/11/black-youth-unemployment-rate-brixton-riots-covid) with more than 40% unemployed – three times worse than white workers of the same age. Between October and December 2020, 41.6% of black people aged 16-24 were unemployed – the highest rate since the last financial crisis – whereas white workers of the same age stood at 12.4%.

Sewell Commission

The Sewell Commission Report on Race and Ethnic Disparities released in March 2021 (see page 4) dismayed many with its findings.

According to *The Observer* (11 April), significant sections of the report, which were widely criticised by health professionals, academics and crime experts, were not written by the 12 commissioners. The full document was not made available to be signed off by them, nor were they made aware of its final recommendations. The finished report, it is alleged, was produced by No 10.

Community and other unions have written to the Prime Minister stating that an end to workplace exploitation for all working people will help end systemic racism (www.tuc.org.uk/news/trade-union-leaders-write-pm-calling-him-reject-insulting-report-and-act-race-equality-work).

Racism at work

An April 2019 TUC report, **Racism ruins lives**, found the majority of ethnic minority workers had experienced racial harassment at work and been subjected to unfair treatment by their employer because of their race.



There is evidence on racial inequalities in employment, income, promotion and training, but recognition of workplace racism remains muted. To address this, the TUC commissioned the University of Manchester to undertake the **Racism at Work survey** (2016/17).

The responses from over 5,000 people were shocking, with over 70% of ethnic minority workers saying they had experienced racial harassment at work in the previous five years, and around 60% reporting unfair treatment by their employer because of their race. Almost half reported that racism had negatively impacted on their ability to do their job, and almost half had been subject to 'verbal abuse and racist jokes'.

Many of the forms of workplace racism highlighted in this report were hate crimes, including over one in ten ethnic minority respondents and 6% of non-British white participants reporting that they had experienced racist violence at work.



In addition:

- > **a third reported that they had been bullied and/or subjected to insensitive questioning;**
- > **almost 15% of women and 8% of men said racial discrimination had caused them to leave their job;**
- > **28% of participants who reported experiencing racism at work reported having to take a period of sick leave;**
- > **part-time or non-permanent employees were more likely to report racial harassment and discrimination;**
- > **over 40% of those who reported a racist incident said they were either ignored, or that they had subsequently been identified as a 'troublemaker'; and**
- > **more than one-in-ten respondents raising a complaint said that they were subsequently disciplined or forced out of their job.**

(<https://hummedia.manchester.ac.uk/institutes/code/research/projects/racism-at-work/tuc-full-report.pdf>)

Racism in education

In 2019, the Equality & Human Rights Commission published **Racial harassment in British universities: qualitative research findings** (www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/racial-harassment-british-universities-qualitative-research-findings), which reported that higher education institutions (HEIs) found it difficult to address the issue of racial harassment, including because of under-reporting. Victims of racial harassment were thought to be reluctant to come forward because of a lack of faith in the complaints process, so many HEIs were concerned they did not have a full understanding of the problem.

The Guardian has recently produced a number of articles on racism in education affecting BAME staff and pupils, including:

- > **'Exclusion rates five times higher for black Caribbean pupils in parts of England'** (www.theguardian.com/education/2021/mar/24/exclusion-rates-black-caribbean-pupils-england);
- > **'British schools are institutionally racist. That must change fast'** (www.theguardian.com/education/2021/mar/24/british-schools-are-institutionally-racist-that-must-change-fast); and

- > **"I was terrified": pupils tell of being victimised in UK schools'** (www.theguardian.com/education/2021/mar/24/i-was-terrified-pupils-tell-of-being-victimised-in-uk-schools).

Teachers have spoken of systemic and at times overt racism they have suffered, as figures reveal the tiny percentage of BAME staff in senior leadership positions.

Action

There is hope. After a groundswell of demand from young people, grassroots groups, teachers and councils are helping to update syllabuses, with schools across England reforming their curriculums to reflect the achievements of black and minority ethnic people and address the harmful legacy of colonialism. The Welsh Government is also taking action (see page 21).

However, anti-discrimination legislation, outlawing discrimination within the Equality Act 2010 on grounds of race – which covers nationality, colour and ethnic origins – is clearly not enough.

As individuals, we have to do more:

- > if we are white, we need to **understand our own privilege** and **consider our own unconscious biases**;
- > if we see racism, we need to **call it out** – being a silent bystander allows the behaviours to continue; and
- > if we want to do more, **encourage employers** to embrace the concept of **workplace allies**.

Allyship is a lifelong process of building relationships based on trust, consistency, and accountability with marginalized individuals and/or groups of people. It is not self-defined, but rather work and efforts must be recognised by those you are seeking to ally with.

Further reading

'The Sewell report on racial disparity is an attempt to erase progress and sow division' (*The Guardian*: www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/apr/02/sewell-report-racial-disparity-progress-division-racism)

'Systemic racism: teachers speak out about discrimination in UK schools' (*The Guardian*: www.theguardian.com/education/2021/mar/24/systemic-racism-teachers-speak-out-about-discrimination-in-uk-schools)

The Prince's Responsible Business Network: *Anti-Racism and Allyship in the Workplace: A Brief Guide* (2020: www.bitc.org.uk/toolkit/anti-racism-and-allyship-in-the-workplace-a-brief-guide)

STUDENT FOCUS

VOICE MEMBER INSIGHTS

Contact: Cameron Mitchell, Professional Officer (CMitchell@community-tu.org)

Whether you are planning on working in a nursery, school, college or university, overseeing a large group of children or students may be a daunting thought. To help you to get a head start in your first year as an education professional, we surveyed Voice members to find out what advice they'd like to bestow on you, the next generation of educators.

Our members expressed a lot of interesting points, such as interacting with colleagues and making sure to develop relationships to ensure that you're in a positive working environment.

'Colleagues can be an inestimable blessing'

'Remember that, important though it is, teaching is not the whole of your life and that what Denis Healey called a "hinterland" is of vital importance.

'Colleagues can be an inestimable blessing – do what you can to nurture good relationships with your colleagues.'

Jon, teacher

'Be happy and positive'

'Assessment is just as important as lesson planning and teaching (without it, Ofsted will fail the school, even if all kids are making amazing progress, because there is no evidence that progress is being made) so make sure that assessment is always part of what you do.

'Submit reports and assessment grades by the given deadline.

'Be happy and positive, even when you don't feel like it – negative attitudes rub off all too easily on your colleagues and students. By doing this you will become a well-rounded educator and find that your options for the future will open up tremendously.'

Alistair, support staff



'You do not need to follow the crowd to fit in – let them follow you'

'Be sure you enjoy being with children as it's a privilege and at times a difficult job. Have realistic expectations of children's individual stages of development.

'Know your own limitations and ask for support when you need it. Developing good reflective practice is key and self-reflection is vital.

'Know what good standards in practice are and demonstrate them. You do not need to follow the crowd to fit in – let them follow you.'

Susan, early years practitioner

Other members said that you should focus on maintaining a good work-life balance and ensure that, over time, you develop your own teaching style as well as an understanding of your learners and their individual needs.

'Know the individual needs of your learners'

'Be organised so that you don't need to take work home with you.

'Know the individual needs of your learners whilst maintaining a professional distance.

'Ask for help and don't try to do everything alone.

'[Remember] the importance of reviewing schemes of learning and not being afraid of changing things that do not work (just because someone has done the same thing for years does not mean that you have to).'

Sharon, SENCo

'Being a good teacher takes time'

'Ask lots of questions.

'Don't assume that everybody you observe is a good teacher.

'Decide your work time limits and then don't go over them. There will always be more work to do, however many hours you work.

'It is NOT OK to work all weekend.

'You can't be good at everything in the first year. Being a good teacher takes time.'

Rebekah, teacher

'Don't expect it to be easy'

'Education is a vocation and it takes a long time to really gain the underpinning skills and knowledge you need. Don't expect it to be easy or that you'll be perfect from the start.

'You will make mistakes – so long as you learn from these and don't "beat yourself up" over them, you'll become an excellent teacher.'

Ann, support staff

'Inspire the children'

'Inspire the children; show passion and don't be put off by paperwork, and be selective!

'If I wish I knew something before entering education, it would be how much I would enjoy it – 46 years in the job and still enjoying it!'

Paul, lecturer

STUDENT FOCUS



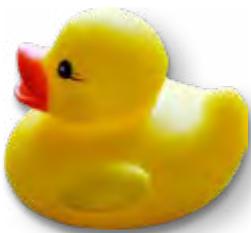
GETTING YOUR DUCKS IN A ROW

Contact: Cameron Mitchell, Professional Officer (CMitchell@community-tu.org)

You might be thinking about finishing your qualification and entering the workplace, but what about everything else?

You will need to get your ducks in a row, so to speak, before you start your new career, and here is a helpful little list of things you may want to consider before entering the world of work.

If you haven't already, fill out this short form: www.voicetheunion.org.uk/newly-qualified-survival-guide-order-form and download your copy of our **Newly Qualified Survival Guide** containing tips and important information to help take you through your first year as a newly qualified professional working in education.

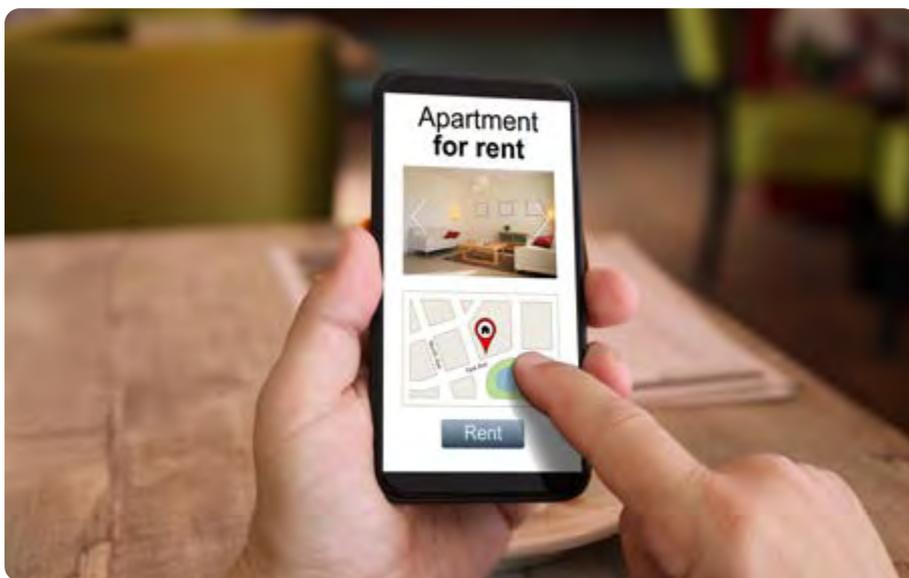


Support for newly qualified teachers

- > **Early career support:** www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-early-career-teachers-reducing-teacher-workload
- > Keep on top of your workload with the Workload Reduction Toolkit: www.gov.uk/guidance/reducing-workload-in-your-school

10 quick tips to consider:

1. **Invest in yourself** – don't think that you must accept the first job that comes along. Starting your new career requires a lot of thought, patience and consideration, and the right job for you will come along.
2. **Clarify what you want from your career** – what motivated you to want to work in education? Determining the goals and aspirations that you want from your career now will set you on the road to achieving them.
3. **Plan everything out** – the first few months of your life as a newly qualified professional will be very busy, so planning both your professional and personal lives will help, whether it is goal setting or even breaking everything into small steps.
4. **Focus on the task at hand** – using your planning and small steps, choose a goal to focus on, then keep motivated to finish that goal before moving on to your next one.
5. **Understand your strengths** – your first year is going to test you to the fullest of your abilities, so make sure to capitalise on your strengths and use them to motivate you. This will also be a great opportunity to learn your weaknesses and work on them.
6. **Be passionate** – you have studied to work in the education sector, so make sure to choose the career route that you are fully passionate about. Without being passionate, you will find it difficult to excel or keep motivated.
7. **Know your limits** – you will have just finished your qualifications; no one expects you to know everything about the job, so don't be afraid to speak up when you are struggling. Your colleagues are there to help.
8. **Workplace relationships** – it is important to develop healthy relationships in the workplace. Your colleagues will be with you throughout your professional development and are there to help nurture you. If you have moved to a new area, you should also get to know your colleagues outside of work.
9. **Networking is key** – as a newly qualified professional, you should be networking efficiently.
10. **Don't settle if you aren't happy** – you are at the beginning of your career, so make sure that it is a fulfilling one and don't settle somewhere that you aren't happy, whether it be your working or personal life.



Moving to a new house/area

Another stressful part of finishing a qualification and entering the workplace can include moving to a new house. If you are moving, you should first consider the area where you are looking to live – we would suggest visiting during both the day and night to see how it differs (subject to any coronavirus travel restrictions in place at the time).

Visit www.streetcheck.co.uk for a useful tool which will provide you with information about different areas, such as crime rates, the type of housing available in that area and nearby services.

You may also want to consider:

- > Will you be renting or getting a mortgage?
- > What areas will be most convenient for your commute to work?
- > Do you have any, or will you want, pets? Some landlords won't allow them.

- > Would you want to share a property with a friend/relative/partner?

There are many things to do when moving home, but here are a few that are particularly important when you're planning to start a new job soon.

- > Ensure that you have your mail redirected so you don't miss any important communications from your new employer.
- > Make sure you pack everything you'll need to start work (supplies, paperwork, work-appropriate clothing) in an easily identifiable box that you'll be able to find amongst all the others. You don't want any extra stress that comes from losing something you'll need amongst all your worldly possessions.
- > Make sure when you update your car insurance that you note your new workplace address and parking specifics.

- > Scope out your route to work ahead of time. Are you going to drive or is there public transport available? You don't want to be late on your first day.
- > Childcare (if needed) – you'll need to know when your drop-off and pick-up times are, where to park, and how long this will add to your journey.

Get your Voice heard

Our student members' voices are as equally important to us as our employed members. You are the educators of the future, so if you have any queries regarding your course, studies or placement, or would like some advice, do not hesitate to contact us. We're here to help you through your course and into working in the education sector.

We also welcome our members who have experienced the workplace to take our short survey (www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/VoiceMemberInsights) to help our student members with any advice or information that you think they would find useful, or that you wish you had known when starting out as a newly qualified professional.

We'd love to hear from you

If you are interested in writing an article for *Your Voice* or a blog post for our website, please don't hesitate to contact us at EDUPress@community-tu.org or call us on **01332 372 337**.

STUDENT FOCUS



BEHAVING PROFESSIONALLY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

By Cameron Mitchell, Professional Officer (CMitchell@community-tu.org)

We understand how hard our young members work – studying, attending placements, training, or working in education or early years. This is the start of what will hopefully be a long and rewarding career. It's an exciting time, and we congratulate you on your achievements!

As you enter the world of work, you'll find yourself focused on performing well and meeting standards expected by your employers and the government. Whilst many of these standards are based on workplace performance and conduct, expectations of how you behave also include your personal and digital life.

Professional standards

There are professional standards for teachers, which include expectations of personal and professional conduct, for:

- > **England:** www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-standards
- > **Scotland:** www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-standards/professional-standards.aspx
- > **Wales:** <https://hwb.gov.wales/professional-development/professional-standards> and
- > **Northern Ireland:** <https://gtcni.org.uk/professional-space/professional-competence/overview>

Much goes without saying, and we know members understand the importance of acting lawfully, both in and outside the workplace. Behaving recklessly,

gaining a criminal record, or tarnishing your own reputation or that of your employer or sector are all detrimental to the careers of education and early years professionals.

Be careful online

With the growth of social media, scrutiny of personal conduct has widened to what we do online. Most adults use at least one social media platform, and it's increasingly common for employers to have their own workplace social media policies.

Even though social media are used in our own personal time, it's important to maintain a respectful and professional presence online – failure to do so can result in disciplinary action from your employer.

A teacher was recently dismissed and banned from teaching for two years for 'professional misconduct' after he caused offence with 'anonymous' blogs that made derogatory comments about the school prom, pupils, parents and his head teacher, who said he was identifiable in an item on the teacher's Twitter account (www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-56490673).

Useful social media tips

Ensure you maintain a professional presence online and reduce the risk of breaking your workplace's social media policy:

- 1 Understand your workplace policies.** It's always important to have a copy of your workplace's policies, which should include disciplinary procedures and examples of 'misconduct' and 'gross misconduct'. Most workplaces now have a social

media policy. If you're unsure where to find this, speak with your line manager or HR. Remember, as your union, we're available if you're unsure about any workplace policies.

- 2 Consider whether to display your workplace.** On Facebook, you can list your workplace in your information, and on other platforms a 'bio' gives you the opportunity to list such information. If you choose to include this information, people may interpret your views and what you post as representing your workplace. To avoid this, avoid listing where you work. However, if you decide having your workplace on social media is beneficial, ensure you make it clear that your activity represents you as an individual and not your employer.

- 3 Don't discuss workplace issues on social media,** especially confidential matters. Talking negatively about your workplace or colleagues can be seen as bringing your workplace into disrepute, and could lead to disciplinary action.

- 4 Remain respectful.** Social media are used as a platform for many to express themselves and their opinions. Whilst you're entitled to do so, you must always be respectful and refrain from derogatory or abusive comments, particularly on a group or individual's beliefs or identity. This includes 'liking', 'sharing' or 'commenting' in agreement on others' posts.

- 5 Contact us for advice and support** if you're unsure about social media and the workplace.

More @ www.voicetheunion.org.uk/publications-resources/protect-your-privacy-online

EARLY YEARS (ENGLAND)



NEW LEAD FOR EARLY YEARS

By Letitia McCalla, Professional Officer (LMcCalla@community-tu.org)

I'd like to introduce myself as the new early years lead for members in England.

I've worked in the union for 13 years. As well as being a professional officer for Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, Leicester and Leicestershire – covering casework and recruitment and retention across the region – I now also have overarching responsibility for early years members in England.

My main aim in my role as early years lead is to engage with members to ensure you are getting what you need from your union, both as an individual and collectively.

I'm also working with other early years professionals in meetings with government officials to voice your views and try to secure better outcomes for the sector.

Recently, the main topics of discussion at government level have been COVID-19-related, and we had a positive result on home testing for nursery staff following our letter to the Children's Minister (www.voicetheunion.org.uk/vf-letter).

Funding, professional development and terms and conditions for the early years workforce are below what they should be, so we continue to work to try to improve them.



You may receive a survey from time to time asking for your views. Please do engage with our surveys, as your feedback informs our discussions.

Newsletter and webinars

Hopefully, you will have seen the new **EY newsletter**. The first one was sent in February. Please look out for the newsletters, as they provide updates on sector-specific issues and give details of upcoming events or training you may find useful.

If you aren't receiving them and would like to subscribe, login to your online account (or create one) at <https://members.community-tu.org> and tick that you want to receive email communications from us.

We recently held a **webinar for early years members on health and safety in the workplace and childcare issues**, which members who took part said they found useful. If you'd like to watch it, and access the resources we featured, it's at www.voicetheunion.org.uk/blog/ey-hs-webinar.

We'll be holding more webinars in the future. If you have any ideas for topics, please let me know.

Joining

Voice Community is the only specialist union section for early years staff. Please do remind your colleagues that they can join us to benefit from our support. We want to ensure that no one is handling issues by themselves. Things are always changing in the sector, and being a member of Voice Community gives you peace of mind and support in your time of need.

Nannies

Please don't forget that nannies are included in our membership (see www.voicetheunion.org.uk/nannies). We recently had a positive outcome for one of our nanny members. She handed in her resignation and the parents she worked for attempted to deduct a significant amount of her final salary for unjustified reasons. They were trying to interpret her contract in a way that benefitted them but was to the detriment of our member.

We supported her in raising her concerns with the parents, and when they did not agree to pay her entitlement, we lodged a claim with the employment tribunal for an unlawful deduction of wages. Our member won the claim and was paid everything they unlawfully deducted from her.

This is just one example of how we support our nanny members. This case should be a reminder to all to double-check your employment contract and ensure you understand and agree to all the terms before signing it. You can also ask Voice Community to check a contract for you – do please just get in touch.

SCHOOLS (ENGLAND)

REBUILDING BETTER – NOT BUSINESS AS USUAL



By Wes Streeting MP
Shadow Minister for Schools

When Keir Starmer became leader of the Labour Party, he said he wanted the UK to be the best country to grow up in and the best country to grow old in. If we want to make that a reality, we have to take a joined-up approach to issues children face both inside and outside the school gates.

During the last year, I have been in awe of the passion, hard work and determination of all our teachers and school staff. Despite being repeatedly let down by the Government, they have continued to do great work in trying circumstances. As we move out of lockdown, schools and their staff must be given better support than they have so far.

Investment needed

If we are serious about making this country the best possible place to go to school, we need to invest in our teachers. That means investing in teacher training and ongoing professional development. It means

improving retention by reducing stress and improving working conditions. It means hiring more great teachers, finally ending the scandal of supersized classrooms.

We must also recognise that much of the damage done to children by ten years of Conservative governments, and exacerbated by COVID-19, goes beyond the school gates. Even before the pandemic, child poverty was rising in the UK, as was the attainment gap between the most advantaged and most disadvantaged children. These problems have been exacerbated by a year of lockdowns, with many children unable to access home learning and falling even further behind their peers.

Bright Futures

Last month, the Labour Party launched our Bright Futures Taskforce to ensure every child can recover from the impacts of the pandemic and every child is able to reach their potential.

We have called for catch-up breakfast clubs to ensure that children can make up for lost time with their friends and their teachers. This will also ensure every child can start the school day with a healthy meal.

It is also important to take a place-based approach to our education system. A one size fits all approach cannot succeed when schools been affected in different ways, at different times and to different degrees during this pandemic. Similarly, the long-term needs of schools are often tied to the needs to the local community.

We saw what a difference the London Challenge made in our capital city. It turned London's schools from a byword for educational failure into a national success story. We need an ambitious and targeted place-based agenda for other parts of the country that – yes – is about education and skills, but is also about employment, housing, transport, public service reform and infrastructure investment.

In the next few months and years, the key test will be whether, when the crisis passes and life returns to normal, we are doing things better than we did before. Labour is committed to putting children at the heart of our recovery, investing in their futures, teachers and communities to rebuild better, not return to business as usual.



FURTHER & HIGHER EDUCATION (ENGLAND)



SKILLS FOR JOBS

By Kate Dearden, Head of Research, Policy and External Relations at Community, who leads on the union's skills priority campaign

In January, the Government released a 'Skills for Jobs' White Paper. While it is encouraging that skills are rightly being given a centralised focus in Westminster, this paper did not go far enough to meet its aim of a radical re-alignment of post-16 education to meet the changing needs of the economy and of employers.

We know that the nature of work, and careers, are changing fast. Skills are the new currency in work and will be critical if we are to successfully revive post-COVID Britain. We also know that across the country employers are facing skills shortages, and that nationwide we face a mismatch between the skills workers have and the skills they need to succeed in their jobs.

It is deeply disappointing that the White Paper fails to acknowledge the role of trade unions in job-related training, and to see no reversal in the cut of funding to union learning, which last year supported 200,000 learners to get new skills, including the 62,000 who got basic English, maths and IT skills.



Further education teaching

Some might see the announced nationwide recruitment campaign to get more people to teach in further education as a step forwards. However, because it is not partnered with any strong commitments to improving pay and conditions for those teachers and support staff, it is unlikely to have any real impact.

After decades of underfunding and being treated as the poor and lower status relation, compared to other areas of education, further education and those who work in it need a massive investment of funding and resources.

Positives

Despite these disappointments, there were some positive outcomes. The decision to give employers a central role in designing technical courses so they are directly linked to skills needed for jobs, we hope will see a partnership between workers, employers and unions developed to create a lifelong learning culture.

We know that training and improving skills is not just what someone does up to the age of 18, but is a lifelong necessity in order to keep track with a changing economy. It is positive that the Government finally recognises the urgent need for workers to be able to reskill and upskill flexibly throughout their lives.

Ambitious reform to skills systems is long overdue, and we will be working with the Government to ensure that those positive proposals are carried out effectively, and to push for additional measures that lead to a true reform of the skills system.

Government must ensure workers are at the heart of our planning for the future, not as an afterthought, and should be given the skills to succeed.

Find out more: www.gov.uk/government/publications/skills-for-jobs-lifelong-learning-for-opportunity-and-growth

TEACHERS' PAY (ENGLAND)

UNIONS UNITE TO REJECT GOVERNMENT PAY FREEZE

In February, Voice Community and other unions made a joint statement calling on the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) to recommend a pay award which will 'restore the value and competitiveness of teacher and school leader pay in England'. The unions jointly opposed the Government's pay freeze for teachers earning more than £24,000-a-year.

The unions warned that the Government's planned pay freeze would 'inflict yet another real-terms cut to salaries, adding to the damage caused by below-inflation awards since 2010', further 'worsening teacher shortages because of the long-term impact on recruitment and retention'.

The statement said: 'The Government is out of touch with the profession and its position is not credible. Its attempts to use the impact of the pandemic to justify further attacks on pay, despite the huge contribution made by teachers and school leaders to the national response to the pandemic, have created enormous anger.'

The unions also called for 'a fairer pay structure to improve teacher retention with the assurance of mandatory pay points for progression in all pay ranges, and the scrapping of performance-related pay (PRP), as the evidence suggests this has a negative impact'.

Deborah Lawson, Assistant General Secretary of Community Union (Voice education section), said:

'The pay freeze is a kick in the teeth for the nation's dedicated teachers and headteachers, who have been working under extreme pressure during the pandemic, with more and more expectations placed on them. It has had a damaging impact on staff morale.'

'Teachers have not only provided education and care for vulnerable children and key workers' children but have worked through holidays.'

'There's already a recruitment and retention crisis, and we've heard many teachers and school leaders say they don't have the energy to carry on and will leave the profession as soon as they can.'

In its own **written submission and oral evidence to the STRB**, Voice Community made clear our disappointment that the Government linked last year's increase to the workforce's dedication throughout the pandemic, despite most of the evidence having been submitted before the peak of the first wave, and that for teachers to be told that their continued

hard work would be rewarded with a pay freeze was a 'bitter pill to swallow'. 'There is a real need to recognise [financially] the Churchillian effort that has been deployed by the school workforce.'

We also agreed with the recommendation of the department that there should be an increase to the unqualified teacher pay range to lift it to a mandatory minimum.

Voice Community called:

- > on the STRB not to accept the pay freeze;
- > for information on what would otherwise have been offered;
- > for a pay increase to at least match inflation;
- > on the STRB, in the absence of a pay increase, to consider increasing PPA (planning, preparation and assessment) time; and
- > for reform of the pay structure, including the main and upper pay scale threshold and pay point differentials.

In its **supplementary evidence to the STRB** (March 2021) Voice Community asked:

- > for a pay increase in line with inflation to maintain the value of teacher pay without breaking the Treasury-mandated "pay freeze"; and
- > for additional PPA time for teachers to undertake planning, marking and assessment for their classes, which we believe will help with the recovery plan.

Find out more:

www.voicetheunion.org.uk/strb2021

PENSIONS UK



UNIVERSITIES ARE AT RISK OF ANOTHER CRISIS – AND THIS TIME IT'S TO DO WITH PENSIONS

By Craig Thomson, Professional Officer
(CThomson@community-tu.org)

Please note this does not affect academic staff in the Teachers' Pension Scheme or support staff who will be in a different pension scheme.

The Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) has more than 300 institutions that administer pensions, and 420,000 active or retired staff enrolled in the scheme. There is a significant concern because USS trustees want to increase combined (employer and employee) pension contributions from 30.7% to potentially 56%. Currently, members of USS pay a 9.6% contribution, and their university employers pay 21.1%.

The move to increase pension contributions is a significant concern for many members of the scheme, and may also be a concern for you, because the modification of the scheme could cost employees who are the highest earners up to £8,000 a year.

The alterations to the scheme are also a concern to universities, as the change will have a combined cost of £1 billion for the institutions administering the scheme.

The announcement is hardly surprising. It was expected that the recent valuation would result in an increase in contributions, because of inflation and USS investment growth being thwarted by COVID-19 (which has driven down interest rates).

Critics argue that the valuation is misleading, as it is widely expected that interest rates will soon improve, and unfair because currently more money is going into the scheme than has been paid out.

Some unions have called for industrial action over this matter. We recognise that this may cause a concern for you. We also understand that the cost of contributions which are being suggested are extremely high and would make the scheme unaffordable to small institutions and many members.

There is a further concern that if the reforms to the scheme are to go ahead, many employers will follow the example of Trinity College Cambridge and withdraw from the scheme. If this were to happen, the health of the scheme would be damaged, and it could have a domino effect of more members leaving, thus making the scheme even less sustainable.

Our view is that, although this move is to fix a potential long-term issue, the increase is irresponsible, not prudent, and does not consider the bigger picture of economic growth.

Gaps in your record

If you are a member of a public service pension scheme and have noticed a gap in your pensionable service record, you will need to contact the employer in question and ask that they send your service and salary details to the pension scheme.

If the employer no longer has the relevant records, you will need to provide payslips to prove that pension contributions were made.

If you have any pension issues or queries, contact Technical Officer (Pensions) Janine Sansom (JSansom@community-tu.org).

LGPS exit cap

From 12 February 2021, the regulation surrounding applying the £95,000 cap on public sector payments was disapplied.

Employers are being asked by Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) administration authorities to make note of exits from the scheme between 4 November 2020 and 11 February 2021 where full strain costs were not paid because of the exit gap. Employers are being encouraged by HM Treasury to pay to any former employees to whom the cap was applied, the additional sums that would have been paid but for the cap whilst it was in force.

If you've been impacted, you should request from your former employer the amount you would have received had the cap not been in place.

For support, contact us on
01332 378008.

Transitional arrangements

The Government has responded to the public consultation to address discrimination caused by transitional protection arrangements. Read our blog to find out if this affects you: www.voicetheunion.org.uk/blog/latest-pension-schemes-changes-updated

Independent schools and TPS webinar

Watch our webinar about independent schools withdrawing from the Teachers' Pension Scheme, or read our blog and download resources: www.voicetheunion.org.uk/blog/tps-webinar-is

VOICE COMMUNITY CYMRU



WALES UPDATE

By Urtha Felda, Senior Professional Officer (UFelda@community-tu.org)

NEW CURRICULUM VOTE 'HISTORIC DAY FOR WALES'

On 9 March, Senedd members voted to pass the Curriculum and Assessment Wales Bill, which means the new Curriculum for Wales will be introduced in 2022. Education Minister Kirsty Williams described this as 'an historic day for Wales'.

The new curriculum is based on **four purposes**, to support learners to become:

- > ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives;
- > enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work;
- > ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world; and
- > healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

The purposes drive the relevance of the content, with five progression steps along a continuum of achievement outcomes for ages 3-16.

The six **areas of learning and experience (AOLE)** are:

- > Expressive Arts
- > Humanities
- > Health and Wellbeing
- > Science and Technology

- > Mathematics and Numeracy, and
- > Languages, Literature and Communication.

The structure is a national-level framework with school-level local design and planning.

There is an expectation to develop curricula in clusters, reducing variability. This started with 800 pilot schools, which have developed resources (available at <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales>) giving exemplars of local curricula and practical implementation, linked to visions and 'what matters' statements.

This co-production of the new curriculum is crucial to the shift from a managerial education system to one based on trust and professionalism. The new curriculum signals the reintroduction of the teacher as an ethical agent working to do the best that they can, although there is concern about how teacher agency can be maintained in the final years of outcome measurement.

Standards and training

New professional standards for teachers have also been developed across the themes of pedagogy, collaboration, innovation, professional learning and leadership.

Exemplars on Hwb include over 250 video clips on the 'sharing our experiences' site, plus case studies of how pioneer schools have addressed different developmental issues such as developing the vision, managing change, developing aspects of staff professional learning, and a purpose-led curriculum.

The new curriculum has a focus on formative assessments, and assessments for learning, which is a key element of the new approach in creating

independent learners able to continue learning after their transition to work or FHE. It's a move away from a pedagogical approach of teaching-to-performance, teaching-to-the-test and excessive use of past papers.

Implementation concerns

The plan is for a staggered implementation, starting with year 7 in 2022, with first qualifications assessed for year 11 in 2027. This will mean dual levels of accountability and measurement.

Whilst some teachers are enthusiastic about the possibilities in creatively offering exciting learning to interested and engaged pupils, others are more cautious, giving humanities as an example of an AOLE which could lessen in-depth specialist knowledge, because of the groupings of previously discrete subjects.

There is also a lack of specialist teachers in Wales, with science and Welsh classic examples. This could lead to a two-tier education system where successful schools are able to provide the breadth of topics but smaller, more rural, schools are not.

There's also concern about the extent to which assessment for certification can realistically be uncoupled from curriculum development. There has been no assessment of teacher capacity to develop the local curriculum and the learning materials to support implementation.

There have been extra Inset days allocated for CPD in schools, and £39 million allocated to initial teacher training, but without proper time for thorough preparation, there is potential for tokenistic or surface-level implementation.

VOICE COMMUNITY CYMRU

The new curriculum is said to provide more experimental opportunities from which children from disadvantaged backgrounds would benefit. The difficulty may be in providing this experimental opportunity within the given budget.

Voice Community welcomes the move away from burdensome, narrow accountability practices and teaching-to-the-exam that the new curriculum heralds. This is also recognised by the establishment of the Managing Wellbeing and Reducing Bureaucracy Group, of which Voice Community is a member.

While welcoming the return to local knowledge, original thought and pupil expression, the unions have raised concerns about:

- > the lack of funding available to support the new curriculum;
- > the capacity of teachers who have limited non-contact time;
- > the possible workload impact; and
- > how parity will be achieved across schools, given disparity in reserves.

Qualifications

Qualifications Wales has been involved in the co-construction of the new curriculum, and is developing new qualifications.

A qualification mirroring the new curriculum needs to reflect an assessment policy and practice which is uncoupled from high stakes external accountability.

The Donaldson report calls for teacher assessment to be the main vehicle for assessment before qualification. This raises issues of validity, reliability and alignment with external benchmarks, as well as issues of equality and bias.

These issues are also relevant to the centre determined grades that will replace exams in 2021, which require more input from teachers and the need for robust moderation, generating increased workload.

The extent to which assessment for certification can be realistically uncoupled in practice from the new curriculum remains a major concern. Some questions raised by the current

content relate to how much the qualifications proposed reflect the four purposes; as put forward, they are only a slight modification to what already exists.

We need more innovation to fully respond to the needs of the 21st century learner. Without innovation, there remains a focus on the end point of the qualification rather than looking at what a good assessment should look like. The current plans rely on specialisms, and only some schools will be to offer the GCSEs proposed.

The **Qualifications Wales consultation, Qualified for the Future**, documents are at: <https://qualificationsWales.org/english/get-involved/consultations-and-surveys/closed-consultations-and-surveys/qualified-for-the-future>

BAME communities and the curriculum

Voice Community welcomed Kirsty Williams's acceptance of the recommendations of the **Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities, Contributions and Cynefin in the New Curriculum Working Group: final report**, which include:

- > mandatory anti-racism and diversity training for all trainee and serving teachers;
- > BAME history to be mandatory;
- > scholarships to support BAME students to enter teacher training;
- > mentoring and social support for BAME teachers;
- > working with unions to support staff experiencing discrimination; and
- > diversity champions on governing bodies.

The history of Wales and its diversity will be mandatory within Humanities in the new curriculum.

www.voicetheunion.org.uk/BAME-curriculum



TEACHERS' PAY 2021/22: Independent Welsh Pay Review Body (IWPRB) Oral Evidence

In March, Assistant General Secretary Deborah Lawson and I attended the IWPRB panel to give oral evidence to support our demands on members' behalf.

Questions raised included ALNCOs, (Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators), TLRs, (teaching and learning responsibilities), lead practitioner roles, and unqualified teachers.

Exhaustion, after working to deliver learning throughout the pandemic, has impacted teachers' resilience. Teachers' workload has therefore been a key element in our submissions. We highlighted the need for them to have more non-teaching time – calling for an increase of PPA (planning, preparation and assessment time) from 10% to 20%, and for more staff to be employed to support that.

We also called for full recognition of experienced teachers' vital role in mentoring and supporting early career teachers, embedding them in school and preventing early departures from the profession.

For this year, Voice Community advocates a 2.7% pay award across the scales, protecting the discretions between the scales.

The IWPRB's decision is expected from the end of May.

More at: www.voicetheunion.org.uk/iwprb-2021

VOICE COMMUNITY SCOTLAND



REPORT OUTLINES PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING EQUITY IN EDUCATION

Good progress is being made towards closing the poverty-related attainment gap, a new report published last month by the Scottish Government has found.

The study – *Closing the poverty-related attainment gap: progress report 2016 to 2021* – looked at improvements made through the Scottish Attainment Challenge, and wider education policies, towards closing the attainment gap during this Parliamentary term.

The findings show:

- > the gap between the proportion of primary pupils (P1, P4 and P7 combined) from the most and least deprived areas achieving the expected level in literacy and numeracy has narrowed since 2016-17;
- > the gap between the proportion of S3 pupils from the most and least deprived areas who achieved their expected level in numeracy narrowed between 2016-17 and 2018-19;
- > the participation gap between those who live in the most deprived and least deprived areas has narrowed year-on-year between 2016-17 and 2019-2020;



- > 96% of headteachers felt that they had a good awareness of the range of approaches that can help close the poverty-related attainment gap;
- > 90% of headteachers reported they had seen an improvement in closing the gap in their schools in the past five years; and
- > 88% of headteachers expect to see improvements in closing the gap over the next five years.

Commenting on the report, Deputy First Minister John Swinney said:

'Closing the poverty-related attainment gap and giving every young person the chance to fulfil their full potential, regardless of their background, remains our defining mission. Our ambition is a long-term one and this report clearly shows significant progress has been made in the last five years.'

'We know that COVID-19 has made our ambition of achieving equity in education harder and I would like to thank all of our teachers and support staff for their extraordinary contribution and resilience shown throughout the pandemic.'

'We have put in place a comprehensive range of measures, supported by the £750 million Attainment Scotland

Fund, to turn the corner with the attainment gap. We have seen improvements across a number of indicators, including a narrowing of the gap between pupils from the most and least deprived areas achieving the expected level in literacy and numeracy. Longer term, we have also seen the gap narrow in initial positive destinations and the proportion of pupils achieving one pass or more at SCQF Level 5 and 6.'

'To mitigate against the impact of the pandemic, we are investing a record £200 million in the Attainment Scotland Fund in 2021-22, including an additional £20 million of Pupil Equity Funding.'

'We are also investing £50 million in the Challenge Authorities and Schools Programmes next year and will support the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund with more than £11 million. This is alongside £375 million in education recovery over this year and next to recruit additional teachers and support staff and address digital exclusion.'

'I am determined to continue to support our young people through these unprecedented times and the evidence from this report and the Equity Audit will guide our thinking for the next phase of the Scottish Attainment Challenge. Now, more than ever, there is a need to stay the course with our vision of equity and excellence.'

Pupils' performance

Looking at performance of pupils since 2009-10, the report also found:

- > the percentage of school leavers in a positive initial destination consistently increased between 2009-10 and 2018-19, for all leavers, and the gap in positive initial destinations also decreased in this period;
- > the gap between pupils achieving 1 pass or more at SCQF Level 5 has reduced from 33.3 percentage points in 2009-10 to 20.8 percentage points in 2019-20; and
- > the gap between pupils achieving 1 pass or more at SCQF Level 6 has reduced from 45.6 percentage points in 2009-10 to 36.1 percentage points in 2019-20

Gayle Gorman, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Chief Executive of Education Scotland, said:

'We are happy to see the improvements detailed in the report and it is heartening that nine out of ten schools have seen a recent improvement in closing the poverty-related attainment gap.'

'We recognise this work is more important than ever and the evidence from this report and the Equity Audit will inform the Scottish Attainment Challenge moving forward.'

Dougie Atkinson, Senior Professional Officer for Voice in Scotland commented:

'While we welcome the findings of this report, the education experiences of Scotland's young people have been brutally disrupted by COVID, and efforts will need to be redoubled if we are to avoid losing any further ground and ensure all Scottish pupils are given every opportunity to flourish equally.'

Read the report at: www.gov.scot/publications/closing-poverty-related-attainment-gap-report-progress-2016-2021



Teachers' Pay

Talks on teachers' pay continue. Voice and the other teaching unions submitted a pay claim for 2021 of 3-5%. The employers' umbrella body, COSLA, made an offer of a 2% uplift for those earning up to £40,000, and a 1% rise for those earning over £40,000 with a cap of £800.

The employers maintain that their offer is sufficient and equates to an overall pay rise of 1.2%. The unions disagree and pointed out that the recent 4% NHS pay offer was also a new consideration.

Commenting on the ongoing talks, Senior Professional Officer Dougie Atkinson said: 'It is disgraceful that the outstanding efforts of teachers in continuing to deliver high quality education during the pandemic have not been recognised when other public sector staff are being offered pay rises four times higher than teaching staff.'

'We will continue to press Scottish Government and the employer to properly recognise the worth of teachers' ongoing contribution.'

www.voicetheunion.org.uk/snct-pay2021

VOICE COMMUNITY SCOTLAND



A SAFER RETURN – LEADING BY EXAMPLE

From COSLA, ‘the voice of local government in Scotland’

As we all return to school and nursery settings, we know colleagues, children and young people, and parents and carers will feel anxious. Working closely together, we can all ensure that we minimise the risk to ourselves and to others. Key to this is leading by example and reminding ourselves and each other what can keep us safe.

What we can all do

Follow FACTS:

- > wear Face coverings;
- > Avoid crowds;

What you can expect in your workplace

There is no one mitigation measure or one-size-fits-all approach that will work. It will always be a package of measures that will protect and keep us safe both in work and in our personal lives.

You can expect and should see in place the facilities and direction on use of masks, cleaning, ventilation, social distancing and hand washing. This will be backed up by organisational, establishment and individual risk assessments appropriate to each setting and where essential for each person.

Trade unions have trained representatives to support workplace safety checks and will work closely

where required with colleagues in establishments.

You may also see the use of bubbles, and can expect regular health and safety inspections, including use of CO2 monitors along with practical advice and guidance available to address concerns.

There will be clear messaging and signage to remind everyone of their personal responsibilities and how to access professional and personal development and support during this time.

What to do if you are concerned

If for any reason you are concerned that a mitigation is not in place or being followed appropriately, you should in the first instance **contact your line manager** to raise the matter and discuss how it can best be resolved.

If you remain concerned, you should **contact your local HR or Health and Safety team** to seek advice or support.

You can also **raise your concerns with your trade union representative** who can offer advice and support in resolving the matter. (**Contact Voice Community Scotland: 01332 378 033 or scotland@voicetheunion.org.uk**.)

Should concerns remain, matters can be raised at a **council level through LNCTs and Joint Consultative Forums**.

By working together and through leading by example, we can ensure we are all safer at work.

Latest COSLA and Scottish Government updates

See www.voicetheunion.org.uk/news-media-issues/coronavirus-information-updated#Scotland



VOICE COMMUNITY NORTHERN IRELAND



THE CHILDREN RETURN – BUT SAFETY FIRST IS STILL NEEDED

By Chris Wilson, Chair of the Northern Ireland Executive Committee
(chriswilson@voiceactivists.org.uk).

Voice welcomed the considered and cautious phased return of children back to school in Northern Ireland during March and April.

It is important to note that the Department of Health continues to advise against the full resumption of usual practice, stressing instead the need for caution.

This is the best approach to take. Voice Community has always wanted to see all children, pupils and students back in education as soon as it was safe to do so. We are conscious of the damage that is being inflicted upon the life chances of children (especially to those from already disadvantaged backgrounds) but the safety of all must be paramount. The Health Minister, Robin Swann, has this right. Education Minister Peter Weir should heed the guidance from the medical establishment. Safety first is the best policy.

The delay in receipt of the weekly COVID test kits reinforces the need for care. The Department of Education (DE) had to acknowledge that there were issues relating to the delivery of testing kits to special schools. Testing using a rapid saliva test – known as the loop-mediated isothermal amplification (LAMP) test – should have been rolled-out in February, but did not begin until 15 March.



However, it is now well established in special schools – as lateral flow testing of staff and older students is in other schools. However, the Public Health Agency has warned that the wider testing of all staff and years 12-14 is likely to see a rise in the detection of cases.

In addition, staff working closely with the children in special schools – for prolonged periods of time – will be given priority for vaccination. This is welcome. But it does raise questions about the equity of not extending the same opportunities for vaccination to all parts of the education workforce, including those working in early years.

In January, Community General Secretary Roy Rickhuss wrote to Peter Weir to ask for all workers in the education and early years sectors to be given priority access to the coronavirus vaccine (www.voicetheunion.org.uk/news-media-issues/letters-call-priority-access-vaccine#Northern).

Taking all these developments in consideration, safety first is still needed.

Northern Ireland Executive Committee (NIEC) update

The NIEC has continued to meet – virtually – despite the challenges of the pandemic. I am pleased to report that we now have a new observer member, Catherine McCready, from the early years sector, who is seeking election to the committee. The elections close at the end of April, after this issue went to press.

It is encouraging to see the NIEC grow in breadth and knowledge. We now cover almost all the education workforce. We just need someone from further education. So, please, do get in contact if you work in FE and would like to join us.

We are a friendly bunch and ever keen to share insight and knowledge!



Latest COVID-19 updates:

www.voicetheunion.org.uk/news-media-issues/coronavirusinformationupdated#Northern

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