
BFAWU Womens Network meeting October 2023

Waspi Campaign

The campaign was touched on, we haven't had an update for a while on the campaign, the impact of the retirement age being moved from 60 to now 66 is massive for women who have had years stolen off them, the government keep moving back the retirement age, leaving women with less and less time to enjoy their retirement.

Carers

Taking inspiration from the Womens Council Of the Isles conference. Unpaid care work impacts millions of people, disproportionately women, who tend to have responsibility for children, parents and other family members. Carers, especially Kinship ones don't have the same rights as parents, employers have been known to discipline people for taking time off to care for sick parents in law, or don't recognise that taking on a family members child leads to the same issues as having your own children.

A discussion was had about how we can look at supporting carers more as a union, developing policy to protect time off and the right to return as those on maternity leave have, how we ensure that our members who need to take extended time off for caring duties, don't end up falling into arrears as a result, and whether as a union we could create a carers network so support is still there even when someone isn't at work.

Mentoring

A discussion was had about how we can keep those who are nearing, or have retired actively involved in the union, whether we could set up a mentoring programme, where these activists who have an abundance of experience and knowledge can support younger more inexperienced activists in their journey in the BFAWU and wider movement. Inspiring them, mentoring and even coaching them at times so that we have the foundations for future activists and leaders and build a culture of supporting others to grow.

It was agreed that mentoring would be a great idea, training, learning, making mistakes and learning from them is key, we all want to do our best for the membership and know that it is easier to get involved if someone reaches out to support.

Domestic Violence Policy

Internally the BFAWU have agreed to a domestic violence and abuse policy, the policy is attached to these notes and is encouraged to be used as a template for branches to approach their own employers with to begin discussions where similar policies and procedures do not currently exist.



Domestic Violence
and Abuse BFAWU.doc

Universal Credit Sanctions

The rules around Universal credit are changing, which is likely to mean lots of BFAWU members are impacted and potentially negatively.

This is because one million low paid workers will be forced to find higher-paid work or more hours – or they will be sanctioned! If you claim in-work benefits you could be at risk.

From Autumn 2023, there will be further changes to the government's in-work conditionality policy.



These changes will mean that around one million of the lowest paid UK workers could be penalised by the cruel and ineffective benefits sanction regime. Even those with childcare responsibilities will have to find more work or be sanctioned.

The government is demanding that low paid workers claiming Universal Credit must:

- Find more hours to work; or
- Find a better paid job.
- They must also meet more frequently with a Job Centre work coach.

Failure to meet these criteria will see workers sanctioned. This means that their incomes could be cut by up to £10.40 per day for a period of around 11-12 weeks.

The concerns are that meetings with job coaches could fall during existing work hours – putting current employment at risk.

The government changes to in-work conditionality for minimum-waged workers in receipt of Universal Credit are –

- An increase in the Administrative Earnings Threshold from 9 to 18 hours. People working below those hours will be treated as if they are unemployed.
- Universal Credit working claimants will be required to meet a work coach and look for more work or face sanctions from September 2023
- Lead carers of children will be required to meet a work coach and look for work or face sanctions.

Decriminalisation of the sex industry

There was a discussion around the unions position on decriminalizing the sex industry, it wasn't thought that there was conference policy on it, but we have supported workers in Bristol and other cities when campaigns have been run to protect venues, keep them open and not criminalise the workers within them. The discussion covered the fact that there is a Nordic Model and a full decriminalization model and how we need to be clear about which position we have as a union as there is still a huge lack of understanding. It was agreed we should be led by the membership, and learn from them, it was suggested that a motion to conference on the subject should be submitted so the debate could be had. The union is here to protect all workers, and no one should be criminalized for trying to earn a living.