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## BFAWU Disabled Members Network September 2025

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### **Workplace Issues**

#### **Accessible Toilets**

Issues were raised about accessible toilets in workplaces being abused and left in a mess, leading them to be closed off, it was agreed this was problematic as people rely on those toilets and should not be penalised due to them being openly accessible to all. There were a few ideas around how access to accessible toilets could be limited, through fobs, or access keys, though concerns were raised that most options would have unintended consequences of highlighting to other colleagues those needing to use accessible toilets but don't necessarily want others to know they do.

Where there are fobs already in the workplace to get around a site, all toilets could have fob access, this could potentially reduce the risk of people with a condition or impairment being identified and may also put others off defacing them.

How do we break down the stigma and barriers society places around disability, especially in a time of so much division?

Do we know as a union how many accessible toilets there are at sites, are they just in the reception area for visitors, or are there accessible toilets where workers have access to toilets throughout sites?

Are we aware of any other barriers in the workplace, such as step only access, heavy external doors that can be extremely difficult to open, signs being difficult to read due to the colours used in them? Historically we have concentrated on areas such as safety measures if a person is hard of hearing, ensuring that lights flash if the fire alarm goes off as well as a siren sounding, but it is probably the time now to look at other areas of our industry which may be creating barriers for people with conditions or impairments that both visible and not visible.

#### **Accessible parking**

Concerns were raised regarding the minimal number of accessible parking bays at workplaces and how they are often used by people who don't necessarily need to use them, meaning those that do are having to park further away, which can seriously impact their ability to fulfil their shift at work. There were some examples of site having removable bollards in place to prevent this happening, which sounds in theory like a good idea, however, this means that the person needing to use the accessible bay having to park up, go to reception for a key to unlock the bollard, remove it, park up and take the key back, which again can detrimentally impact the rest of their shift. Sometimes the bays are not in the right place, they are near reception almost designed for visitors rather than the workforce, which creates issues around usage

Are we clear as a union what sites have accessible bays, whether there are enough of them, and whether the people who need to use them can do?

We have a number of members who are experiencing the long term effects of Long Covid, who are perfectly able to fulfil their duties at work, but may struggle with walking to and from their car into site as that tires them out due to the affects of the Long Covid, do we know what is in place to support them?

#### **British Sign Language needs**

Whilst the union historically has done some great work supporting those who are hard of hearing with the implementation of additional safety measures, we have members who rely on BSL to communicate, but generally neither the union or their employer communicates in that way, when the Union Learn Fund was in place there was the ability to source training around this through the fund, but now it is not in place in England or Scotland this has become more difficult, though one branch has negotiated with their employer a BSL interpreter to attend site regularly to communicate with a couple of members who rely on BSL to communicate and are looking into what else can be done to support them. How do branches and the union more widely properly communicate with members in this situation, as just giving them a briefing document is not the same as communicating with them? We talk a lot about different languages, but BSL is rarely mentioned, how can we encourage activism, or adapt what we currently do so that we are not excluding anyone?

Do other unions have anything we can look to for guidance or inspiration?

A starting point would be to ensure that we caption everything and use Alt Text on all posts that include images so that they are as accessible as possible.

## **Awareness raising**

How do we raise awareness of different conditions and impairments as a union to try and remove some of the stigma attached to them? The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion calendar that is being drafted, may help to do this in some way, if we attach to the awareness days, weeks and months social media posts, blogs on the website and articles in the Foodworker we can help to encourage members to look out for symptoms of different conditions, as well as ensuring members are aware of their rights at work too..

A starting point could be to look at the following questions and get the information around branches so that we can look at what members have, and where there are gaps that need to be filled in provisions:

- ***How many accessible toilets are there at your workplace?***
- ***Are they just in the reception area for visitors, or throughout the workplace?***
- ***Are there any accessible parking bays at your workplace, if so how many?***
- ***Are they in the right place?***
- ***Are they misused?***