

Trades Union Councils' Programme of Work 2017/2018

Changing the world of work for good



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TRADES UNION COUNCILS 2017-2018 PROGRAMME OF WORK

The programme of work

Section 1 – Public Services

NHS

Since 2010 the Coalition and current Tory Governments have proved that the NHS is not safe in their hands. Austerity driven reductions in public spending mean Government funding has fallen well short of what the NHS needs.

Compared to many EU countries the UK continues to spend less of our Gross National Product (GNP) on health.

Every year since 2010 NHS staff have seen real terms pay cuts as well as increasing pension contributions despite a massive cut to their pension benefits. Other terms and conditions changes have also seen workers worse off.

Many NHS trusts are now in deficit with no prospect of getting back into surplus. This is a massive shortage of nurses and doctors and other professional staff. The result is closed A&E units, centralisation of key health services at fewer hospitals more and more miles apart and the closure of local and rural hospitals.

In addition, Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs) have been drawn up in conditions of secrecy imposed by NHS England; they will accelerate cuts and privatisation.

Trades Councils are urged to:

- continue campaigning against the Tories' attacks on our NHS and build the resistance alongside the NHS staff and their unions
- Sustained campaigning work in our communities in defence of the NHS
- oppose STP and support local mobilisations such as Save Liverpool Women's Hospital

The TUCJCC will:

- Produce a Trade Union Councils' easy-to-read guide on why the service is not safe in Tories hands
- Ensure Trades Councils can access Development Grant funding for work to defend the NHS in our communities.

Housing

In order to tackle the current housing crisis there needs to be a comprehensive set of policies and a plan of action put in place covering Housing Supply; Tenants Rights; and Action on Homelessness.

Trades Councils are urged to:

- Support campaigns for new council and social house building programmes
- Call for reinstatement of Council Direct Labour Organisations
- Support campaigning to end the 'right to buy'
- Campaign to abolish the cap on housing benefit
- Link in with tenants' organisations and campaigns against homelessness
- Exposing the negative effects on key workers in public services
- Urge Councils to undertake programme of repair and investment in existing council properties.
- Work with active campaigns such as ACORN, Generation Rent, Defend Council Housing, Axe the Housing Act, and community-led initiatives like Land Trusts, Co-Housing and Self-Build Cooperatives.
- encourage voter registration of homeless people with registration campaigns

Transport

Trades Union Councils continue to support the industrial campaigns of unions in the transport sector.

Trades Councils are urged to:

- Support Action for Rail and individual union campaigns on rail and bus transport.
- Support industrial action taken to oppose the introduction or extension of Driver Only Operations or other employer or government initiatives that would lead to a reduction in staffing or safety.

The TUCJCC will:

- Write to Rail North, relevant Metro Mayors demanding decisions to purchase rolling stock for Driver Only Operation are reversed and to publish responses to TUCs.

Public Spending

Ongoing reductions in public spending means that local authorities are facing yet another round of severe cuts, felt disproportionately in labour-led authorities in the least affluent parts of the country. Central government allocations to local authorities do not take adequate account of local need.

Trade Union Councils are urged to:

- actively support all trades' union opposition to the cuts
- mobilise support for campaigns against the cuts
- Call on the Council Labour Group members, Labour Party members and supporters to reject the cuts and lead a campaign for the Government to provide the resources that local people need.

The TUCJCC will:

- Promote the "Ten Pledges" of the Labour Leadership among affiliated members.
- Publicise our opposition to 'Austerity' and proposed budget cuts.

Section 2 – Employment Rights

Precarious Employment

The erosion of decent quality employment and its replacement with precarious, casualised work is prevalent across all sectors of the economy. From zero hours contracts, to bogus self-employment and extending agency work, vulnerability and insecurity are common characteristics of the experiences of many workers.

The TUC is campaigning for Great Jobs for All workers.

Trades Union Councils are urged to:

- Support the TUC's Great Jobs Campaign and union campaigns for decent employment standards
- Help to raise awareness of insecure work
- Help to promote employment rights
- Work with unions to expose employers who pay less than the NMW
- Campaign to improve rights for zero hour's contract workers and others on casual contracts
- initiate similar campaigns to Sheffield TUC's "Sheffield Needs a Pay Rise" campaign
- Take a lead together with their affiliated unions, and other organisations in developing strategies and action appropriate to their local area.

The TUCJCC will:

- call upon the TUC to urge the Labour Party to include outlawing of zero-hour contracts in their general election manifesto,

Health and Safety

Public spending cuts are impacting on the health and safety regulatory environment; local authorities have cut workplace inspections by 97% and by 2019/20 funding for the Health and Safety Executive will have been drastically reduced.

Trades Union Councils are urged to:

Commemorate International Workers Memorial Day with events open to the public and to use European Health and Safety Week as a way raising awareness of these issues.

Section 3 – Trade Union Organising

The decline in pay and conditions at work is directly related to falling union organisation at work. Far too many workers are struggling to survive on the bare legal Minimum Wage.

Hostility towards trades unions by many employers and a diminishing level of trade union and employment rights for UK workers make matters worse: Britain now has the lowest level of collective bargaining of any European country apart from Lithuania.

Trades Union Councils are urged to:

- Support local campaigns for decent pay and conditions at work
- Support union efforts to increase collective bargaining coverage
- Promote the value of trade union organisation
- Support initiatives to develop organising skills
- Invite trade unions to speak at trades councils meetings about organising campaigns in their area

Section 4 – Economic and Social Policy

The Brexit negotiations are underway. The TUC remains concerned that workers will continue to pay the price and is campaigning to protect jobs and investment and to maintain employment rights now and in the future.

The uncertainty about the future status of non-UK EU workers and increases in race-hate crimes is a major concern.

Trades Union Councils are urged to:

- Support public service campaigns
- Support campaigns against trade deals that lead to the detriment of workers
- Support fair treatment for migrant workers and anti-racism campaigns
- Support workers who challenge discriminatory practices at UK borders or related to migrant worker exploitation and abuse
- Support union campaigns to recruit and collectively bargain on behalf of migrant workers

Defence, Diversification and Jobs – Motion to Congress 2017

Conference welcomes the 'Lucas Plan' 40th Anniversary Conference held in Birmingham in November 2016 and agrees that the Plan was an idea from which we can learn much today.

The Plan was a pioneering effort by workers at arms company Lucas Aerospace to retain jobs by proposing alternative, socially-useful applications of the company's technology and their own skills. 40 years afterwards, we are facing a convergence of crises – militarism and nuclear weapons, climate chaos, and the destruction of jobs by automation – which mean that we have to start thinking about technology as political, as the Lucas Aerospace workers did.

However, in the 4 decades since the Plan was drawn up Britain's manufacturing industry has shrunk from 25% to 14% of GDP, with the 'defence' industry now representing 10% of all manufacturing. Britain cannot afford to lose any more manufacturing skills and capacity, and 'defence' workers are rightly concerned about the potential loss of jobs, for example if Trident replacement is cancelled.

In line with the outcomes of the Lucas Plan Conference, we therefore call on trades unions and the TUC to lobby the Labour Party to establish before the next general election a 'shadow' Defence Diversification Agency, to work closely with the Shadow Department for Industry in developing an overall national industrial strategy including the possibility of conversion of 'defence' capacity. The first task of this Agency would be to engage with plant representatives, trades unions representing workers in the 'defence' industry, and local authorities, to discuss their needs and capacities, and to listen to their ideas, so that practical plans can be drawn up for arms conversion while protecting skilled employment and pay levels. A key means for developing the national industrial strategy would be the National Investment Bank proposed by the Shadow Chancellor.

We also urge trades union councils, trades unions and the General Council of the TUC to assist the work of such a 'shadow' Agency if set up.

Welfare

The UK welfare benefit system remains under pressure for more cuts and is leaving already vulnerable people in desperate conditions. Thousands of workers are now using foodbanks on a regular basis.

Trades Union Councils are urged to:

- Raise awareness of the Welfare Charter
- Work with TUC Unemployed Workers Centres to campaign against benefit cuts and expose the negative impact of welfare reform
- To campaign for the abolition of the Universal Credit benefits system

The TUCJCC will

- Publicise and increase awareness of the Welfare Charter
- gather, and publicise evidence from TUC Unemployed Workers Centres from affiliated trades union councils, and others on the detrimental impact Universal Credit is having on workers and other claimants

Pension Provision

Women have been denied their rightful State pension at age 60 years without proper consideration to the effects this would have in their home life and personal welfare by denying them their rights to receive the State pension at the time they were expected to receive what they had been paying into for the whole of their working lives.

This is exacerbated by delayed access to the state pension at the expected time.

Trades Union Councils are urged to:

- Support campaigns to bring about legislation that prevents big business, private owners, governments and everyone else taking funds from pensions
- Support campaigns for fairer, more equal pensions

Racism and Inequality

Trades Councils are urged to:

- Speak out for equality, and against discrimination and harassment on the basis of ethnicity or religion.
- Support attempts to replace the Prevent agenda with a government anti-extremism strategy informed by trade unions and communities targeting all forms of domestic extremism not just that found in the Muslim community.

The TUCJCC will

- provide adequate briefings and information

BREXIT and the EU

Trades Union Councils are urged to lead our communities in setting out and campaigning for key issues under any BREXIT deal including collectively bargained terms and conditions for all workers including migrants

Section 5 – International

No to Trump

There is rightful outrage around Donald Trump's attempts to impose a travel ban on Muslims from a number of middle-east and African countries.

Trump's misogyny, xenophobia and racism threaten to take the world down the path which led to the 1930s rise of fascism and the horrors of the Second World War. His policies and statements are emboldening the far right, both inside and outside the USA, and will likely lead to more innocent victims like those who perished in the Quebec mosque attack in January. His state-sponsored far-right nationalism has echoes in Britain in the growing Tory/UKIP common demagoguery.

Trades Union Councils are urged to:

- Raise awareness about the extreme consequences of Trump's rhetoric and policies, leading to increased hate crime and community tensions
- Support campaigns organised to oppose a UK visit by Trump

Section 6 – Trades Councils

National Trades Councils Conference

It is noted that only around half of all trades councils attend annual conference and that, as a motion-based statutory conference, with the exception of the motion selected to be debated at Congress, the resolutions agreed inform the Trades Councils Programme of Work or are 'advisory' in their status.

The TUCJCC will:

- Explore financial support to increase the number of delegates
- Review the format of the conference to provide the right balance of keynote speakers, campaign successes, workshops and motions.

Trades Councils

Social, economic and political changes all impact on trade unions, their structures and processes as well as membership, and also on trades union councils. Trades Union Councils can be flexible to increase participation and engagement.

Trades Union Councils are encouraged to:

- Reach out to affinity organisations, such as NUS, anti-racism organisations, anti-poverty groups, etc.
- Run leaflet campaigns publicising trades council activities.
- Encourage trade unionists who are not delegates to attend Trades Council meetings as non-voting visitors

The TUCJCC will:

- Produce an up-to-date booklet should be produced, educating trades unions and the public on the work done by Trades Councils in recent years.