

# Disability Newsletter

## New Year Edition -January 2026



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### London & Eastern Disability History Month Event

#### Including amongst others:

- Martyn Gwyther EC Member for Disabled Members
- Steve O'Donnell Regional Secretary
- Nicola Redwood Dis Comm Member
- Dave Price chair of LE Dis Comm
- Paula Peters LE Community
- Marc Scheimann LE Dis Comm Member
- Mike Todd LE Faith workers
- Aisha Malik Smith LE Women's & Equalities Officer

### The Campaign so Far..

Here is a roundup of what we have been doing since our last newsletter.

National Disability History Month saw members share their stories with us. These stories will be published in our upcoming newsletters over the coming months.

We have also been busy filming videos with some of our disabled members which have been shared across Unite's social media platforms.

The Autumn budget day, saw Unite communities come out in force across the country and attend a rally in Westminster, to campaign against the benefits cuts and call for the redistribution of wealth in the U.K. To read the full report on Unite Live, please click [HERE](#).

Also during disability history month, your EC member for disabled members, Martyn Gwyther has attended a number of disability events to raise awareness of the threats and challenges facing disabled members. We will also be hitting the road with our disability roadshows, more details to follow soon.

The survey is doing fantastically well, the responses are currently in excess of 4000 member submissions. We particularly want to hear from our young disabled members. Due to the restrictions being placed on the age that you can apply for benefits, we fully understand that this can cause issues with you being able to continue with further education, so it is vital that we hear from as many young members as possible.

We are looking to end the survey at the end of January. Once ended, the results will be analysed and a meeting will be scheduled to present the results.

If you would like us to come to your branch meeting and discuss the disability campaign please get in touch.

**Do you have a story or a submission for the next newsletter? Please send your contribution to [Heidi.Drewett@Unitetheunion.org](mailto:Heidi.Drewett@Unitetheunion.org)**

# SAVE THE DATE! COME ALONG TO THE LAUNCH OF OUR ONLINE UNITE CARERS' NETWORK!



Connect, share, and support each other in your caregiving journey. Our new online community is here to provide:

- **Peer Support:** Share experiences with others who understand.
- **Expert Resources:** Access tips, advice, and guidance.
- **Events & Workshops:** Engage in virtual meetups and learning opportunities.

**JOIN OUR LAUNCH MEETING  
TO FIND OUT MORE:**

**When: Jan 29, 2026 7pm**

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://tinyurl.com/Unite-National-Carers-Network>

**Sign up today and be part of our Unite Carers' network!**

       
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## Are you Disabled ?

It is important you inform your local unite office, don't worry, we don't share this information outside of our organisation. Informing us of this means we can make sure that you are getting the right support and information that you need



## Disability History Month -Members Stories

### Buket's Story

Following an extremely abusive and traumatic childhood, I found myself in care at the age of 15.

At the age of 16, I met and married my husband. At 17 I had my first baby.

My husband moved us to the U.K. on the promise of a better and beautiful life, sadly this was not the case, he also started physically abusing me. I then had my second baby.

After 12 years I finally found the strength and courage to call the police and finally divorced my husband.

One day I woke up and I couldn't remember who I was or where I was, I was terrified.

I was diagnosed with several complex mental health conditions, relating to the trauma and abuse that I have suffered in my past.

At the time of my diagnosis, I had two young children and working full time and I had no support at all. It was recommended that I apply for PIP, this helped a lot because it took the pressure of me. As I did not want to go back to my husband, I never want to depend on a man ever again.

Now I'm 40, my children are in university, but life is no easier.

I have had many jobs because of my mental health conditions.

Recently I had a bad time with my mental health that required hospital admission and when I returned to work, I was treated like trash by my employer, they say they care about me and my health but they don't at all. I am just an issue for them.

## Phoebe's Story

I have spine and joint issues; I also have difficulties walking.

Until recently I was working full-time. My employer was not supportive. My ops manager did not like having a disabled employee. Getting a workstation assessment, which should be done by law, well, that was like pulling teeth. I needed a certain chair, but they never put this through access to work, so I was made do without.

My OT wanted me to work from home, but my employer refused saying they need to make sure that I am actually working. They put me in a room on my own with no access to a toilet or kitchen facilities. I had to beg to get a swipe button so that I could access these basic facilities.

I asked if I could use the management car park, but this was only allowed for one month, after this I was made to park in a public car park and walk. I requested that I work from a different site so that I could park at the door, I was told a flat no, because I could not be trusted to work from there, even though I could be trusted to run support groups from there!

It feels like a them and us situation, they all believe disabled people are cheating the system. Do they not realise that disabled working people also pay tax?

Motability cars are hugely expensive to adapt. Why are disabled working people governed by certain brands of cars that actually costs so much more to the taxpayer to make them fit for purpose, when we could just go and pick a car with the cheaper optional extras that we need, like heated seats for those with joint issues and heated windscreen so you don't need to scrape, automatic transmission with the auto park system. This would be so much cheaper in the long run for the taxpayer than the current system in place.

My pip assessment was the most degrading experience I have ever been through. I was interviewed by a physiotherapist who was asking me about my mental health. Really! As a registered Psychologist, I was disgusted. On one occasion I had a paramedic! There used to be a time when a proper doctor did your assessment, but this is no more. The system is set up to make you believe that you are cheating the system.

The reality is I would give anything to spend one day where I did not feel pain, stress or the risk of dislocation.

**If you find these stories upsetting or triggering and require any assistance please contact your local Unite office who can signpost you to additional help**



SCAN ME

**The disability Survey ends on the 31st January**

**To find out how to get involved please email**

**Equalities@unitetheunion.org**

**Heidi.Drewett@unitetheunion.org**

**Dave.Allan@unitetheunion.org**

**Martyn.Gwyther@unitetheunion.org**