

# Disability Newsletter

May - 2026 Issue 5



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## Rep Training Weekend



Reps from the Regional and National Disabled Members' Committees came together, in Birmingham for a weekend of focused campaign training. The motions raised at the Equality Conference were organised into four clear sub groups:

- **Workplace** — actions requiring implementation at workplace level
- **Unite** — actions to be taken forward within the union
- **Political** — actions requiring government level change
- **Public and Local Authority** — actions for local authorities and public bodies

Across the weekend, each group developed an initial campaign plan. On day two, after completing the training sessions, the groups revisited and redesigned their plans using the new tools and approaches they had learned.

With support from an Organiser, each group will receive the guidance and practical assistance needed to turn their plans into action.

Keep an eye out in up coming editions of this newsletter for collective actions that we would like you to take part in to support our campaigns.

# Campaigning in Action - Unite project group


Members of the Unite Project Group visited the Grimaldi Building at the end of April.

The Grimaldi Building, home to the RNIB headquarters, has won multiple awards for its inclusive design. Every aspect of the building has been created with **neurodivergent people and those with visual impairments** at its core, ensuring that accessibility is not an add on but the foundation of the entire space.



Dan Smith, Claire Bignell, Martyn Gwyther, Jason Cronin and Heidi Drewett visited the site for a full tour, gaining insight, information and practical ideas for improvements. The aim of the visit was to identify changes that can be implemented across Unite and to explore ways we can drive meaningful change at workplace level.

The building was truly remarkable. Every aspect of the building, from the ceilings to the floors and everything in between has been cleverly designed to be fully inclusive.

 The entire building is equipped with **Navilens technology**, allowing users to scan a code with their phone and instantly receive information about their exact location within the building. Navilens operates in two modes: an **informational mode** and a **directional mode**. When the organisation moved buildings, the old site displayed a Navilens code that guided users directly to the new location.

The **lighting system** has been designed with sensory accessibility in mind. Every room has lights that are not only dimmable but also have **adjustable colour temperature**, allowing individuals to tailor the environment to their needs. In the toilets, the lights **slowly rise to full brightness**, avoiding the discomfort of sudden, harsh lighting.

Throughout the building, the **flooring is tactile**, with walkways using a different texture from seating areas, kitchens and workspaces. This provides clear, intuitive navigation for visually impaired people.

Each floor is **colour-coded**, creating an additional layer of orientation support. The building even includes **left-handed and right-handed accessible toilets**, giving stroke survivors and others with mobility limitations the option that best suits their needs.

On the staircases, the handrails feature **embossed chevrons** that indicate how many steps remain before reaching the top or bottom, offering vital spatial awareness for visually impaired users.

Every room has sound proofing in the ceiling and walls that stop the sound bouncing around the room.

The list is not exhaustive. The takeaway from this visit is so vast and there is so much we can implement going forward to make buildings more accessible.

# Mental Health Awareness Week 11-17th May



Mental Health Education Courses  
Available Nationwide  
Check out the courses available in your area  
Here  
<https://www.unitetheunion.org/why-join/member-services/education/training-and-courses>

Unite the Union Trade Union Rep  
Mental Health and Work Tool kit Available here  
<https://www.unitetheunion.org/media/1764/gofal-unite-mental-health-toolkit-english-version.pdf>

Unite the Union  
Trade Union Rep Toolkit  
Mental Health and Work

**How are you?**

Produced in partnership with Gofal and the Wales TUC

Unite's Mental health Support Programme For Reps



**REACH US!**

(uk) 0808 196 2016  
(non-uk) 00353 1 518 0277  
(Text 'Hi' on whatsapp) 07418 360 780

(Scan to REGISTER FOR your digital wellness portal or visit)  
**UNITE.SPECTRUM.LIFE**  
**LOGIN?ORG=UNITE**

# Deaf Awareness Week 4th - 10th May

Unite the union

**DEAF AWARENESS WEBINARS**

13 MAY 2026 – 12.30PM and 6.00PM

**Join our Deaf Awareness Webinars**

Hosted by UNITE's Southwest Region's Disabled Members Committee, join our engaging online webinars focused on increasing Deaf Awareness and promoting inclusivity in the workplace. These webinars aim to empower members with practical tools and knowledge to better support the Deaf and hard of hearing community.

We will welcome speakers from the Deaf and hard of hearing community, UNITE the Union officials and activists, as well as from deafPLUS UK – a charity that provides specialist support for Deaf, Deafblind and hard of hearing community across the Southwest.

Wednesday, 13 May 2026

12.30 – 14.00      18.00 – 19.00

Register today: [tinyurl.com/UniteEQEvents](https://tinyurl.com/UniteEQEvents) or via the QR Code Below:

Fighting for **JOBS • PAY • CONDITIONS**

[unitetheunion.org](https://www.unitetheunion.org) [unitetheunion1](https://www.facebook.com/unitetheunion1) [@unitetheunion](https://www.instagram.com/unitetheunion) [unitetheunion](https://www.youtube.com/unitetheunion) [unitetheunion](https://www.linkedin.com/company/unitetheunion) [@unitetheunion](https://www.tiktok.com/@unitetheunion)

## Scanning C Pen Clarification

There has been a lot of questions regarding trialling C-pens and obtaining them.

Trials can only take place in a Unite Office, if you wish to trial one, please contact the education department at your local regional office to enquire if they have one available.

You can find all information about them at [WWW.SCANNINGPENS.CO.UK](http://WWW.SCANNINGPENS.CO.UK), if you wish to purchase one please email [Neilr@scanningpens.co.uk](mailto:Neilr@scanningpens.co.uk) / [Beki@scanningpens.co.uk](mailto:Beki@scanningpens.co.uk) and let them know you are a unite member.

Funding– Funding for a scanning pen can only be decided by your branch. Each branch has their own policies and procedures regarding hardship funding, therefore in order to obtain funding you must apply directly to your branch for this. Please contact you local office if you need contact details for your branch.

ARE YOU A CARER?

YOUR VOICE MATTERS.

We want to share the lived experiences of carers in our community.

Your story can help others feel seen and understood.

What does caring look like for you each day?

Where do you find support?

What barriers do you face?

If you'd like to contribute a story for our newsletter, please contact Heidi.

Email address on the bottom of the newsletter.

You can stay anonymous if you prefer.



### Seeing AI App

The free app from Microsoft for visually impaired People

The seeing AI App uses your phone camera to read out text as well as describing what it is seeing to you where that is your surroundings or photos you have on your phone already



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