**P23-24/100**

**Motion calling for Cardiff University to develop a Disability Policy with the trade unions**

Cardiff UCU notes:

* The University does not have an existing Disability Policy
* Policies and procedures relating to disability are dispersed in various places and do not have a consistent framing or approach. For example, the reasonable adjustments form is not grounded in the [social model of disability](https://blogs.cardiff.ac.uk/brennanpincardiff/learning-about-the-social-model-of-disability/) and ‘others’ the person seeking adjustments (we have raised this with the university and asked them to implement reasonable adjustment passports [date and link])
* Procedures are often unclear, and there is a lack of training for line managers on how to support staff with disabilities or staff requesting reasonable adjustments
* Many staff who request reasonable adjustments feel they have to wait too long for these to be implemented, with impacts on their health and wellbeing.[[1]](#endnote-1)
* 58.5% of respondents to Cardiff UCU EDI survey in 2023 who disclosed a disability or long-term illness reported having felt discriminated against while working at Cardiff University.[[2]](#endnote-2)
* The university sometimes wait for Access to Work grants to be awarded before starting to implement reasonable adjustments. This is not the procedure [outlined by ACAS](https://www.acas.org.uk/reasonable-adjustments), which states that ‘This [Access to Work] is not a substitute for the employer’s legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments or pay for them’.

Cardiff UCU believes:

* Our disabled colleagues deserve to be able to work with dignity
* The exclusion of our disabled colleagues due to the lack of progressive policies and practice is damaging to all staff and students
* The university must do more to support disabled workers
* Any costs associated with disability e.g. implementing reasonable adjustments should come from central university budgets rather than departmental budgets
* The university should have a dedicated and trained Disability Officer as a point of contact to discuss adjustments and proactively address day-to-day barriers and HR issues.

Cardiff UCU calls on the university to develop a dedicated policy to support disabled workers, in collaboration with the trade unions and disabled staff networks. This policy must be based on the **social model of disability** and should include elements on:

* [Disability leave and disability-related absences](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/7835/Disability-leave-briefing/pdf/UCU_disability_leave.pdf)
* Hidden/invisible disabilities
* A reasonable adjustments policy, with clear procedures for reasonable adjustments with the responsibility on the employer to implement these in a timely manner, recognising that delays are contrary to staff’s dignity at work and wellbeing.[[3]](#endnote-3)

Alongside and in addition to the policy, there should be elective training and detailed guidance for staff with line manager responsibilities, disability equality training for all staff based on the social model of disability, workplace awareness raising campaigns including awareness of discrimination by association, and improved monitoring of disability equality in the workplace, including monitoring and publicising reasonable adjustments that are in place.[[4]](#endnote-4) The university should also make available common software for disabled staff, as well as making more easily available common assistive technology (e.g. mice for people with arthritis).

1. Cardiff UCU’s EDI survey in 2023 found that a common experience was the difficulty and length (e.g., 3 years) in accessing reasonable adjustments pertaining office equipment, working flexible hours, teaching times, or workload. Many participants also felt belittled when asking for such adjustments, with described behaviours including “made to feel guilty” and “being shouted at”. There were also mentions of requests for sick leave being rejected. Analysis of responses suggest high heterogeneity in how requests for reasonable adjustments are addressed by line managers, meaning individual situations can improve or deteriorate significantly when line managers change. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Open-ended answers reflected that people affected by disability feel they are highly discriminated against compared to abled colleagues. Behaviours listed spanned a range of situations that included micro-aggressions to being actively pushed out of their jobs by their head of schools. These and other discriminatory behaviours (e.g. reasonable adjustments as above) were reported to have real consequences for affected people, mainly in terms of mental health, and sometimes leading to long-term sick leave. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Reasonable adjustments in organisations – guidance for best practice. September 2021. The Law Society of England and Wales and its Lawyers with Disabilities Division; and ‘Legally Disabled?’ team,

   Cardiff University Business School. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/disabled-solicitors/reasonable-adjustments-in-organisations-best-practice-for-disability-inclusion> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)