



report from the TUC

High profile describes ACM's presence at the Trades Union Congress (TUC) held in Brighton on 8–11 September 2003. The Association's motions on pensions, older learners and workforce development were all overwhelmingly supported by conference.

What ACM called for

Pensions

- To resist the implementation of a common pension age of 65 across the public sector
- To campaign for an end to public sector scheme rules that discriminate between married and unmarried couples

Older learners

- To review the needs of older learners, and to identify strategies and resources aimed at improving participation in education and training by people aged 55 and over

Workforce development

- To ensure that the new National Skills Strategy brings sufficient additional resources to enable colleges and other providers to develop and deliver education and training to world-class industry standards
- To ensure that employers participate by setting clear time limits for their voluntary participation – after that date compulsory measures should be introduced that require all employers to deliver their training obligations to their workforce

Turn to page 2 to discover how ACM is securing your rights and working to improve the learner experience.

report from the tuc

the story behind the motions

Pensions

Speaking on the pensions composite motion, Peter Pendle, ACM General Secretary, said: 'When the *TES* broke the news about a possible increase in the retirement age for members of the teachers' scheme from 60 to 65 our phones didn't stop ringing. No other issue has caused so many members to contact our head office in a single day. There was a fair amount of panic. No one welcomed the idea; all expressed concern.

'The impact of this move will affect more than just individuals. Colleges already find it difficult enough to recruit and retain qualified lecturers and managers. Low pay, poor job security and high levels of stress mean that many leave early. If they know they will have to work for another five years, the problem will only get worse. I have no doubt, therefore, that this will prove to be a very unpopular measure.'

ACM's motion also attacked pension scheme rules that favour married couples and discriminate against unmarried partners. This is a characteristic of many public sector pension schemes.

Speaking at the conference Peter Pendle said: 'It seems almost inconceivable that in a modern society, where people have more choice over their lifestyle, that we still have one set of rules for married couples and another for unmarried partners. Take widows' and widowers' pensions. Despite living as a couple, if you were not married to your partner then your partner won't get a pension. If you were married, then they will. This is wrong and it must be changed.'

Older learners

ACM's motion on older learners reported that in 2021, the over 55 age group will constitute 40% of the UK population – 20 million people. According to recent research, about a quarter of all adults are currently in education. However, only one in nine older learners is currently learning.

Conference was told to forget the stereotype of what older learners like to study. They are more likely to be studying modern languages than other groups of learners, and no other group is more interested in learning how to use computers. Among their top arts course choices are film, photography and video.

Older learners are the neglected cohort in the equal opportunities and social inclusion debates. Resources invested in policies will generally be expected to yield economic and political benefits – social impact alone or individual personal development will not cut the mustard. Politicians seem to think that though the individual benefits of promoting learning for older people may be considerable, the economic and political returns are relatively small when compared with investing in people with long working lives ahead of them. This is a blinkered view and in ACM's opinion, politicians underestimate the returns on improving the participation of older people.

The returns are far from negligible, and as that cohort of the population expands, numerically and relatively due to earlier baby booms and improved longevity, so the returns on investing in older learners will increase. About one-third of unemployed people over the age of 50 would like to be in work. Finding work benefits not only individuals, but also transforms them into net contributors to the economy. And yet people in this age group looking for a job often need to reskill or update their skills, particularly where, as is often the case, their joblessness is due to the decline of a traditional occupational sector.

'Older learners are the neglected cohort in the equal opportunities and social inclusion debates'

Workforce development

ACM's final motion acknowledged the government's commitment – demonstrated through the abolition of fees and the introduction of grants – to expanding education entitlements and opportunities for adults with no or few qualifications, but also said that we must press the government for further radical measures.

The government must set limits to voluntarism in respect of employers' responsibilities for the development of their workforce. We asked the TUC to call on the government to set clear time limits for the voluntary participation of employers. After that, compulsory measures should be introduced that require all employers to deliver their training obligations to their workforce.

The motion also said that, in addition to the limits on employer voluntarism, it was vital that the new strategy brings sufficient additional resources to enable colleges and other providers to develop and deliver education and training to world-class industry standards.

Lobbying

During the week ACM delegates also had the opportunity to lobby several government ministers including Secretary of State for Education, Charles Clarke; Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Higher and Further Education, Alan Johnson; and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ivan Lewis.

TUC's Public Sector Liaison Group

ACM has been allocated a place on the TUC's influential Public Sector Liaison Group, which will consider issues that will be raised with senior government ministers through the Public Sector Policy Forum. The work of the Liaison Group will focus on how the public sector can improve performance. Major issues considered so far include recruitment and retention problems, pensions and reducing bureaucracy.

ACM conference 2004

Prosperity through learning: practical skills and policy vision for leaders

Thursday 25 and Friday 26 March 2004
Solihull, Birmingham

The 2004 ACM conference offers college managers significant professional development opportunities.

The conference will focus on the development of management skills by offering an exciting variety of skills training sessions including:

- career progression tips and advice
- discipline issues and grievances: investigating the problem
- course and resource planning
- understanding and developing your leadership style
- a college approach to preventing work-related stress.

In addition to the above, top policy-makers and thinkers will address delegates on the importance of visionary leadership. Chris Hughes, Chief Executive, LSDA; Barry Sheerman MP, Chair of the Education and Skills Select Committee; Ann Limb, Chief Executive, Ufi Limited; and Brendan Barber, TUC General Secretary, are among those that have confirmed their attendance to date.

College and sector leaders who want to understand and shape the future of the sector will not want to miss this conference.

Further information is available on the ACM website www.acm.uk.com

sector news

no time for complacency



The sight of a trainee police officer openly expressing racist views was sickening. Yet racism is a problem affecting many sectors of society, and colleges are not immune. Indeed, the revelations of BBC One's programme, *The secret policemen*, show us exactly why we should never be complacent. Having policies to tackle institutional racism and individual bigotry is not enough. Steps must be taken to turn policy into practice.

Since May 2002 colleges have been required to have a written policy to promote race equality. They should, therefore, have in place arrangements to:

- assess the impact of their policies, including their race equality policy, on students and staff of different ethnic groups
- monitor the admission and progress of students and the recruitment and career progression of staff in relation to ethnicity
- publish the results of their assessment and monitoring
- publish annually the action they are taking in relation to meeting their duties.

To help, the Commission for Racial Equality has produced *Code of practice on the duty to promote race equality: a guide for institutions of further and higher education* (2002), which provides guidance for colleges on what they should do to meet these duties. But is any real progress being made?

Racists may not operate openly in our colleges, but their ignorant and bigoted views haven't gone away.

ACM is urging colleges to take every practical step to tackle the problem. Regular diversity training, positive action where monitoring has highlighted a problem, mandatory induction for all new staff on equal opportunities issues and practice, support for anti-racist events, information for staff and students on race equality issues, and improved links with the community. These are just a few examples.

Indeed, there is plenty of good practical information available to help colleges put policy into practice. For example, the Commission for Black Staff in FE has just published a good practice guide on staff development. This is the third such guide that has been circulated free to colleges, the others being on recruitment and selection, and on retention and progression.

The Race Relations Act itself has been updated by new regulations introducing, among other measures, a definition of harassment. Together with the new regulations on religious discrimination that take effect next month, colleges have a clear legal incentive to tackle racism and bigotry.

Sadly there will be those who just pay lip service to race equality; and there will be some who claim it is yet more political correctness. But if turning policies into practical measures can help in the fight against racism then ACM is proud to be politically correct.

LSC consultation on changes to FE funding

Members involved with funding will be aware that the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has published a circular consulting on proposals to make radical changes to the FE funding approach (Circular 03/15, *Funding: plan led funding for FE*). This has resulted from the work of the LSC's Funding Simplification External Advisory Group, on which ACM General Secretary, Peter Pendle, has represented the Association. Key changes proposed in the consultation document include:

- a more transparent relationship between funding and key aspects of planning
- an end to retrospective clawback
- replacement of the current separate funding audit with a simpler 'regularity audit'
- lightening of the administrative load for 'well-managed colleges'
- an element of block funding
- measures to make the funding system easier to operate with the abolition of immediate census dates
- abolition of franchise discounts.

As always, when considered in detail the proposed changes may not look quite as attractive as first thought. ACM will be responding to the consultation document and invites the views of members. Council members will consider an initial draft response in early December, so please send your views to Peter Pendle at peterpendle@acm.uk.com

Centre for Excellence in Leadership

The new 'leadership college' for further education and lifelong learning was finally launched in October. ACM has campaigned long and hard for such provision and lobbied for the new centre to support all managers and not just senior post-holders. ACM believes that it is vital for newly appointed and middle managers to be developed to give them the leadership and management skills to excel and become the senior managers of the future. We also campaigned to ensure that the new centre was used to address under-representation by various groups at senior levels in colleges. The Centre appears to have taken both these issues on board.

ACM will continue to run its own continuing professional development events for college managers including the 'Masterclass' series for new and middle managers, in association with Hay Group.

General Secretary, Peter Pendle, has been appointed to the Centre for Excellence in Leadership's Policy Advisory Board and would welcome any views or feedback from ACM members on the Centre's activities and provision.

Praise for ACM media training

Sue Ransom, Principal, Dearne Valley College, writes:

Tess Woodcraft is such a highly skilled professional that in just one day it is possible to learn a great deal. As well as background information and general discussion we all got to 'have a go' at both a radio and television interview, then to listen and view and discuss our 'performances'. For our TV interviews, we all chose potentially difficult situations made more challenging by Tess's realistic tough questioning. I was floored by her opening, 'The college is in a mess, isn't it?'

Just two weeks after the training session, I found myself dealing with the media when a student ran away from a residential visit and was missing for five days. I hadn't anticipated putting theory into practice so soon. My learning from the day was invaluable; we would have coped but I felt better prepared and more confident in supporting the staff.

The event is especially useful for members who deal with the media to promote as well as to defend their college. Thank you, ACM.

acm responds

Extracts from ACM's response to the Skills Strategy White Paper, *21st century skills realising our potential*.

The Association welcomes:

- the creation of an entitlement to a Level 2 qualification for all adults (ACM has long campaigned on this issue; its motion to last year's TUC conference was carried overwhelmingly)
- the creation of opportunities for young adults to gain Level 3 qualifications in skills shortage areas
- the piloting of an adult education maintenance grant
- the creation of the Skills Alliance, reflecting the role for social partnership in the delivery of the Skills Strategy
- the proposals for expanding and strengthening the role of union learning representatives
- the development of unitisation and a credit framework for adult qualifications
- the strengthening and expansion of Modern Apprenticeships
- the recognition of the need to protect a wide range of adult learning programmes which offer personal learning, development and fulfilment
- the intention to ensure improved information, advice and guidance for adults
- the recognition of ICT as a basic skill.

The Association wishes to raise the following points of concern and would welcome all opportunities for further dialogue and development.

It is vital to the success of these proposals that the new strategy brings sufficient additional resources to enable colleges and other providers to develop and deliver education and training to world-class industry standards.

The emphasis on regional skill strategies is welcome. However, there is a multiplicity of agencies working at regional and sub-regional levels. We have three concerns here:

1. There is a need for coherent leadership and coordination. The present structures – the LSC, local LSCs, Regional Development Agencies, local Learning Partnerships – may jostle for resources and influence, diverting energy and resources away from the real goals.
2. All the regional and sub-regional agencies absorb substantial resources. If there are more agencies than are needed to achieve the task in hand, then resources that could be directly targeted at upskilling adults are lost in bureaucracy.
3. There is a lack of clarity about what constitutes the strategic area. Local LSCs have a remit for particular areas; the remit of the Regional Development Agencies is geographically wider. The Association calls for clarification on the roles, relations and responsibilities of the regional and sub-regional agencies.

While we welcome the recognition of the value of adult learning programmes that offer personal learning, development and fulfilment, there is no commitment of resources or clear targets associated with this proposal.

We are concerned that this aspect of the policy should not turn out to be mere lip service to a worthy ideal. That ideal will only be delivered if specific policies and resources are dedicated to making it happen.

We welcome the intended reforms to the adult curriculum. Rationalisation of the plethora of vocational qualifications is long overdue; furthermore much greater flexibility around employers' particular needs is necessary. New funding arrangements should closely articulate with this curriculum framework, making it possible for providers to deliver just the training employers require and to be funded for that training.

We have been heartened to hear hints from officials that government is considering limits to voluntarism in respect of employers' responsibilities for the development of their workforce. We call on government to ensure that participation by setting clear time limits for the voluntary participation of employers. After that date, compulsory measures should be introduced that require all employers to deliver their training obligations to their workforce.

ACM believes that educational institutions in common with government should lead by example in respect of workforce development, and ensure that opportunities embrace all employees and are not confined to professional staff.

The Association's response to the report of the Tomlinson Working Group on 14–19 reform (*Principles for reform of 14–19 learning programmes and qualifications*) can be viewed on the ACM website.

England

AoC told 'we accept the pay offer'

All the FE National Joint Forum trades unions have advised the Association of Colleges (AoC) that they have accepted the pay offer. It is expected that AoC will announce the outcome shortly. The unions will be undertaking a campaign to encourage all colleges in England to implement the settlement in full, including a 3% increase with effect from 1 August 2003 plus a further 0.5% backdated to 1 April 2003. Colleagues in colleges where the settlement has not been implemented should contact the ACM Office in Leicester for advice and assistance.

Discussions are about to commence to consider arrangements for job evaluation, performance management and the introduction of job families. Regular updates will be available on the ACM website.

Scotland

Public Sector People Management Expo

Wednesday 18 and Thursday 19 February 2004
Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre –
Glasgow

This event for everyone associated with Scottish public sector 'people' issues comes at a crucial time for the nation's numerous public sector departments, agencies and organisations. For whatever their activity, size or location, all Scottish public sector employers are facing a common challenge: how to recruit, equip, retain, train and motivate their workforce while responding to an ever-changing modernisation and reform programme (*21st century government/the Joint Future programme/ Agenda for change*, to name a few).

Through main plenary sessions, seminars, interactive workshops and an informative on-site exhibition, the Public Sector People Management Expo 2004 will provide an ideal opportunity to view, listen and learn about the latest in people management ideas, initiatives and good practice.

For further information contact Roger Tolman at the Public Service Partnership Ltd on 0161 975 6292 or by email at rtolman@pspltd.org

Wales

Steps taken to align pay differentials

The FE National Joint Forum trades unions in Wales are finalising a joint claim to submit to employers in November. The bid calls for an increase of at least 3.5% from 1 April 2004, the maintenance of differentials for managers, and increasing the bottom of the management spine in line with those in sixth form colleges and schools. Further updates will appear on the ACM website.

ACM to extend its activities in Wales

ACM membership in Wales continues to grow. With the impacts of devolution and the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales, it is becoming apparent that ACM needs to review and develop its organisation in Wales and the services provided to its members.

The first stage will be to review and reorganise the ACM Wales Executive to ensure wider representation from all branches and to enable the Association to be more responsive to developments from the Assembly and funding bodies. A separate negotiating body already exists in Wales and it is vital to ensure that managers' views are put forward in a coherent and timely fashion. One option being considered is to appoint a caseworker with specific responsibility for Wales.

Over the next few months proposals will be developed for consideration by ACM's National Council. ACM branches and members in Wales will be consulted and have an opportunity to put forward their views.

ACM events

2/3/04 | Birmingham

Bullying at work

Bullying is a serious issue that can have serious consequences. This course looks at the nature and effects of bullying and what can be done to tackle the problem.

Members £70

Non members £100

27/4/04 | Birmingham

Basic employment law

This course is aimed at anyone wanting to understand the very basics of employment law. It will look at employment contracts, laws relating to pay and conditions, and unfair dismissal.

Members £70

Non members £100

11/5/04 | London

Work-related stress

Discover the hazards that might lead to stress in the workplace and consider the organisational and practical steps that can help reduce or prevent work-related stress.

Members £70

Non members £100

8/6/04 | Leeds

Disciplinary and grievance training

This training event will look at best practice in dealing with grievances and disciplinary matters and will cover issues such as the law, use of procedures, investigations and the conduct of hearings.

Members £70

Non members £100

For further details and a booking form for any of the above events, please contact us on 0116 275 5076 or by email at events@acm.uk.com

2004 subscription notification

Enclosed with this newsletter is your subscription notification. Please ensure you read it and take the appropriate action. We would be most grateful if you would also take this opportunity to advise us of any change to your contact details.

September Council report

The ACM National Council met in Leeds on Friday 26 and Saturday 27 September. Consideration was given to funding simplification and areas of concern were raised that would be taken up with the LSC. Initial discussions were held regarding possible improvements to the case-worker service aimed at strengthening support for branches and regions; detailed proposals would be placed before Council at its next meeting to be held on 23 and 24 January 2004.

Council members received an hour-long session on media awareness presented by Tess Woodcraft of the Centre for Strategy and Communication. The session was both interesting and informative and highlighted many areas to be aware of when dealing with the press.

The Education and Employment and Services Committees met on the Friday and concluded their business on Saturday morning. Funding simplification, the pay award, the Tomlinson consultation, changes to NVQ dates, the helpline and caseworker service and the leadership college were some of the topics discussed by the Committees.

In-house training from ACM

ACM can provide in-house training to colleges at a very reasonable cost. Our portfolio consists of training on work-related stress, disciplinary and grievance, media, performance management, emotional intelligence, coaching and mentoring, and strategic skills for middle managers.

For further information on any of these topics, please visit our website www.acm.uk.com

Request for an ACM information pack and application form

I am considering joining ACM, please provide me with further information.

Full name

Job title

Name of organisation and address

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Tel 0116 275 5076 Fax 0116 255 0548

Email membership@acm.uk.com Web www.acm.uk.com