



The journal of the Unity Trades Union

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Rhonda is Denby's learning champion



Our new union learning representative (ULR) at Denby Potteries, Rhonda Chauntry, (pictured left) has a mission to improve the prospects of her fellow workmates.

The mother-of-two is keen to spread the word about how improved literacy and numeracy can help when it comes to gaining promotion or applying for a new job.

"I left school when I was 16 with just a single CSE Grade 1," said Rhonda, a lithographer. "I am now 42 and want to better myself, and also take a few people along with me. The greatest need here is for some people to improve their English language and maths skills."

Rhonda said she volunteered for the

position after being approached by the company's HR department. "The existing ULR worked nights and found it difficult to carry out the role, so I decided I would have a go.

"I have worked here for seven years and know most people on the factory, and I find it easy to approach people."

Rhonda has completed the five-day first stage of the ULR course, which is provided by the union, and is now keen to start on Stage 2. She would also like to take the health and safety course.

Perspective

"I can't believe just how much I learned on the first stage of the course. We had to work in teams which gave me a great perspective on the way we work here.

"Gaining extra qualifications has to be a good thing when you go for promotion or if you apply for a new job."

Rhonda said she was well supported in her new role by the company and its training provider, AXIA Solutions.

She also had praise for Unity's ULF project manager Gerald Crookes. "The key to being a good ULR is having a high level of back-up and Gerald is just great and always approachable," she said.

"If you are interested in workplace learning or in becoming a ULR, please contact Gerald at head office on 01782 272 755 or geraldcrookes@unitytheunion.org.uk.

Agency workers benefit from new equal rights

Hundreds of thousands of agency workers across the UK will benefit from improved working conditions after the new equal treatment rights for temps came into effect on 1 October.

Unlike fixed-term employees and part-time workers, until now agency workers have not had a right to the same pay and holiday rights as directly employed staff in the same workplace. This lack of rights has left them open to abuse, says the TUC.

Nearly half (46 per cent) of the agency workers who responded to a YouGov survey commissioned by the TUC said they received less holiday entitlement than permanent staff. One in three (33 per cent) reported getting less pay for doing the same work as directly employed staff and nearly one in three (28 per cent) said they lost out on overtime and unsocial hours payments. According to the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the average agency worker gets five days less holiday a year than permanent employees.

The LFS also found that temps earned on average 68 per cent of the pay of permanent workers - a 32 per cent pay gap.

However, following years of campaigning by unions, including Unity, agency workers will now benefit from new, improved rights at work.

From the first day of an assignment, agency temps will have a right to use any facilities provided by the hirer - such as

a canteen. They will also be entitled to information about internal vacancies at the company they are working for, and to be given the opportunity to apply for them.

After 12 weeks in the same role with the same hirer, agency workers will be entitled to the same pay, holiday entitlement and working hours as permanent staff, and they will also receive improved maternity rights.

The TUC believes these rights will help stamp out some of the exploitation that agency temps have faced at work, will help young workers gain a stepping stone into permanent employment and protect the well-being of pregnant agency workers.

Unity General Secretary Geoff Bagnall said: "These new rights for agency workers are an important step forward in helping agency temps get a fairer deal at work.

"For too long, agency workers have faced discrimination at work. They are frequently paid less, are required to work excessive hours with no overtime pay, and are entitled to less holiday

than directly employed workers doing exactly the same job.

"Some rogue employers have used temps to undermine the terms and conditions of existing workforces, replacing permanent staff with agency workers on lower pay, with no security, no training, no sick pay, minimum holidays and no pension provision.

"But thanks to hard campaigning by unions, including Unity, this will change. Now, after 12 weeks in the same role with the same hirer, the law will require agency temps receive equal pay for the job they do and to receive some of the same rights as permanent staff working alongside them."



Deal to secure 150 jobs signed

Unity has welcomed the purchase of the former Ideal Standard factory in Middlewich by Hong Kong-based manufacturer HKR International's Imperial Bathrooms Group.

The Cheshire factory closed in June leaving almost 250 people, many of them Unity members, out of work. Imperial Bathrooms plans to create 150 jobs by next May at the factory, which will reopen shortly.

Imperial bosses say the move is aimed at giving the firm a manufacturing base in Europe. They chose the site because of the traditional manufacturing skills in the Potteries and the North West.

Managing Director Jan Klomp said: "Now the industry is faced with fast rising wages in Asia, high energy charges in China and very high transport costs, it makes it possible for sanitary ware to be made in the UK at almost the same cost as in the Far East".

Unity General Secretary-elect Harry Hockaday said: "In January I was approached by Mr Klomp of HKR International requesting a meeting with Unity over difficulties they were experiencing in their attempted purchase of the Ideal Standard manufacturing site at Middlewich.

"Unity is delighted that the outcome some nine months later has resulted with the re-opening of the site, providing employment for many of our redundant members from Ideal Standard and Twyfords".