

## Ask the experts

I was recently diagnosed as suffering with symptomless pleural plaques. I have been told that compensation is no longer available. Could you explain the current situation?

Pleural Plaques occur when the lining of the chest becomes scarred. Until very recently any member suffering from symptomless pleural plaques was entitled to compensation. However, some of the big insurance companies funded a 'test case' to the House of Lords. This is commonly known as the 'Rothwell Case' and the decision of the House of Lords was to change the previous position.

Now, any member suffering from symptomless pleural plaques will not be entitled to compensation.

Unity has however made representations to the government suggesting that 'no fault compensation' would be appropriate in the future. Essentially this means that if any member is diagnosed with this disease they will automatically obtain compensation without having to prove that their employer or previous employer was in any way at fault.

We will have to wait and see what response we get from the government.

**Do you have a question about a work problem that you would like answered? Send it to: Problems, Unity News, Unity, Hillcrest House, Garth Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 2AB. Your name will not be revealed if your question is published.**

# Resolving problems at work made easier

From April, a new streamlined process for resolving disciplinary and grievance issues came into effect. The main aim of this is to reduce the number of people going to employment tribunals by simplifying the system for dealing with workplace disputes.

Minister for Employment Relations, Pat McFadden said: "Tribunals can be costly, time-consuming and draining for people and businesses alike.

"We have changed the rules so that employers and employees will have greater flexibility to deal with grievances and disciplinary issues at work at the earliest opportunity. ACAS's expanded helpline and conciliation services will play a key role in delivering this".

Employees and employers will be able to call the ACAS helpline for impartial and confidential advice on the options available for resolving workplace problems. They will also be able to access a free early conciliation service for certain types of cases, with the aim to reduce the need for people to enter into full tribunal procedures.

Following the passage of the Employment Act 2008, a number of obligations on employers and



employees when dealing with workplace issues have now been removed.

The previous system, which instructed employers to follow a mandatory three-step system in resolving disputes, will be dismantled and employers will instead develop systems which best suit their workplace. ACAS has developed a statutory code of practice to set out best practice guidelines for employers.

Unity general secretary Geoff Bagnall said: "It is always best if employers, employees and their union reps can fairly resolve problems in the workplace. These new dispute resolution arrangements rightly focus attention back on internal grievance and disciplinary procedures."

● *Members with a disciplinary or grievance issue should speak to their Unity works representative or call head office on 01782 272755.*

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

# Hope not hate

Dear friend,

Equality, fairness, solidarity and justice are at the heart of the trade union movement. It's why I'm proud to come into work every day - and it's why our movement is so important.

The BNP fundamentally opposes all of these values -

they believe in division, hate and oppression. Only recently, the BNP's leader Nick Griffin said that immigration has been a "bloodless genocide" and that black and Asian Britons "do not exist." Truly horrific statements - and ideas that threaten all of us.

I'm already part of "Hope not Hate" - the campaign that's committed to stopping the BNP. I'd like you to join us.

You'll be sent a few emails a month asking you to do a few really simple things. The campaign has already had an big impact - because there are so many people taking part, we've already got some great results. All through people power.

**Unions Together**

[www.unionstogether.org.uk](http://www.unionstogether.org.uk)

And the stakes really couldn't be higher. Trade unionists have a unique role to play in this campaign - Hope not Hate is even running union specific events across the country. You can make a huge difference - why not sign up now?

For more information visit <http://action.hopenothate.org.uk/tulo>

This is a campaign we can win - and can't afford to lose.

Thank you.

Helen Symons

unionstogether  
info@unionstogether.org.uk

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contact your Union Representative for details

## Compensation payout for injuries totals £300,000

Last year the union was successful in recovering around £300,000 in personal injury claims on behalf of its members.

The money was paid out to 90 members. The highest individual settlement, of £20,000, went to a member who had developed repetitive strain injury due to the nature of their work.

Unity general secretary Geoff Bagnall said: "The 2008 figure, although high, was considerably down on the 2007 total as we now have fewer members.

"Pursuing successful personal injury claims for our members is just one of the many benefits there are of belonging to the union."