

## Above-inflation pay rise for our Corus members



**Roy Rickhuss, national secretary**

Community has won a 4% pay rise – more than the rate of inflation – for members working in the two main divisions of steel giant Corus.

Members in the steel strip and long products divisions will receive a 4% increase across the board, including wages, bonus payments and shift payments – all backdated to 1 April this year.

'This 4% increase represents a significant step forward for both Community and Corus,' said national officer Roy Rickhuss.

'The agreement means real wage

growth, a real difference in the pay packet of our members. Negotiated by unions led by Community as the largest union, this agreement recognises the value of Corus employees and their contribution to the company's success.'

Lay delegates representing members in the strip and long products branches approved the deal on 9 June, and members are already benefiting. This isn't the case in other unions which have to go through complicated procedures. 'We believe our way is better,' Roy said. 'Members in the branches elect their lay delegates who are experienced and can decide if a deal can be ratified or not. Our union, and our members, trust them – they have a track record of achieving the best deals possible.'

Corus has also agreed to set up a joint working party to examine the findings of the earlier Family Friendly report. 'We hope that this will result in the implementation of the report's recommendations, making Corus a more family-friendly workplace,' Roy added.

Community has also secured an agreement from Corus to set up a working party to discuss the feasibility of a national learning agreement. Such an agreement could enable more members to attend courses to improve their skills or learn new ones.

Roy said: 'The success of Corus is due to the high quality of the goods it produces, thanks to the skills of its workforce. To ensure the future competitiveness of the industry as well as job stability for Community members, the union believes it is important for Corus to begin constructive talks on this issue. The agreement to set up a working party is an extremely positive development and we look forward to working together with the company.'

Corus has set up a series of meetings to review current bonus arrangements. 'We know how important the current bonus system is to our members,' Roy Rickhuss said, 'with up to 23% of take-home pay reliant on bonus. So these talks are going to be important and, as always, we will look to all members to give us support in protecting bonus arrangements and other working conditions.'

## The Helen Dowie Award for Lifelong Learning goes to...

Audrey McJimpsey, a Community Union Learning Representative at RSBi Blindcraft in Springburn, Glasgow received the third annual STUC Helen Dowie Award for Lifelong Learning from Prime Minister Gordon Brown at the STUC Annual Congress in Inverness this April.

Audrey (pictured below) said, 'I couldn't have achieved this award without the support of my union Community and I am very grateful for the support my family and friends have given to me over the years.'

Audrey has been very active within the trade union movement since 1986 and currently supports local initiatives to promote union activity, especially union learning. She represents 100 members in her role as a Union Learning Rep within RSBi, where a large percentage of the workforce is disabled. Audrey has encouraged more than 75% of the workers to take up learning opportunities.

Community General Secretary Michael Leahy said, 'Community is proud and honoured that Audrey has won the Helen Dowie Award for Lifelong Learning: it is no less than she deserves.'

'Community sees the opportunity for personal development and fulfilment through the provision of education and training opportunities as central to the purpose of our union. We hope that the news of Audrey's well-deserved award encourages more people to take advantage of our learning services and also encourages more of our members to become Union Learning Reps.' (see page 10)



## Staff changes

Community is saying goodbye to a number of long-time employees including Ken Penton, Michael Walsh, Mick Barnett, Bernard Pike, Willie Patterson and John Marston.

Community thanks them all for their service and wishes them well with their new challenges.

## Women working together for change

Community had a stand at the first woman's equality conference in March this year. The event entitled 'Women working together for change' was organised by Grow and took place at the Silverwood Miners' Welfare Centre in Dalton, Rotherham.

David Martin, membership liaison manager, was behind the stand handing out recruitment information and other literature, and a number of recruiting forms were given out.

Community's NEC member Sue Mather conducted a workshop on the family friendly legislation that unions have campaigned for, which people can use to help with their work-life balance, she explained. She also spoke about Community's work and its involvement within

the community, particularly as a force for good in encouraging diversity and equality.

Sue said, 'This is an exciting time for women in Rotherham as the borough's first women's strategy has been developed. It aims to ensure women's needs are identified and addressed, as many key plans and policies don't really take account of any differences in needs and priorities between women and men. Research and statistics show there are still many arenas where women experience inequality and disadvantage due to their gender, and that women face further discrimination due to factors such as age, sexuality, disability, ethnicity or faith. Another important aim is to make sure women's achievements and contributions in all fields are recognised and celebrated.'

## Community Director elected to TUC Northwest Executive

Community regional director Steve Stacey was elected to the TUC North West Executive Council in April 2008, demonstrating the respect that Community has earned from our brother and sister unions in the region.

'I'm very pleased to have been elected onto executive council,' said Steve, 'particularly with Liverpool being the European Capital of Culture 2008, as we will be working on lots of exciting, new initiatives.'



## Community continues to encourage benefits of lifelong learning

Community held a Union Learning Representative regional conference at the Commodore Hotel in Cwmbran on 12 March 2008.

The event brought together people who have contributed in some way as part of the Community ABE project funded through the Wales Union Learning Fund. This exciting initiative has helped, and is continuing to help, increase awareness of lifelong learning opportunities, mostly among steelworkers, steelworkers under threat of redundancy and the wider communities throughout Wales. The programme has realised that, for some, this has been the first real opportunity for them to access learning.

## Members jobs are safe, thanks to union lobby

March 2008 saw great news for steelworkers and Community members based in Scunthorpe, Dalzel and Skinningrove. The Ministry of Defence announced that Corus had won a contract to supply over 80,000 tonnes of structural steel for the Royal Navy's two new aircraft carriers, which is the equivalent to the amount required for Heathrow Airport's Terminal 5 and three times that for Wembley Stadium.

Community General Secretary Michael Leahy OBE said, 'This is great news for UK steelworkers and their families. Community has been at the forefront of the campaign to ensure that the Government uses its procurement powers to benefit British companies as they are legally allowed to. Community members who work at the steelworks will have gone home happy that evening, able tell their families that their job was more secure because a Labour government had listened to their union.'

## Corus fined £200,000 for death of Community member

Steel producer Corus was fined £170,000 and ordered to pay legal costs of £30,000 after the death of a Community member at its Brinsworth strip mill in Rotherham in 2003.

Shane Eastwood, 34, died due to a defective safety switch on a crane. At the inquest, Judge Robert Moore found that his employer Corus had not guaranteed an effective inspection regime or ensured there was adequate training.

The decision came days after Worker's Memorial Day on 28 April and serves as a reminder to all that a safe workplace is a right that has not been extended to all workers in Britain.

## Community gains place on TUC race relations committee



The TUC Black Workers' Conference was held in Eastbourne on 18 to 20 April. Community's delegation – national officer Joe Mann, Freddie Toolaram, Ashokkumar Patel, Meesan Foley, Rajinder Sagoo, Champak Parekh and Jitu Depala – participated throughout.

Both the TUC President Dave Prentis and General Secretary Brendan Barber praised the work that had already been done, but declared that there was more work to do.

The conference debated issues such as 'Closing the ethnic minority employment gap', 'Modernisation of race equality in trade unions', 'Involvement of Black and Asian members in company union structures' and 'Temporary and agency workers'. Community moved a motion on racial abuse, which received the unanimous support of the conference.

The conference was a great success for Community as Jitu Depala was elected and Freddie Toolaram was re-elected to the TUC Race Relations Committee. This year also saw Meesan Foley become Community's first delegate from Scotland to attend a TUC Black Worker's conference.

## Raising domestic abuse issues at TUC women's conference

Workplace equality reps, women's health and safety, breast screening, women's poverty and pensions, post-natal depression and the decriminalisation of sex workers were a few of the issues debated and passed through the annual TUC Women's Conference in Eastbourne on 11 to 14 March.



Community's delegation moved a motion calling for greater support in the workplace for victims of domestic abuse. Women suffer economic poverty if unable to work through physical and psychological abuse in the home. Conference felt

that local councils should be pressured to provide affordable housing for victims so they could leave abusive partners. This support would empower women to live a productive, independent life.

Conference also moved motions of solidarity for women globally, particularly in Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. In Afghanistan, 65% of widows commit suicide as they see no future for them in their own country. Women and girls suffer abuse and murder, and are excluded from the educational system. In Iran, following the teachers' strike against poverty pay, the teachers, most of whom are women, have met with mass arrests and intimidation. In Iraq, there has been a rise in the torture of women and girls because it is deemed unacceptable for women to be seen in public places, to work and to wear Western clothing.

## Conference spurs union to trial youth member network

The TUC Young Members' Conference was held in Manchester in March. Community's delegates were Tom Blenkinsop from Region 2 and Alasdair McDiarmid and Duncan Harrod both from Region 8.

With more than 70 delegates from 12 unions, the conference was widely considered a great success. The range of issues discussed included: apprenticeships and the national minimum wage, global unionism, housing and organising your workers.

As a result of the TUC Young Members' Conference, Community will soon be trialling a national youth member network, which will support young members becoming active in the workplace and develop a youth agenda for our union.

For more information, visit [www.community-tu.org/equality](http://www.community-tu.org/equality) and follow the links.



## Joe awarded Higher Education Learner of the Year 2008



Community member Joe Monks of Cardiff was awarded the Higher Education Learner of the Year Award 2008 by the National Institute of Adult, Community Education, at a grand ceremony in May this year.

At age 50, Joe was unexpectedly made redundant from his long-term career at Allied Steel and Wire and was faced with the frightening prospect of re-entering the job market.

Joe left school with few qualifications and limited literacy due to his undiagnosed dyslexia and realised that this would keep him from securing skilled employment. This spurred Joe to enroll in full time education while still working shifts.

Joe enrolled at Coleg Glan Hafren where he gained 5 GCSEs in his first year and has now gone on to complete an Access to Social Work course and study for an HND. Joe now plans to study for a degree at University of Wales Institute Cardiff (UWIC) in Housing Policy and Practice.

Joe said, 'As a result of returning to education my life seems to be changing by the day. Within the next two years I hope to become qualified to tutor people with basic skills needs and this would complete a remarkable turn around in my life.'

## Fight to keep jobs for blind members

Thirty-three blind and visually impaired Community members working in a factory in Willesden, north London, face the closure of the works - which offers them supported employment - and the loss of their jobs.

The workers say that being able to come out to work each day makes all the difference to their lives, 'otherwise many of us would be stuck indoors



and be unable to feel fulfilled like any other worker,' said Martin Foden, the Community branch chairman 'and, naturally, it adds a lot to our social lives.'

Community is now battling to keep the works open and the fight is being joined by an increasing number of MPs and local councillors. Community

officer David Dobbs explained: 'The factory, which is run by a reputable charity, The Royal London Society for the Blind, is due to close at the end of July. We've asked for this deadline to be moved to the end of the year and for our period of consultation to last not 30 days but six months. This will give us time to find new sources of funding for the plant.'

The charity says that there have been cuts in grants from local authorities as these move toward the government's current policy of running down supported employment schemes and trying to move people with a disability into open employment.

'We have spent more than £1.7 million over the last five years to keep the factory running. We can no longer afford it,' said the charity's chief executive Brian Cooney. 'It's very sad but we are faced with no other alternative.'

The factory, which opened in 1997, specialises in producing high-precision components for cars, marines and torpedo engines. Brian Cooney said, 'There is no doubt that with the support we can give, the factory offers a sense of independence to blind and partially sighted workers.'

Community, however, believes that without supported employment some members may never find new jobs. David Dobbs said: 'We're determined to do all we can to keep the factory open, but to do this we need to find new sources of funds, and that will take us a little time. We are grateful for the support we have received from MPs, especially Andrew Slaughter who recently visited the works, and others. I urge Community members around the country and others who back our case to sign a petition by visiting [www.community-tu.org](http://www.community-tu.org).'

## Union opens Aldwarke learning centre



Hundreds of workers at Aldwarke Cast Products in Rotherham will now be able to access learning opportunities following the opening of the Minerva Learning Centre at the plant.

The learning centre contains a suite of seven computers provided by Communitas, Community's training and learning arm. The building renovation was financed by a £10,000 prize awarded to Aldwarke Cast Products by Corus, as part of the firm's continuous improvement programme.

Michael Leahy, General Secretary, said: 'The opening of the centre here at Aldwarke shows what can be achieved when employers work together with us. I hope other employers will

follow the example of Corus, and work with us, and Communitas, to promote and encourage lifelong learning, as it is in everyone's interest that employees are able to develop their skills.'

The learning centre was officially launched on 21 May 2008 by Michael Leahy, General Secretary of Community, Kees Stolwijk Managing Director of Corus Engineering Steels and Lyndon Peach, Chief Executive Officer of Communitas.

Now that the centre is officially open for business, Union Learning Representative Lee Bradshaw has conducted a survey of Aldwarke employees to find out what types of courses they would like to see the centre provide. Most are keen to undertake IT courses, and so Lee will be working with Communitas to ensure that their learning needs are met. Lee is also hoping to recruit more Union Learning Representatives to spread the word about learning and encourage staff who may be nervous about getting involved to dip their toes in the water.

Bob Hudson, Branch Secretary of the Aldwarke 01 Branch said: 'It is a tribute to the hard work of Lee and our colleagues in Communitas that Aldwarke employees now have this wonderful facility to use. I hope people will get involved and get learning.'

## Boosting legal services for our members

Community members can now call **0800 389 6332** and access the union's free legal advice service. The legal service can help members with a wide range of legal queries, such as employment, personal injury, welfare benefits and housing matters. The legal service is staffed by David Hewitt who has many years of experience in personal injury claims, DSS appeal tribunals and employment law.

If you find yourself in trouble with the law, as a Community member you can now call a free 24-hour emergency helpline **0800 916 9002**. Solicitors will be available to offer you initial advice and support.