

## Community's Member Service Centre speaks to all members

Being able to pick up the phone and talk to Community's trained advisers at the Member Service Centre provides Community members with peace of mind. When there is an issue in the workplace, Community members know that they can get advice and guidance from Community over the phone.

Every month the Member Service Centre receives hundreds of calls from Community members on workplace issues such as Health and Safety, Bullying and Harassment, Pay and Working Conditions or Legal Advice for both work and home.

That is why Community have taken the step of ensuring that the Member Service Centre is accessible to members who do not speak English.

When the Service Centre receives a call from members that have limited English, Community will now connect to a translator. The Community officer, member and translator will then hold a three way conversation. This will allow both the officer and the member to discuss the problem and for the Member Service Centre to give advice and guidance on how to solve it.

The new service offers translation of over 100 languages including:

Welsh, Gaelic, Polish, Hungarian, Romanian, Bengali, Punjabi and Turkish.

**You can call the Service Centre on 0800 389 6332**



## Community discuss youth issues in Europe

Community has attended the first Youth Officer meeting of the European Metalworkers' Federation (EMF) in Brussels. The meeting was held as a result of the EMF congress deciding that it was important to develop a youth network amongst affiliated unions to discuss and advise on the issues facing young members.

Young people across Europe face specific issues of employment and representation. Young people suffer from high levels of unemployment across Europe. There are also barriers to full employment like youth rates or the high level of part time or contract positions that employ young workers.

The EMF realises that developing the framework to allow young workers to discuss their problems will help the international trade union movement address these problems.

Representatives from metal working unions in Belgium, France, Germany, Finland, Hungary, Slovenia and Britain attended the meeting.

## Port Talbot disaster report verdict

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has released the report into the explosion of Blast Furnace No. 5 at Corus UK's Port Talbot plant, South Wales.

The explosion on 8th November 2001 killed three and injured dozens of other Corus workers.

General Secretary Michael Leahy said: 'Community Union welcomes this report into the tragedy at No. 5 Blast Furnace. The report vindicates the prosecution of Corus for their unforgivable lapses in Health & Safety which led to the deaths of our members.'

'Community recognises that the new management at Corus have begun to implement the lessons learnt at Port Talbot, but these must be fully rolled-out at sites across the country.'

'Incidents like the deaths at No. 5 Blast Furnace provided further justification for improved health and safety legislation such as the Corporate Manslaughter Act. The Government should also ensure adequate funding for the HSE which is now reporting seven years after the incident, a disappointing delay for such an important report.'

## 30 Year badges awarded

There were three 30 Year Membership awards to members in the North East.

Awards went to:

Rob Middlemas of Corus Skinningrove works, who was President in 2003 and will sit on our union's National Executive Council from January.

Craig Brooks, who works in analytical services, Corus Teesside. Craig is a works rep and has been a safety rep for some 10 years.

Martin Padgett, who left Corus two years ago. He coaches North Ormesby youth football teams.

## Community congratulates long serving members

Community has recognised the service of three members. Sylvia Murphy, the senior administration officer from Region Two was recognised for having completed 25 years of outstanding service. The General Secretary was happy to present this award as Community has only just managed to talk Sylvia out of taking early retirement.

Ken Holly was nominated for the Confederation Shield Award. Ken had served as a Branch Secretary for Tredegar Tubes for over 17 years, as well as providing leadership during the successful strike at the Caparo group.



**Pictured General Secretary Michael Leahy (left), President Keren Bender with Ken Holly and wife Diane**

Roy Bennett was nominated for the meritorious service award by his branch. Roy began his service in NUFLAT (which became KFAT) as a branch secretary in 1980 and was then elected as a Full Time Officer in 1988. Roy became a senior organiser with the creation of Community in 2004 and has served with distinction ever since.

## Jamie Oliver wows Community cooks

Community members in Rotherham took part in Jamie Oliver's 'Pass it on' campaign in the town.

The campaigning chef set up camp at Rotherham, accompanied by Channel 4 cameras, to teach new cooking skills to over 1,000 local people. His plea was 'Pass it on.'

'Rotherham was great,' Jamie said, 'and so many people have new skills now that can transform the way they and their families eat.'

The massive 'Pass it on' training session was held at the Magna Centre and a new Rotherham Food Centre was established in the town centre by Jamie to show residents how to cook and eat better.

Rotherham Council, which is led by former steelworker Roger Stone and has a number of Community members within it, helped fund the project which was seen on nationwide TV.



## New Executive Council

The members of the National Executive Council for the period January 2009 to the end of 2011 will be:

Region 1: One Seat

**Pat Donnelly**

Region 2: Two Seats

**Richard Green and Rob Middlemas**

Region 3: Three Seats

**Mick Fell, Sue Mather, and Lew Schaffer**

Region 4: Two Seats

**Dean Cox and Paul Mills**

Region 5: Three Seats

**Alan Coombs, Keith Davies, and Mark Hill**

Region 6: Two Seats

**Dougie Fairbairn and Paul Fox**

Region Seven: One Seat

**Keith Jordan**

Region Eight: One Seat

**Gareth Davies**

Three Interregional Women's Seats

**Tracy Clarke, Claire Main, and Bernice Plaster**

National Seat for a Representative of Disabled Members

**Robert Mooney**

National Seat for a Representative of Ethnic Minority Members

**Omar Al-Karrad**

*See pages 16 and 17 for election news for Deputy General Secretary and National Executive Council members.*

## State pension protest

Community members joined thousands of pensioners and workers who descended on Westminster at the end of October to demand the right to retire with dignity on a decent state pension.

The protest was part of a year-long campaign by the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) and the trade union movement to mark the centenary of the state pension.

In a packed rally at the Methodist Central Hall, campaigners heard how one in four of today's older people were living in poverty, with millions more struggling to meet the rising costs of food and fuel.

Up to nine million workers were also likely to join them when they retired because they were either unable to save or denied access to a decent occupational pension.

NPC general secretary Joe Harris said: "When billions of pounds are being found to bail out the bankers, no-one can say that the people who have worked all their lives don't deserve a decent state pension when they retire. We don't want charity, we want what is right."

Among an array of trade union speakers was Community's Tommy Brennan. He criticised ministers for saying that they could not afford to raise the state pension, but could always find money for wars and nuclear weapons.

Young and old campaigners later took their message to the House of Commons and called for the basic state pension to be raised to the official poverty level of £151 a week for all men and women, and increased each year in line with earnings or prices, whichever is greater.

To get involved in the campaign visit [www.npcuk.org](http://www.npcuk.org)

## Pat McFadden congratulates Community

Minister of State for Employment Pat McFadden was invited to speak to the November meeting of the National Executive Council.

Mr McFadden spoke about the current economic climate in the UK. Gordon Brown and the rest of the Government were working very hard to keep people in work. The Government were pursuing this strategy through direct support to employers as well as support to working families, stated Mr McFadden.

Mr McFadden also spoke about the need for the Government to work in partnership with the trade union movement to support working families. As a long time member of Community, Mr McFadden was aware of the work that Community did to bring training opportunities to members that had been made redundant. Mr McFadden praised Community on its modern approach to the current economic situation.

Mr McFadden is the latest politician to visit the NEC. Hywel Francis MP, Joan Ryan MP, Vera Baird MP and Caroline Flint MP have all made time to visit Community this year.



Pat McFadden congratulates Community President Keren Bender thanks Pat McFadden for addressing the NEC

Community has long been calling for minimum standards in the betting industry but is disappointed that the companies have not acknowledged the union's concerns. There is a long way to go to fully implement the union's 10 minimum standards. It is a sad reflection on the companies that it has taken Government intervention to get them round the table to discuss such crucial health and safety issues.

Community was supported by Ian McCartney MP and John Park MSP who emphasised the need for union involvement as key to the successful implementation of minimum standards and security improvements.

Local authority representatives described some of the problems they had encountered with betting companies over health and safety. In one alarming example, council officers had advised that betting shop workers should lock the shop door before emptying the gaming machines, which could hold around £2,000, but they were shocked to discover that an employee in one shop had been disciplined by the company for doing so.

It was clear to Community representatives at the meeting that the companies' efforts at high-level to tackle security issues were not reaching shop-level effectively. The union made the case that too many incidents were going unreported or were not reported accurately.

Following the meeting, the Secretary of State committed to setting up a working group to tackle the issues raised. Community Union will be represented on the working group by Regional Director Christine Hardacre, who will be putting members' issues - lone-person working, longer opening hours, training and improved security etc - directly to the companies.

Hopefully this process will bring about the much needed improvements in conditions for betting shop workers.

## Remembering Jeff Akers by Michael Leahy, General Secretary

It is with a mixture of relief, sadness and anger that we have learnt of the conviction at the Old Bailey of Mark Malone for the homophobic murder of Community Union member Jeff Akers.

We feel relief for Mike, Jeff's long-term partner, and for Jeff's family and many friends that this long trial process is finally over and justice has been done in the court.

On behalf of the members and staff of Community Union I extend my deepest condolences to Mike and Jeff's family and close friends in your unimaginable grief at this time. We stand by you now and in the future. We have a great sense of sadness that we have lost a valued member of our union, a community activist who helped so many people, especially people living with HIV and AIDS and who dedicated so much of his life to the benefit of others. Jeff will be sorely missed by so many people.

We are also angry that in the twenty-first century homophobia and homophobic crime still exists. Jeff's murder was a senseless act of bigotry that has left so many people with a deep sense of loss and grief. Homophobia has no place in our society in any way, shape or form. Jeff's murder is just the latest example of extreme violence directed against gay men simply out of hatred and bigotry. Homophobia does not just simply exist in the minds of individuals. It is shaped by culture and society. To this end we at Community Union oppose all forms of homophobic discrimination wherever it raises its ugly head.

Our schools must do more to challenge homophobic attitudes amongst pupils and teachers. Our workplaces must be active and vigilant in erasing homophobia amongst management and workers. Our communities must speak out against homophobia at all times and in all places.

It has been said that for evil to triumph it just requires good people to do nothing. We at Community Union will not stand by and do nothing at this time or at any other time. Let me make it crystal clear that our union supports the TUC and all other progressive organisations that oppose discrimination against gay men, lesbians and transgender people. There is no place for bigotry in our society and we

will do everything in our power to stamp it out.

Our union welcomes members from across our diverse society and we believe, without any doubt, that our union and our communities are made much stronger through diversity and our eternal commitment to equality. There is no justification for homophobia and no excuses. Jeff's murder provides us with the starkest reminder where homophobic attitudes can lead. Homophobia is never a joke. It is, quite literally, deadly serious. In the light of Jeff's murder I shall be tasking our union to look at ways in which we can take even stronger action against homophobia in the future; how we can further contribute to the TUC's campaigns; how we can use our political influence to improve Government policy; and how we can welcome more LGBT members into our union and make sure we hear the voices of our LGBT members throughout our organisation.

