

TRADES UNION COUNCILS

2014-2015

PROGRAMME OF WORK



TRADES UNION COUNCILS 2014-2015 PROGRAMME OF WORK

Trades Union Councils 2014 to 2015 programme of work continues the themes of last year's programme of work and is based around the TUC 2014 campaign 'Countdown to a future that works'

The key themes are:

- ***Jobs, Growth and a New Economy***
- ***Fair pay and a Living Wage***
- ***Good Services and Decent Welfare***
- ***Respect and a voice at work***
- ***Strong Unions***

Ever since the economic crash nearly brought the world's economic system to its knees there has been a clear choice.

Those who did best from deregulated capitalism, which lets inequality rip and finance rule, want to go back to business as usual. For them the crash was an opportunity.

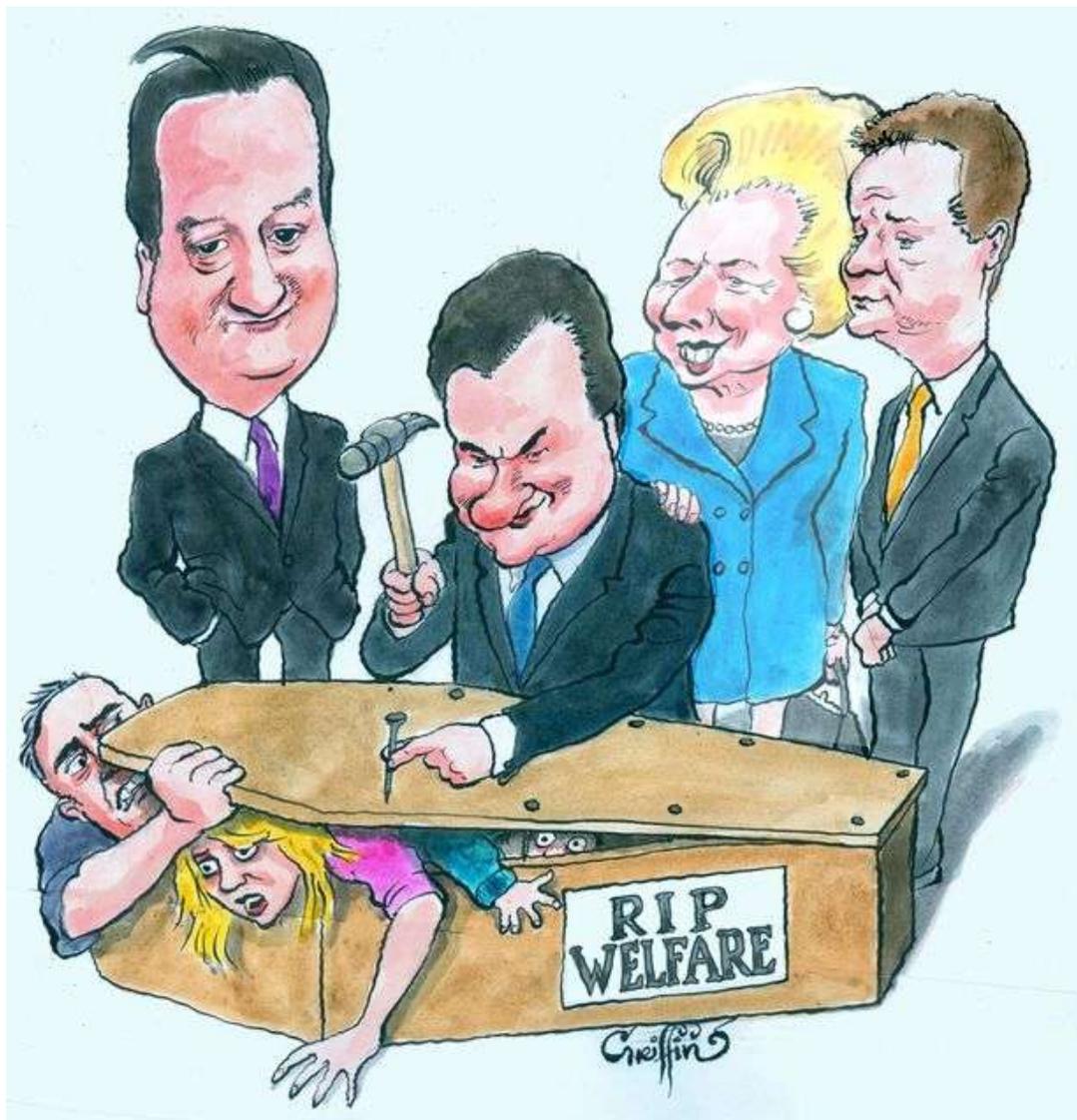
They want to use it to shrink the state permanently by cutting services and slashing the welfare safety net any of us might need. They want people to give up rights at work and accept permanent pay cuts and job insecurity.

Our struggle is to build a new economy run in the interests of the many, not the few. One that creates good jobs that pay well, on which sustainable growth can be built, and gives working people a real voice in their company.

The campaign plan has united and excited our great movement. Throughout the country union members have come together to make the case for social justice and economic advance.

But the TUC General Council is clear that we must step up our work as we approach the most important election in a generation.

The trade union voice in the community is as important as ever. The capacity of trades union councils to provide a local response and to organise trade unionists into coalitions with other progressive forces is crucial. They do this by providing services which keep local trade unionists up to date with developments within the wider trade union movement, and by taking up relevant local industrial and community issues.



Cartoon by Charles Griffin

➤ ***Jobs, Growth and a New Economy***

Trades union councils will:

- Use every opportunity to expose how austerity fails and rips the local community apart
- Press for an alternative economic model at local and national level which delivers good sustainable jobs for all

The fight against austerity is our central campaign priority. We will resist cuts and wage freezes. We will fight for decent jobs, particularly for young people, and investment in skills. We will press for fair tax that stops avoidance and evasion and makes those who profited the most from the bubble pay the costs of clearing-up the damage. We will defend gains made that advance equality, as women, BME, disabled and LGBT citizens suffer as services are cut and the economy slows. Cuts in public sector jobs inevitably lead to cuts in services, affecting entire communities and our quality of life.

The 2014 Trades Union Councils Conference reiterated the decision of the 2012 conference calling for the public ownership of banking and finances as the first step to creating a new kind of society. Conference called on trades union councils to vigorously campaign for the adoption of a programme of public ownership under democratic control.

The 2008 crash was the worst in living memory. But the wrong medicine of cuts, pay freezes and austerity has delayed recovery. Only now is the economy beginning to grow. But most people and many parts of the country are missing out as growth is fuelled by a London house price boom and increased borrowing, not from the economic rebalancing, higher wages and investment we need.

Rather than build a new, less unequal and more sustainable economy this government wants to use the crash to shrink the state, reduce rights and set inequality in stone.

Trades union councils will fight for an alternative – a future that works.

➤ ***Fair pay and a Living Wage***

Defending living standards

Trades union councils will

- Work locally for the nationwide campaign to spread the living wage to private and public sector workplaces
- Help co-ordinate union campaigns to win better pay at local and national level
- Press for better state and workplace pensions

This year's trades councils conference noted that the report 'Walking the Breadline' by Oxfam and Church Action on Poverty revealed that over half a million people are now reliant on food aid, triple the number of a year ago. Changes to the benefits system are the most common reason for people using food banks. This level of food poverty has not been seen in Britain since the 19th century. It is completely unacceptable that whilst this is happening, wealthy individuals and corporations continue to avoid paying their fair share of taxes.

Conference passed a resolution which called on trades union councils to:

- work together with groups such as FareShare collecting surplus food from the food industry and distributing it to community groups and homeless shelters;
- approach local councils to turn over public land for the use of community projects growing fruit and vegetables for local people;
- help local communities in establishing Incredible Edible and Guerrilla Gardening projects;
- to approach local schools and colleges to utilise space on their premises to grow sustainable products, thereby educating young people in food production;

This year's conference also passed a resolution calling for campaigns against zero hours contracts and support for the Living Wage. The TUCJCC recognises that trades union councils should be at the forefront of local campaigns promoting the Living Wage and local employers who reach Living Wage agreements.

Pensions are deferred pay, and unions will defend, and work to extend, decent workplace pensions in the private and public sectors. The union movement backs a decent state pension for current and future pensioners, and oppose unjustified increases in the state pension age.

Living standards are under attack

People earn £40 a week less in real terms than they did in 2008.

If wages had risen in line with economic growth workers would be £102 a week better off than they are now.

We're told the living standards crisis is over, but across the public sector and in much of the private sector pay still losing a little of its value every month.

Almost five million people are paid less than the living wage. Half of people in poverty are in working households.

But at the top, boardroom pay continues to rise far above inflation.

Trades union councils will fight for a real recovery that delivers decent pay for all – Britain needs a pay rise.



Cartoon by Chris Riddell

➤ **Good Services and Decent Welfare**

Standing up for society

Trades union councils will:

- Oppose outsourcing and privatisation at local and national level
- Fight NHS fragmentation and defend local health services
- Expose the effects of the government's cuts on services, benefits and working people at local level
- Campaign to defend welfare and oppose the stigmatisation of claimants

Public services are under huge pressure. Local councils are being hammered. Yet the respected Institute for Fiscal Studies say that we have had less than half of the Chancellor's planned spending cuts.

We were told the NHS would be protected, but waiting times are up, bed shortages common and GP services barely able to cope.

The public realm is under a dangerous twin attack. Austerity economics is used to justify cuts, but the real objective is just as much to shrink the state permanently and open up vital services to private profit. This is a political choice, not an economic necessity.

The welfare state – the safety net which any of us might need – is threatened. Ministers and their media allies have used public hostility against those who cheat the system to try to undermine the whole welfare system. The unemployed are increasingly treated as if losing their job was their fault, with a six-week wait for any benefits and workfare schemes no different from those used for offenders being punished by the courts.

The TUC and the TUCJCC are asking trades union councils to build and extend alliances with service users and the wider community, to work with every possible ally to defend the welfare state and public services realm against privatisation.

Trades union councils are asked to continue to monitor and publicise the damage to local health services through privatisation and to champion, with local health service unions, the NHS in their area. This supports the call from this year's conference for

all affiliated unions and regional organisations to throw their weight behind such campaigns.

Decent housing is the bedrock of a decent society. Decent housing provides the basis which enables students of all ages to study and develop and for families to flourish. Decent affordable housing provides security for all. The annual conference of trades union councils recognised the importance of housing for the development of people and the development of the economy.

Conference identified a number of issues around which trades council, unions and the TUC should be campaigning, much of which are already part of union campaigns. They are:

- A massive increase in the council sector by new builds and taking over available housing
- A massive increase in private sector dwellings regulated as to types of new builds
- A publicly run scheme assisting purchase of accommodation and mortgage supply
- New rent controls enforced by local authorities with private rental dwellings not meeting adequate standards being taken over by the public sector plus introduce new private sector tenure with rights and security
- Providing adequate funds to councils for housing provision and administration
- Legal obligation for each new development to have at least 30% of genuinely affordable housing
- Abolishing the bedroom tax and the housing benefit cap instead capping private rents for council requirements
- Ensuring new developments are only sited after proper consideration of local needs including transport, flood plains, environment and other local provisions rather than the interests of developers
- A balance of housing provision with commercial development which will reduce commuting and ensure properly mixed communities

- Greater use and modernisation of existing housing stock, a system ensuring unoccupied dwellings are brought in to use and to decriminalise squatting of empty accommodation

Trades union councils are asked to identify which of these campaign issues they can take forward in their area as part of the campaign to defend standards in welfare and services. .

Fighting service cuts, defending welfare and opposing privatisation will be key campaigns for trades union councils and communities.



Cartoon by Martin Rowson

➤ *Respect and a voice at work*

Trade union councils will:

- Defend workers and union rights
- Expose discrimination against pregnant and older working women
- Oppose fascism and the far right at work, on the streets and at the ballot box

The attacks on rights at work and equality encourage bad bosses to treat staff badly and discriminate. More workers face exploitation and vulnerable working will grow. Wealth and power are flowing to those at the top, while ordinary people take wage cuts, enjoy fewer rights at work and live in fear of the growth of vulnerable jobs. Rights at work are under attack.

Insecure work is on the increase. Zero-hours contracts have gone mainstream, agency work is common in permanent posts and bogus self-employment is rampant.

Fees for employment tribunals mean that workers increasingly cannot afford to enforce their basic rights. Protection against unfair dismissal and redundancy has been reduced.

The Prime Minister wants to end the rights that we owe to Europe – working time protection such as paid holidays, rights for agency workers and equal treatment – so that he can offer a false choice in a referendum between leaving the EU or giving up basic rights.

But inequality lies behind the crash. Extending rights at work and strengthening workers' voice is key to securing a productive fair economy.

This year's conference recognised that most unions now have anti-racist policies in place in unionised workplaces. However, many non-unionised workplaces still see racist practices. It highlighted the fact that trade union councils are in a good position to address the problems in non-unionised workplaces when vulnerable workers have no knowledge of their legal and employment rights.

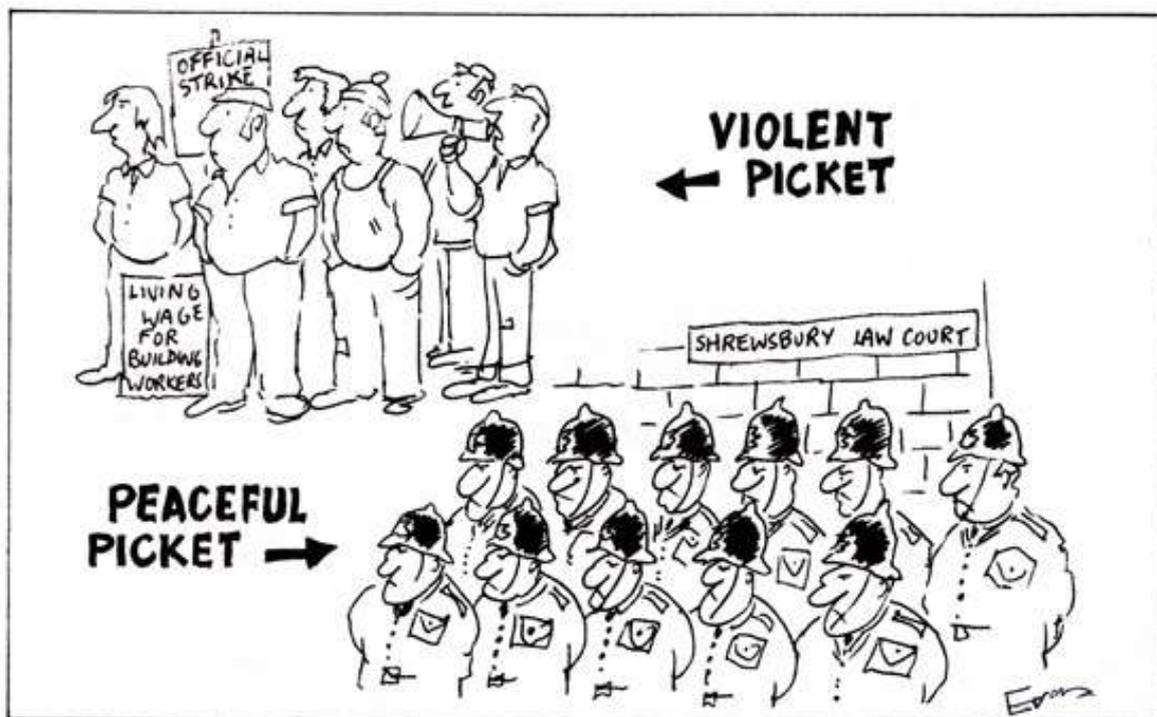
Trades councils are asked to:

- Analyse the results of the European elections and the far right and fascist vote.

- Try and create unity among all anti-racists groups at a local level.
- Disseminate information/best practice by trade unions including case precedents, cases won and involvement in anti-racist campaigns.
- Continue to make anti-racism and the campaign against racists organisations a priority.

The TUCJCC will assist in this work.

This year's conference also passed a resolution that condemned the insertion of fees to bring Employment Tribunals cases and the doubling of the qualifying period to claim unfair dismissal to two years. The changes are designed to weaken what little legal protection workers have and will only serve to limit access to justice to claimants who have the financial status and ability to pay.



Cartoon by Phil Evans

➤ **Strong Unions**

Organising at work and in the community

Trades union councils will

- Work with unions to strengthen bargaining and campaigning power
- Involve young people and community groups in the work of the trades union council and the local union movement

Strong trade unions are a vital part of a fair and prosperous society. Societies with weak unions are less fair, more unequal and hold back economic growth.

Trades union councils face a range of challenges. They need to organise in the community as well as the workplace and strengthen campaigning abilities.

Trades union council resources are limited and trades councils will have to prioritise the campaigns they get involved with but TUC Regional Secretaries and Regional Councils, as well as the TUCJCC will give support where they can.

Trades union councils need to reach out to young people in their communities, connect them to trade unions and use their energy and inventiveness. Trades union councils could also explore using the young members' forums of affiliated union branches as well as schools and youth groups.



Cartoon by Phil Evans

➤ *The People's Charter*

The TUCJCC and the trades union council conference continue to support the principles of the People's Charter and welcomed the rise of the Peoples Assemblies around the country. The TUCJCC is calling on all trades union councils to:

- Affiliate to the People's Charter and promote it locally;
- Respond positively to approaches for Charter activists to regularly attend trades union council meetings;
- Identify a "link person" with the Charter and to keep it on the trades council agenda. And send contact details to the People's Charter at info@thepeoplescharter.org .

The People's Charter has identified set of six major reforms to reverse the crisis and the government's austerity policy:

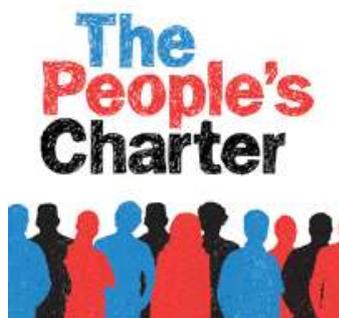
- A fair economy for a fairer Britain
- More and better jobs
- Decent homes for all
- Protecting and improving public services
- Social justice
- A secure and sustainable future and for urgent action against global warming.

These principles, and the programme behind them, have been endorsed by Congress as well as the trades union council conference.

Trades union councils are asked to work with the People's Charter in their campaigning. Information about the People's Charter can be found at

www.thepeoplescharter.org/ or write to:

The People's Charter, PO Box 53091 London E12 9DA



Ten things you can do to help us win

- Build for October's Britain Needs a Pay Rise demonstration in your workplace and community www.britainneedsapayrise.org
@payrise4britain #18oct
- Join the TUC's digital army by signing up to Going to Work www.goingtowork.org.uk
- Share how austerity has blighted your community at the False Economy website <http://falseeconomy.org.uk>
- Back the Saving our Safety Net campaign and tell the government to scrap plans to make people wait at least five weeks for unemployment benefits www.savingoursafetynet.org
- Join local community campaigns to defend the NHS <http://alltogetherforthenhs.org>
- Press your local council to back the Robin Hood Tax
- Join your local public services campaign – contact your TUC region
- Back TUC international solidarity actions through the Going to Work website www.goingtowork.org.uk
- Put the TUC's Campaign Plan on your trades union council agenda.



Contacts and links

Trades union councils' joint consultative committee

Chairperson

Matt Wrack FBU

General Council Members

Dave Harvey, NUT

Pat Stuart, Unite

Northern

Kathy Taylor

13 Westwood Gardens

Stakeford, Northumberland NE62 5YF

01670 858340

kathyt2114@sky.com

Yorkshire and the Humber

Martin Mayer

59 Meersbrook Road

Sheffield, S8 9HU

0114 2589142

martin.mayer@unitetheunion.org

North West

Alec McFadden

Mersey Advice, 4 St Anne Street

Birkenhead, Wirral CH41 3JU

07831 627531 /

alec_stuc@hotmail.com

Midlands (East)

Moz Greenshields

4 Cherry Tree Court

Ashbourne, Derbyshire DE6 1DQ

07889 274723 /

mozgreenshields@tiscali.co.uk

Midlands (West)

Dorothy Heath

7 Silvers Close

Walsall, WS3 5DF

01922 683018

heathdorothy@ymail.com

East of England

Teresa MacKay

8 Tolworth Road

Ipswich IP4 5AU

07956 847479 /

teresa.mackay@ntlworld.com

South East

Linda Kietz

16 Mansell Road

London W3 7QU

07711 314236 /

lkietz@btopenworld.com

Wales

Amarjite Singh

315 Newport Road

Cardiff CF24 1RD

07988 057709 /

johnny.roudh@hotmail.com

South West

Andy Robertson

52 Gordon Avenue

Whitehall, Bristol BS5 7DS

01179 516584 /

a.robertson@rmt.org.uk

Committee members can also be contacted:

C/o Tom Mellish,

Secretary to the TUCJCC

TUC, Congress House,

Great Russell Street

London WC1B 3LS

Tel: 020 7467 1380

Email: tmellish@tuc.org.uk

Or: Debbie Cleary

Tel: 020 7467 1290

Email: dcleary@tuc.org.uk

Useful publications and contacts

The TUCJCC pamphlet '**Community**' has been especially produced for trades union councils to explain the value of union branches affiliating to their local trades union council or establishing a trades council where one does not exist.

The TUCJCC has also produced '**The Journey**' a pocket sized pamphlet that pulls out to tell the reader about the benefits to their daily lives of joining a union as well as in their workplace. This is for use by trades union councils and unions as part of their union membership recruitment campaign.

These two publications are available from the TUC's Organising and Services Department by contacting Tom Mellish on tmellish@tuc.org.uk or telephoning 020 7467 1380.

Touchstone Blog – for latest information on the economy and '*Cuts Watch*' go to www.touchstoneblog.org.uk/about/

Green workplaces Network – For all your information on the green workplace, contacts and activist networks go to: www.tuc.org.uk/workplace/index.cfm?mins=87&minors=4&majorsubjectID=2

Black Workers - The TUC has produced a short guide on negotiating for race equality at work to help trade union stewards and activists. The guide explores a selection of issues relevant to black workers to help familiarise trade unionists with the some of the most commonly occurring concerns, many of which have been dealt with through legal proceedings. There are also checklists that provide a starting point to enable activists to start developing bargaining goals. www.tuc.org.uk/extras/collectivebargaining.pdf

LGBT Workers -The TUC has published updated guidance for unions taking into account recent legal changes and current good practice: *LGBT Equality at Work*: - a TUC guide for union negotiators on lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans issues. This is available on-line at www.tuc.org.uk/equality/tuc-19413-f0.cfm Trades councils may

wish to start preparing for LGBT History Month in February 2015. Go to www.lgbthistorymonth.org.uk/ for all the information you'll need, lots of ideas and contacts presented in a lively way as well as reports on previous events. For a wide range of information on LGBT in the union world, including the new Trades Union Trans Network, go to www.tuc.org.uk/equality/index.cfm?mins=108&minors=24&majorsubjectID=6

What does the government's austerity plan mean for you? - TUC fact sheet produced for the 2013 TUC Women's Conference. Go to www.tuc.org.uk/social/tuc-22008-f0.cfm

Where to get labour movement and counter-austerity publications

For a broad range of left wing publications go to **Bookmarks** www.bookmarksbookshop.co.uk where you can order on-line or visit the shop at 1 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1B 3QE (around the corner from the TUC) - 020 7637 1848 or enquiries@bookmarks.uk.com .

Also, **The Peoples Bookshop**, Third Floor, The Attic, Saddlers Yard, 70 Saddler Street, Durham DH1 3NP <http://peoplesbookshop.co.uk/>
You email the shop through their webpage.

The Alliance of Radical Bookshops

Very useful site with the contact details of a number of left-leaning bookshops. Many offer on-line services and not all the bookshops are in London!
www.radicalbooksellers.co.uk/?page_id=2

News from Nowhere

Liverpool's Radical & Community Bookshop - not-for-profit · a worker's cooperative · committed to social change www.newsfromnowhere.org.uk/index.php

The Morning Star – for daily news and information about the labour movement. The Morning Star is available from some major supermarket chains and can be ordered through your local newsagent at no cost to the newsagent on a sale or return basis. Also available online at www.morningstaronline.co.uk

Many unions produce guidance on issues raised in this document. Check with affiliated unions to see if they have publications relevant and useful to your work. Also visit '[unionsinthecommunity](http://www.unionsinthecommunity.org.uk)' (or go to www.unionsinthecommunity.org.uk) the site set-up specifically for trades union councils

Contacts

The current directory of trades union councils can found on-line at the trades union council page of the TUC website or email Tom Mellish at tmellish@tuuc.org.uk for a hard copy.

The TUC Information Services Team supports trades union councils with information and contact details on the issues raised in this document and across the full range of trade union activity. Email info@tuc.org.uk or telephone 020 7467 1262.

Disability Alliance

12 City Forum
250 City Road
London EC1V 8AF
Tel 020 7247 8776 email office@disabilityalliance.org website www.disabilityalliance.org

Friends of the Earth

26-28 Underwood Street
LONDON N1 7JQ
020 7490 1555 email through web site www.foe.co.uk/index.html for a quicker response

Hazards (Magazine) – health and safety information and networking on H&S

PO Box 4042
Sheffield S8 2DG
Tel: 0114 201 4265, email editor@hazards.org website www.hazards.org

Hope Not Hate

PO Box 67476
London NW3 9RF
020 7681 8660 www.hopenothate.org.uk

Love Music Hate Racism

PO Box 66759
London WC1A 9EQ

Tel: 020 7801 2781, email info@lovemusichateracism.com
Website <http://lovemusichateracism.com/>

Morning Star

52 Beachy Road, London E3 2NS
020 8510 0815 email reception@peoples-press.com www.morningstaronline.co.uk

Peoples' Charter

PO Box 53091
London
E12 9DA info@thepeoplescharter.org Contact is by email through the website
www.thepeoplescharter.org

Trade Union Friends of Searchlight

PO Box 1576
Ilford IG5 0NG
020 8550 1805 www.searchlightmagazine.com

Unite Against Fascism

PO Box 36871
London WC1X 9XT
Tel: 020 7801 2782. Email only through web site <http://uaf.org.uk/>

A full range of links to organisations dealing with politics, research, environment, employment rights and many other aspects of our work can be found at www.tuc.org.uk/links/index.cfm

