Reflections on trade unions and disabled employees

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Presentation

- Introductions
- Our research
- Implications for trade unions
Introductions

Professor Kate Sang, CREWS director (UCUScotland Equality Officer, branch officer and caseworker)

Dr James Richards, Associate Professor of Human Resource Management (UCUScotland Honourary Treasurer, branch officer and caseworker)

Dr Jen Remnant, post-doctoral research associate (Member of local branch committee)

CREWS: Centre for Research on Employment Work and the professions https://www.hw.ac.uk/ebs/research/employment-work-professions.htm

Our Union – the University and Colleges Union Scotland https://www.ucu.org.uk/scotland
Social model of disability

- Medical model of disability
  - Disability resides in the individual
  - Cure, treat or eradicate disability
- Social model of disability (disabled person)
  - Disability arises when a person with an impairment interacts with an environment not adapted (or inclusive) of their needs
  - Disability is social oppression

Adapted from Inclusion Scotland
Our research

- Disability Inclusive Science Careers
- Neurodivergence and trade unions (disability champions)
- In work poverty
- Women's health at work

Key messages

- Disabled people especially vulnerable to in work poverty
- Disability intersects with gender
- Importance of recognising different and intersecting impairments/conditions
- Ignorance of employers, line managers and trade unions
- Stigma, shame and internalised ableism
- Covid may have offered opportunities
Implications for trade unions

- Need for improved awareness and understanding of intersectionality, disability, social model of disability
- Disability champions
- Disabled people are diverse – some may have benefited from COVID, others harmed
- Collaboration and co-design
Way forward

• Need stronger evidence bases
• Importance of intersectionality
• Look for examples of good practice
• Centre the needs of disabled people in the post Covid recovery
Thank you for listening

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