

Resolution calling for St Mungo's to end disciplinary against Unite rep and for commissioning local authorities to insist on a review of governance.

A Unite rep faces gross misconduct charges in direct response to a grievance he raised about bullying and we have evidence of widespread bullying as well as union busting. We call on commissioning local authorities to insist that St Mungo's drops this disciplinary and that a review of governance is set up.

This **** notes that St Mungo's is one of the most important agencies working with homeless people in London and southern England. Unite members working for St Mungo's are proud of the services they deliver. However, they are deeply concerned that the executive team and board are undermining their work and are creating a culture of silence while pursuing a policy of undermining Unite. Grievances regarding bullying have not been inadequately investigated and staff raising bullying concerns have been faced with retaliatory measures:

- Unite rep Vicko Plevnik was suspended in April (and remains suspended at the end of October) in contravention of ACAS guidelines and our recognition agreement. Charges include alleged psychological distress to senior managers caused by grievances from staff about bullying by senior managers. Further farcical charges include allegedly eating a biscuit during an online staff meeting.
- Vicko's colleagues have taken twelve weeks of strike action returning to work after management conceded their initial demand for an independent investigation.
- A Unite survey of staff found that 68% of respondents had suffered bullying by senior managers.
- Unite has received concerns from members that they feel unable to call out bad practice.
- In October 2019 an Employment Tribunal found St Mungo's guilty of victimising a female worker who had raised questions about pay equality in the organisation. This followed the boards failure to respond to the board chair.
- We know that St Mungo's has been in discussion with paid consultant about how to undermine the union from an accidentally forwarded email.
- Earlier this year nearly half of Unite reps faced an HR formal procedure, this figure has now fallen as reps have been selected for redundancy.
- St Mungo's have failed to adequately investigate how they came to share confidential client information with the Home Office when engaged in a programme of forced deportation which was subsequently found to be unlawful. The internal report finds that St Mungo's senior management were not culpable because they were unaware of the practice but does not ask how this could be the case. Unite members feared to raise the issue as individual members but Unite did raise their

concerns and publicly campaigned on the issue – the report makes no mention of this.

A clear pattern of attempts to undermine Unite and to discourage staff from speaking up has been established by senior managers in recent years. Such an approach is strongly associated with abuse of clients in services for vulnerable client groups. Repeated attempts over an extended period by Unite to raise these concerns with the board of St Mungo's have been met with a consistent refusal to engage; this represents a serious failure of governance. Real safeguarding risks arise from the culture of silence, action is urgent.

This **** resolves to

- Urge St Mungo's to end the suspension of Unite rep Vicko Plevnik
- Call on local authorities commissioning services from St Mungo's to insist that the Unite rep Vicko Plevnik is reinstated and to call for a review of governance arrangements at St Mungo's to involve Unite as representative of the workforce.

Please keep us informed of any actions following this resolution.

Email: info@housingworkers.org.uk

Updates available here: <http://www.housingworkers.org.uk/>