

FIREFIGHTER

THE MAGAZINE OF THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION | WWW.FBU.ORG.UK | FEBRUARY/MARCH 2022

USED TO THE HEAT

FIREFIGHTER ALAN SOUTAR
AIMS FOR THE TOP IN DARTS

SEE P16



**THE THREAT
TO OUR RIGHTS**

See P8

**GRENFELL: THE ROLE
OF GOVERNMENTS**

See P12

**COVID SHORTAGES
EXPOSE CUTS IMPACT**

See P7





MATT WRACK

THE GOVERNMENT IN CRISIS – ABYSMAL, CRUEL AND CORRUPT

As I write it is clear that the Prime Minister is under real threat of losing his job.

The scandal around parties in Downing Street during lockdown has dominated the news for weeks. There has been a growing undercurrent of anger around the whole handling of the pandemic; the failure to plan and prepare; ignoring the warnings; the lack of PPE; the staffing shortages in public services; the dodgy contracts to mates of mates.

All these have been exposed while, at the same time, millions suffered the impact of Covid-19 through lost family and friends, the isolation of lockdown or the hardship of job losses or furlough.

So the growing list of social events is exposing sharply the contrast between the terrible experiences of the majority with the cavalier attitude of those in power.

Let us not forget that the UK's Covid death rate is one of the highest in the world. The current total is 154,702 deaths – meanwhile New Zealand has recorded 52, Norway 1,439, Australia 3,389, and Denmark 3,656.

Death on the scale here was entirely avoidable – if only there had been adequate planning, preparation and investment; a point we have made from the start. The pandemic has been mishandled at every turn.

Whether Boris Johnson sat drinking wine in the Downing Street garden on a particular date is becoming the focus for all the other growing anger over the hardship and loss of the past two years



and the abysmal, cruel and corrupt way in which so many decisions were taken.

GRENFELL – BACK TO FRONT INQUIRY

We have moved into a part of the Grenfell Tower inquiry when the government's role is finally the focus.

We have argued from the start that the real causes behind the disaster were structural and systemic and that these arose from policy decisions.

We have said that the public inquiry got it completely wrong by examining the actions of firefighters before looking at how the building had been turned into a death-trap; firefighters on the night dealt with what was in front of them. They did not create the conditions within the building.

It was the decisions of governments over successive decades which created the conditions for Grenfell. They deliberately created a building safety system based on minimising rules.

They weakened the testing and inspection regime. They

privatised the public testing agency. They scrapped national standards in the fire and rescue service and created a race to the bottom by chief fire officers – driven by central government cuts.

They did all this in the name of “cutting red-tape” and making life easier for business. They allowed commercial lobbyists to set the agenda on building safety.

It is a tale of a deadly and utterly corrupt political system. And then they have the nerve to try to pass blame onto firefighters.

It is those governments who have questions to answer – not those who responded on the night whether as control staff or firefighters on stations.

I know that readers of this magazine will support us in our work to defend those who rushed into a building with no guarantees over its structural integrity, making their way through dark, smoke-filled corridors and doing whatever they could to save lives.

They deserve the thanks and support of ordinary people and I know that

support is there.

Those who made the decisions which allowed Grenfell to happen are the ones who deserve to be held to account and to pay the price for their decisions.

RIGHT TO STRIKE UNDER THREAT

Elsewhere in this issue, we delve into how the right of firefighters to strike has come under threat.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services issued a report in December last year, suggesting it be looked at as part of a raft of measures to “reform” the fire and rescue service.

We are clear: the right to strike is an essential democratic right for all workers – including firefighters.

The report shows clearly that Sir Tom Winsor is utterly out of touch, reactionary and anti-worker.

It is staggering that this report was published after the two years in which FBU members have done great work in keeping our service going in the most difficult circumstances as well as helping the wider effort to tackle the pandemic. Winsor should be ashamed of himself.

DECON

It is vital that firefighters, serving and retired, fill out this survey. The more information received, the more research can be done, and the more lives can be saved. Please help us to make firefighting safer. You can find the registry at uclan.ac.uk/research/activity/fcdr



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NEWS

PENSIONS

Westminster government intervenes to disrupt pensions payment deal

p6



CUTS

Pandemic exposes severe impact of cuts on service

p7



PICTURES: PETER EVERARD SMITH

FBU EXHIBITION UNIT BACK ON THE ROAD

The new and improved FBU exhibition unit is back on the road.

Its first outing was the red plaque unveiling for firefighter Malcolm Kirton in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, on 2 February (see P6).

The exhibition unit was a popular feature during the FBU's centenary celebrations in 2018, informing people about the history of the union and the making of the UK fire and rescue service.

■ You can request to use the exhibition unit at an event in your area by emailing FBU East Midlands regional secretary Adam Taylor at adam.taylor@fbu.org.uk



Neil Carbutt (left), FBU regional chair for Yorkshire & Humberside, and Adam Taylor, East Midlands regional secretary, with the unit

FBU MAKES MAJOR ADVANCES IN FIGHT FOR SAFE BA POLICIES

BREATHING APPARATUS

The FBU has made major advances in its fight against dangerous BA policies. Manchester is the latest brigade to withdraw them, after intervention from the union.

The policy, recommended in National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) guidance, involves firefighters going beyond the bridgehead in high-rise fires without safe air.

The FBU is clear that this policy is dangerous and unlawful, increasing the risks firefighters face from exposure to toxic fire contaminants and being overcome and beyond the reach of rescue.

This is also dangerous for the public, with firefighters not able to save anyone if they are taken out of action as a result of injury or worse.

The FBU argues that these policies contravene health and safety law.

The FBU was in the process of challenging the policy legally when Greater Manchester fire and rescue

chose to withdraw it.

Local reps are in ongoing discussions to develop a safe and professional policy.

Elsewhere, the FBU has halted the policy in other brigades, after local officials wrote to services setting out objections.

The FBU successfully halted the policy in London last year through representations to the brigade's health and safety committee.

However, the fight to get rid of the policy entirely continues.

The NFCC is yet to revoke the guidance, and brigades around the country are still attempting to implement it, including Hampshire & Isle of Wight and Dorset & Wiltshire.

FBU national officer Riccardo la Torre said: "The union will challenge this practice

wherever it is raised, utilising all legal, political and industrial resources at our disposal.

"The FBU is the only organisation challenging this unsafe practice, and we will never compromise on firefighters' safety."



"It's not smoke, it's dry ice they're having a disco ..."

SOUNDING OFF

Rachael Bayliss on the campaign for better terms and conditions in the hospitality industry

TIME TO TAKE FIGHT TO HOSPITALITY BOSSES

In December last year I was sacked from my pub job after refusing to work with Covid symptoms. I then tested positive for Covid-19.

My story went viral after I posted the email interactions between myself and my manager on Twitter and I am now taking action against the pub.

Having been forced to work the night before when sick with a fever and cough, I consequently spread Covid to a Christmas party I served.

This example alone shows that the issue of hospitality workers' rights is literally everyone's problem.

The struggle for the trade union movement is to not just organise these workers, but also to challenge the culture of these industries around sickness and to cultivate a sense of pride in the roles they have as part of modern social life.

Having worked in hospitality for over four years and having attempted to organise various venues, it is clear to me that the workers in these industries don't believe it could be better and therefore don't try to fight – they just leave for the next job, which is easy enough when the industry turnover is so high.

The pub is an iconic part of British working class culture and identity – let's use this relationship to make the public case for full sick pay, guaranteed pay and secure contracts for workers in these industries.

With a government who metaphorically play the role of the unscrupulous boss and the Labour party acting as HR, it is time as a movement to pour energy and resources into building trade union representation among these sections of industry and take the fight to the bad bosses who consciously endanger their staff and the public.



IAN MARLOW

CARTOON BY JONNEY

WESTMINSTER MINISTERS INTERVENE TO DISRUPT PENSIONS PAYMENT DEAL

PENSIONS

The Westminster government has made two political interventions to prevent fire and rescue services resolving pension claims under the framework agreed by the FBU and fire employers last October.

This agreement meant that all firefighters not currently receiving their correct pension could be dealt with immediately, without waiting until the government's October 2023 proposal.

"Immediate detriment" affects members who have already retired and who have been paid their pensions and lump sums under the terms of the 2015 Firefighters' Pension Scheme, when they

should have been paid under the terms of the 1992 scheme.

It also covers members who will retire in the near future and who will find themselves in the same position.

Mark Rowe, FBU national officer, said: "The FBU is fighting a government that has demonstrated on numerous occasions that they simply do not care that our members are suffering pensions detriment."

"The FBU will continue to fight so that members do not have to wait until October 2023 to receive the pension that the court ruled they should be paid, a pension they are entitled to receive now."

The first of these Westminster

interventions meant if a member has retired more than 12 months ago and is paid a second pension lump sum (a top-up to the underpaid lump sum at retirement) it is an "unauthorised payment" and taxed at 55%.

The second intervention came from the Treasury, which said that "immediate detriment cases cannot be processed before new legislation is in place without considerable risk".

As a result of these interventions, the majority of fire and rescue services have paused the adoption of the framework that would have ensured members receive their correct pensions immediately.

FIREFIGHTERS REJECT PCC TAKEOVER PLAN

CUMBRIA

The FBU in Cumbria is opposed to the local police and crime commissioner's (PCC) proposal to take over governance of the fire and rescue service that could lead to the tearing up of firefighters' pay, terms and conditions.

Peter McCall, PCC for Cumbria, recently published his "business case" to take over governance of the service, despite the option of a Cumbria fire and rescue authority being on the table after an upcoming local government reorganisation.

The FBU is opposed to police and crime commissioners taking over fire and rescue services in England and Wales. Fire and rescue is a humanitarian service, not about law

enforcement.

"Firefighters do not want to be swallowed up by police forces. Imposing the PCC model on local people is not democracy," the union said.

The PCC model involves less scrutiny and accountability than local government fire authorities.

McCall has claimed not to be empire building, but this proposal could not be a more stark example of it, the FBU said.

"This case is not in the interests of firefighters, nor the public but Peter McCall's political ambitions."

The union urged its members in Cumbria "to take this threat seriously and organise to stop this unwanted takeover that could eventually lead to the undermining of the Grey Book".



Rev Louise Carr (l) the minister of Gainsborough Methodist Church at the unveiling with Malcolm's sister, Sandra Kirton (r) and FBU president Ian Murray, centre

RED PLAQUE HONOURS THE BRAVERY AND SACRIFICE OF FIREFIGHTER MALCOLM KIRTON

RED PLAQUE

In honour of his bravery and sacrifice, a red plaque was unveiled for Malcolm Kirton who, aged 38, died in the line of duty trying to rescue a mother and child from a fire in a carpet warehouse in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, 30 years ago.

Ben Selby, FBU executive member for East Midlands, said: "It's important to have an active remembrance, a ceremony to unveil the plaque. Crews from local stations will be able to come

here and spend a few moments to remember the life of Malcolm."

Former chief fire officer John Herrick said Malcolm was very well liked on the station, a very good officer, and a pleasure to work with.

Paul Kirton, Malcolm's younger brother told the family, friends, firefighters and former colleagues gathered at the unveiling, that Malcolm "loved the fire service, loved working with the lads. He would have been so proud to see this today".





JOE LOM/SHUTTERSTOCK

FIREFIGHTERS AND ENGINES UNAVAILABLE AS OMICRON EXPOSES DANGERS OF CUTS

Fire and rescue services across the country were hit by the Omicron variant of Covid over Christmas and into the new year. Engines were taken off the run, as a fire and rescue service impacted by years of cuts and lacking resilience struggled to cope.

Shortages were reported in services including London, Hampshire and Isle of Wight, and across the North East, Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk.

The first reports were received from London, where the Omicron variant took off. London had more than a third of its engines unavailable at various points, with a high of 50 engines off the run. This came against a background

of up to 15% of operational firefighters in the capital having tested positive or having to self-isolate.

Jon Lambe, FBU regional secretary for London, said: "Omicron should not be having an effect on this scale – the reason is that London Fire Brigade has been left in a terrible state by years of government cuts, with almost one in five of London firefighters cut since 2010."

In Hampshire and the Isle of Wight pumps were left unavailable at multiple stations. Mark Chapman, regional secretary for the FBU's southern region, said: "The service is at an absolutely threadbare level of cover, because the government has cut the fire and rescue service to its bare bones, with

Hampshire losing almost one in five of its firefighters since 2010, and the Isle of Wight losing more than one in four in that same period."

North East regional secretary Brian Harris said: "It's entirely unclear how the government thinks it is acceptable to have a fire and rescue service with such a low level of resilience."

Across the UK one in five firefighter positions has been cut since 2010, with some services losing over a third of their firefighters during this period.

The loss of jobs has come against a background of financial cuts, with English services losing £140m in government funding since 2016 and with London alone losing more than £22m.



THE

RIGHT

TO

London, 26 November, 1977: demonstration in London during the first national strike by UK firefighters who were demanding a 30% pay rise at a time when inflation could reach 25% a year

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RIGHT TO STRIKE

THE PUBLIC
THANK YOU FOR
YOUR
MAGNIFICENT SUPPORT

FOR
AR
MURD

WANT
Merlyn
Ree
Jim
Callan
for
Arson
Murder

HOW MUCH
CAN YOU AFFORD
TO LOSE

NO MAGIC
FROM MERLYN

C
DIVISION

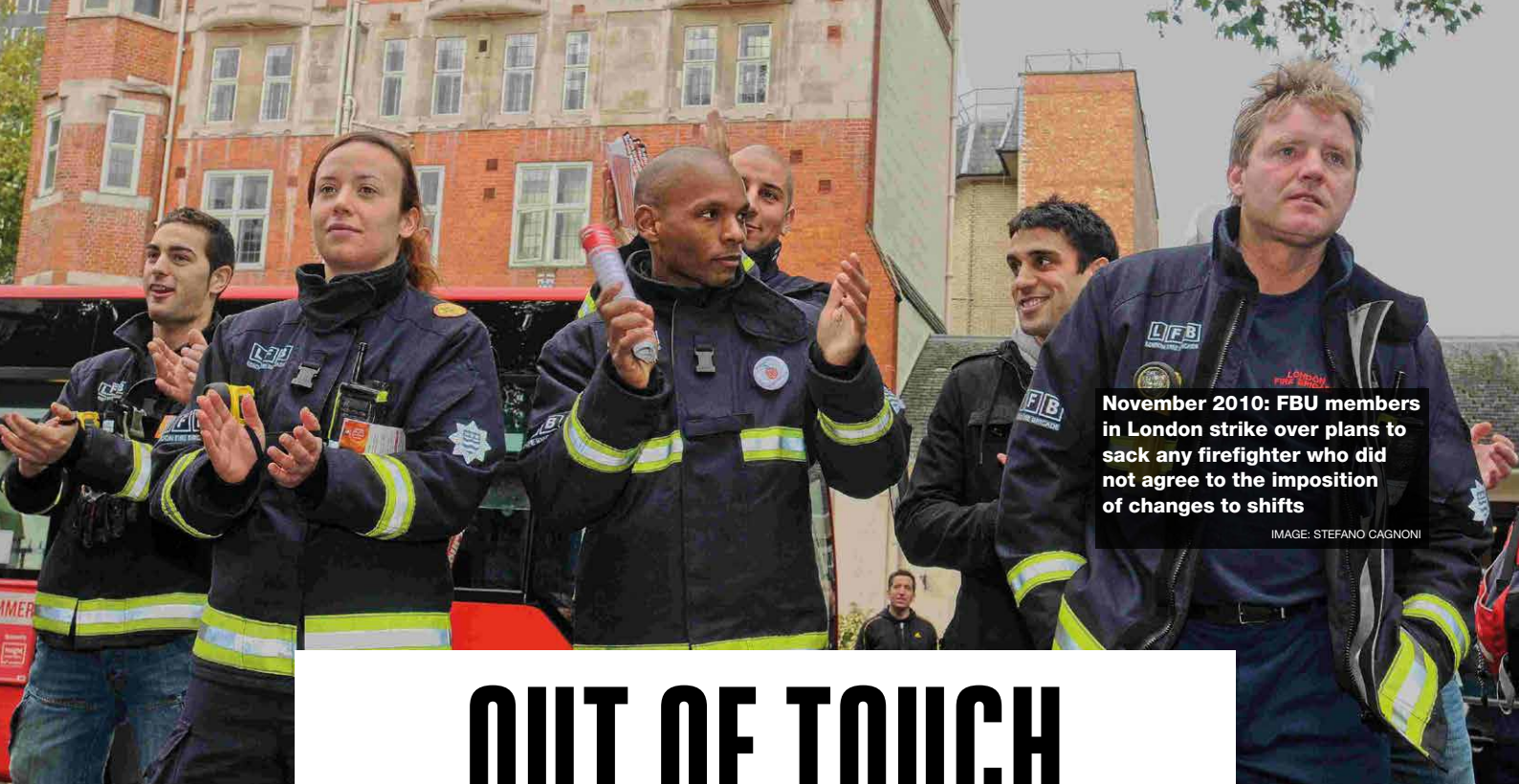
THANK ALL THE PUBLIC & TRADE
UNIONS WHO HAVE SUPPORTED
THEM IN THEIR STRUGGLE TO
ACHIEVE A LIVING WAGE.

THANK YOU.
EVERY ONE

STRIKE

Every advance in the pay, safety and conditions of working people has always come as the result of their own efforts – often through strike action. Now the government is looking at removing our right to strike



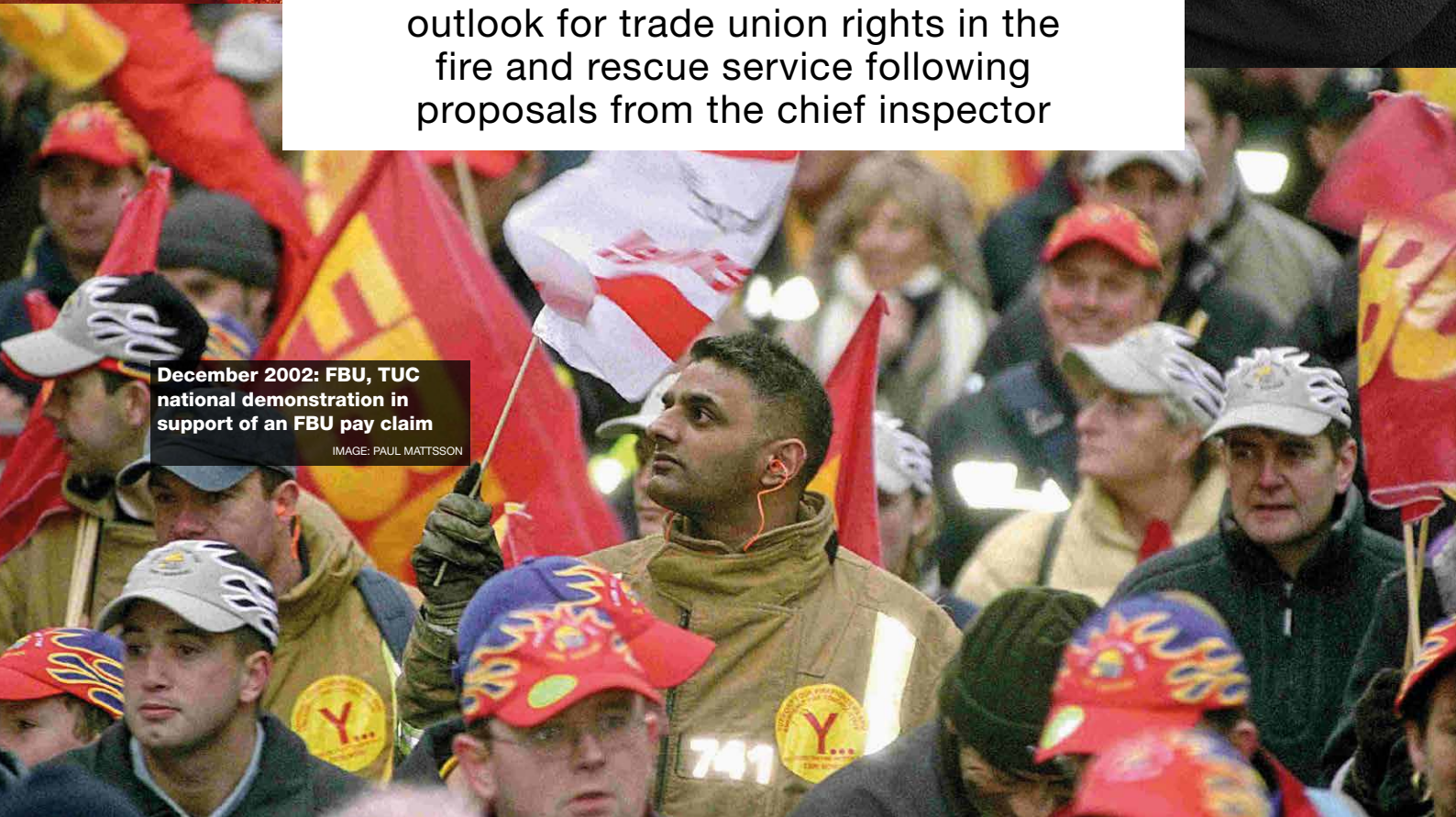


November 2010: FBU members in London strike over plans to sack any firefighter who did not agree to the imposition of changes to shifts

IMAGE: STEFANO CAGNONI

OUT OF TOUCH AND IN BREACH OF INTERNATIONAL TREATIES

Daniel Blackburn looks at the outlook for trade union rights in the fire and rescue service following proposals from the chief inspector



December 2002: FBU, TUC national demonstration in support of an FBU pay claim

IMAGE: PAUL MATTSSON

Sir Thomas Winsor, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for the Fire and Rescue Service, took issue after his appointment with the idea that firefighters should have any say about the work they do or the terms under which they do it.

When additional responsibilities for firefighters were proposed, his reports denigrating collective bargaining machinery questioned "why ... a contract of this kind was even necessary".

His latest report raises the stakes by suggesting the removal of firefighters' right to take strike action. The new proposal for firefighters' union rights can be summarised quite simply: no rights.

Everywhere, fire and rescue services are a crucial part of public safety infrastructure. Nobody questions that. But there are not many countries that take this as grounds to remove all union rights from firefighters.

One such country where a very repressive system has been applied is Japan. I have worked on firefighters' rights with the Zenroren union. It is a system so extreme that until last year anyone organising a strike in the public services could face a prison term with hard labour. It is one of the worst regimes for firefighters' rights.

Removing UK firefighter rights and taking the UK in that kind of paranoid authoritarian direction is completely unjustified.

The system in Japan was a hangover from the post-war United States occupation and a fear that union rights in the public sector would threaten stability or incite some sort of revolution.

Looking at the successful and stable countries around the world where firefighters have enjoyed union rights for decades such fears seem ridiculous. Around much of Europe, in Canada, in New Zealand, in Australia, and elsewhere, firefighters enjoy union rights.

Firefighter bargaining is well established in the US and President Biden is backing a Bill to enhance US public sector union rights.

OUT OF TOUCH

The proposal that UK firefighters' rights should be quashed seems completely out of touch with this global picture.

But Winsor is no industrial relations expert. Rather, he is a lawyer from a commercial background in the City with no prior relevant experience in either policing or firefighting (both sectors he has been charged with regulating).

What he does have is establishment backing, installed at the top to regulate rail, police, and now fire. Ask the police unions what they think of the "solutions" he came up with for their sector.

Like Winsor, I am also a lawyer, though a rather

different sort of lawyer. Despite my first-class, prize-winning masters degree in human rights and more than 29 years as a specialist on trade union rights the Tories did not come to me for trade union advice.

Defend the right to strike and other industrial action, otherwise conditions will be imposed upon us and not for the better
David Fitzgerald

That's a pity, because I would have listened to those who actually work in the fire and rescue service.

When the FBU asked me to work on this, it was quickly

apparent that the union and the employers are broadly in agreement: both want existing arrangements protected.

BINDING TREATIES

And it is not only the fire and rescue service's main providers that support collective bargaining for firefighters. Conventions of the International Labour Organization – a United Nations agency – apply to firefighters and protect union rights. There are similar protections under the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter.

These treaties are binding on the UK. They are not part of the EU and are unaffected by Brexit. Speaking of which, the Brexit agreement also protects labour rights, while UK law itself has a number of provisions that will make Winsor's proposals more awkward to implement than he appears to have anticipated.

As I advised FBU general secretary Matt Wrack, there are good grounds to support protection of firefighters' rights, and the IER is ready to assist in that regard.

If we forfeit our right to strike, we turn our back on all those who struggled before us in their fight for the rights that we enjoy and give away so easily today
FBU member



August 2014: Notice outside a London fire station during strikes against plans to force firefighters to work longer while having their pensions cut

PAT TUSON/ALAMY

The right to strike is crucial and must not be allowed to be taken away. It is worth fighting as hard as we can for
Richard Sweatman

Daniel Blackburn is a barrister and director of the International Centre for Trade Union Rights and editor of *International Union Rights* journal and the global reference book *Trade Unions of the World*



FIREFIGHTERS WERE NEVER TO BLAME FOR GRENFELL

As the Grenfell Tower inquiry starts to look at the role of government in the disaster, FBU general secretary **Matt Wrack** reviews the background to this phase of the investigation

**FBU members
taking part in a
monthly Grenfell
Silent Walk in
West London**



GUY SMALLMAN

The Grenfell Tower Inquiry is finally moving towards examining the role of government. This is an important stage in the investigation, but it also means that, for FBU members, it is worth reviewing what we have said previously.

It is also worth reminding ourselves of the broad strategy we have adopted in the aftermath of this terrible incident.

From the earliest assessments, we identified a number of areas to research and to campaign on:

- defend and protect FBU members from unfair criticism
- examine and expose the role of government policy, especially in relation to deregulation and the weakening of safety standards

- highlight any real failings within the fire and rescue service, including the fragmentation of our service driven by government policy over the past 20 years. Such failings were generally not related to actions taken on the night, but a wider failure to plan and prepare, and an idleness towards emerging risks
- defend and support the bereaved, survivors and residents and to build alliances in the local community. We identified early on that there would be attempts from government and from business interests to play “divide and rule” between firefighters and the community
- we knew early on that the weakened building safety regime had been driven by a political agenda and by the lobbying and demands of big business. We have sought to expose this as we have developed our case
- we have tried to explain that many of the failings exposed by Grenfell reflect concerns which have been raised by the FBU with ministers and within the fire and rescue service for decades. Sadly, our warnings were largely ignored; those responsible should be held to account for the tragic result

Death and destruction on the scale of Grenfell inevitably – and rightly – led to demands for justice for those who lost their lives, the survivors and the wider community.

From the start, the FBU has fully supported this and has sought in various ways to talk to and build dialogue and alliances with the bereaved, the survivors and the local community. That has occasionally been a difficult task, but it has been essential.

DEREGULATION HAS BEEN RUTHLESSLY PUSHED BY GOVERNMENTS FROM THATCHER TO JOHNSON

We knew that there would be attempts from various quarters to blame fire-fighters for what happened in order to divert attention from the real and deeper factors which caused such a disaster. Many FBU members have played a vital role in helping to build our alliance with local people, for example by regular participation in the silent walks in North Kensington.

DEREGULATION

The FBU has consistently argued that central government decisions lie behind most of the failings which led to Grenfell and we have pointed to the drive to deregulation and privatisation. The deregulation argument is that government rules, standards and regulations are an impediment to business. They stop or slow down businesses getting on with things – so called “red tape” – in this case building or redeveloping blocks of flats (or any other building).

Big business corporations exist to make a profit and rules and regulations on safety issues increase their costs and so reduce their profits.

There has been a long-term alliance between politicians pushing a “free market” agenda and corporations and other business interests lobbying consistently for regulations and standards to be reduced or scrapped.

This was reflected, for example, by former prime minister David Cameron describing health and safety as a “monster” which should be slain. Deregulation has been ruthlessly pushed by governments across this time period, from Thatcher to Johnson.

This political agenda created a weak and fragmented building safety regime with an ever greater role for the private sector.

Public sector agencies including the fire and rescue service and local authority building control were attacked, weakened and undermined by cuts. The evidence has been exposed at the Grenfell inquiry hearings.

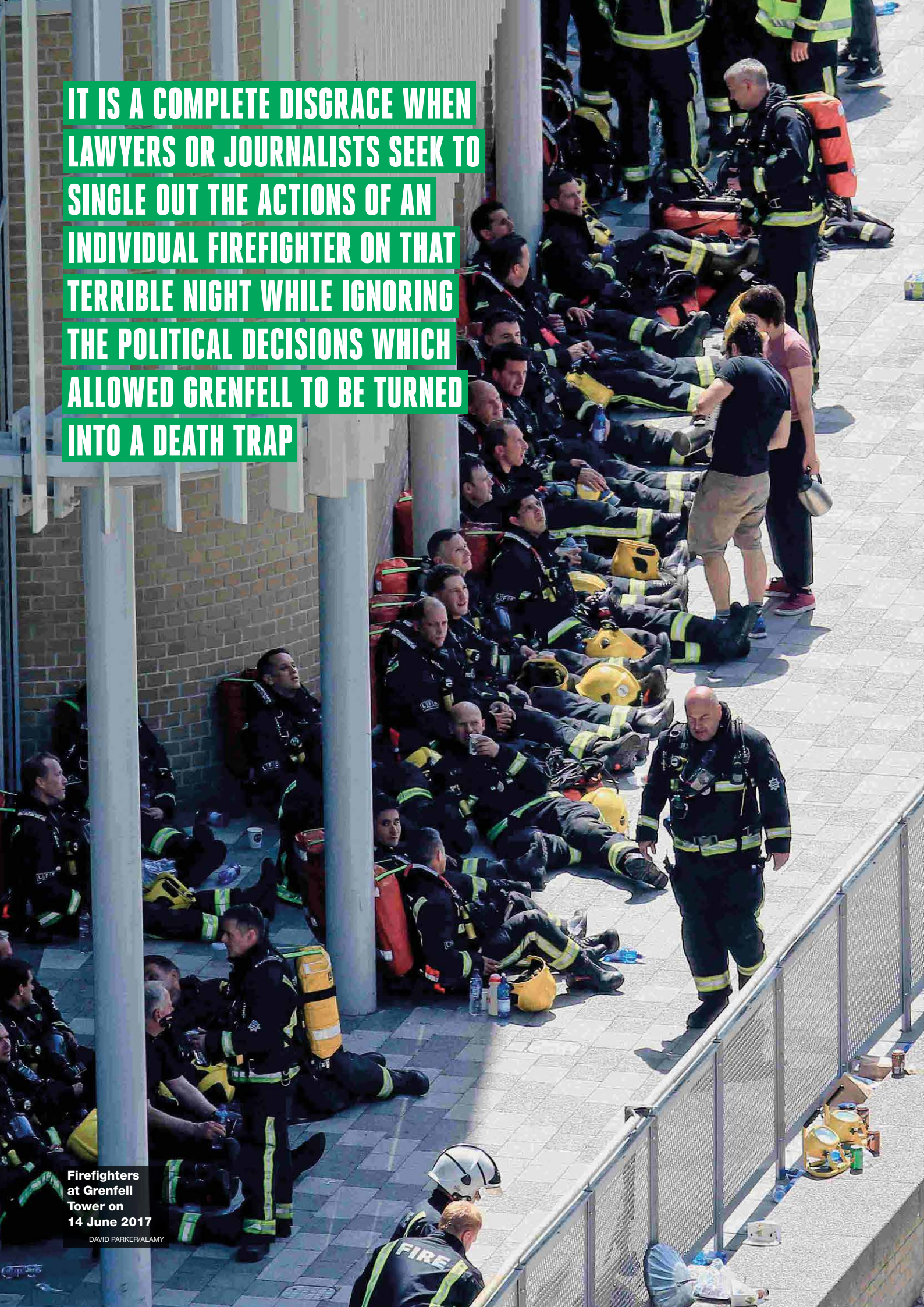
Building control teams were slashed while developers, construction firms and manufacturers of construction products gamed the system, fully aware that what they were doing was dangerous.

It is truly sickening that the cladding industry was effectively allowed to regulate itself and test its own products. Nothing was allowed to get in the way of making a profit – even if lives were at risk.

**IT IS A COMPLETE DISGRACE WHEN
LAWYERS OR JOURNALISTS SEEK TO
SINGLE OUT THE ACTIONS OF AN
INDIVIDUAL FIREFIGHTER ON THAT
TERRIBLE NIGHT WHILE IGNORING
THE POLITICAL DECISIONS WHICH
ALLOWED GRENFELL TO BE TURNED
INTO A DEATH TRAP**

**Firefighters
at Grenfell
Tower on
14 June 2017**

DAVID PARKER/ALAMY



GOVERNMENT MINISTERS AND THEIR NODDING DOGS

When we look at the fire and rescue service, it is also clear that any weaknesses have been driven by central government. National standards were abolished, national structures were scrapped and our service became increasingly fragmented as government ministers obsessed about so-called “localism”.

So it is a complete disgrace when lawyers or journalists seek to single out

the actions of an individual firefighter on that terrible night while ignoring the political decisions which allowed Grenfell to be turned into a death trap.

There were and are failings in our service, but they were not the failings of those on the front line who attended that fire. Rather we have seen a complete failure of chief fire officers to stand up for or defend our service and our profession.

Indeed, many of the leading figures from the Chief Fire Officers Association and from the National Fire Chiefs Council have supported and endorsed “localism” and the scrapping of standards.

They have acted as noddling dogs for government ministers for 20 years while our service has been attacked and cut to pieces.

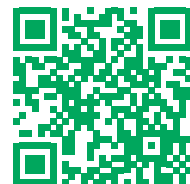
WHERE NEXT?

For the remainder of the inquiry, now in phase 2, the FBU will continue to seek to make sure that blame for the Grenfell Tower tragedy is apportioned to those who are truly responsible, and not the firefighters who gave their all – and often risked their own lives – trying to save residents who were trapped in their homes.

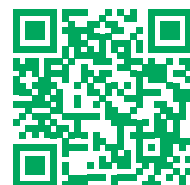
We will continue to highlight the fact that the failings that led to Grenfell were a result of a building safety approach that was fundamentally flawed, and that that approach was the result of political choices made by governments at Westminster over the past four decades.

FIND OUT MORE

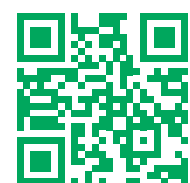
■ Watch the FBU’s oral opening submissions to module 6 of phase 2 of the inquiry at youtu.be/9BXp99zESVo?t=1448



■ Download a transcript of the FBU’s oral opening submission at bit.ly/FBU-GTI-6-2-transcript



■ Read the FBU’s written opening submission at bit.ly/FBU-GTI-6-2



Above: People thank firefighters during a silent walk by Grenfell Tower one year after the disaster

Below: Silent walk on the second anniversary of the fire



HIS AIM IS TRUE

Alan Soutar is setting the world of darts on fire, but he is still fighting them in Scotland, as he told **Steve Morgan**



Alan Soutar is used to feeling the heat. His 17 years with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service – preceded by eight as a commando serving in 27 countries – have seen to that. Yet his 2022 started with grace under different pressure, as he blazed his way to the last 16 of the world professional darts championship (PDC).

Along the way, Alan stunned second-round opponent Mensur Suljovic in front of a packed, raucous Alexandra Palace in London – and an audience watching at home in Arbroath on Sky Sports.

Coming back from two sets and two legs down, he completed the job in dramatic fashion, hitting a nerveless 144 to check out in a tie-break, before going on – returning home for a shift first – to knock out seventh seed Jose De Souza, where he coined the tack-sharp, work-related quip: “Jose A, or hose B?”

A fairy tale at the best of times, 44-year-old Alan's story is more remarkable yet given that, without Covid,

it might never have happened.

When not crewing shifts with his pals at Kingsway fire station in Dundee, he put his lockdown to good use, racking up hours of practice nailing those doubles and trebles.

After qualifying for a prized tour card for the professional circuit last February, 12 months on, a lifetime's passion that began with the triathlon – “dominoes, darts and pool” – with his brother Garry on visits to his grandparents' pub in Arbroath, has been handsomely rewarded.

Still pinching himself at the bizarre scenarios in which his new-found acclaim

finds him, Alan laughs recalling a recent trip to get a new phone.

“The guy kept looking at me, but he didn't say anything,” he says. “We went right through the procedure, then when I mentioned the discount for being a firefighter, he said: ‘YES, it is you!’ and disappeared to get his mate from out the back for some selfies.”

IT'S LIKE A FAMILY

Alan is revelling in the good PR it brings to the day job and has no desire to hang up his PPE.

“I'm a firefighter,” he says. “I want to be in the back of the fire engine, putting the BA on, putting out fires – that's what I want to do. And I love the lads at work – it's like a family.”

The practical, all hands-to-the-pump approach has been with Alan as long as he can remember.

As a schoolchild, he recalls being advised to narrow his interests because he'd try every sport and pastime going.

He listened – or at least, partially. He's still a man of action. When not fighting fires or playing darts, he's one of four ambassadors at his beloved Arbroath FC,

ALAN AND PARTNER AMANDA HELP RAISE GUIDE-DOG PUPPIES BEFORE THEY ARE ALLOCATED OWNERS



Alan Soutar in action against Callan Rydz in round 4 of the William Hill World Darts Championship 2022 in Alexandra Palace, London

PICTURE: LAWRENCE LUSTIG/PDC

currently enjoying their finest season in nearly half a century.

He's also looking forward to restarting his own darts academy in Arbroath, which attracts 70-plus youngsters every Thursday.

Then there's the guide-dogs. Alan and partner Amanda – also a keen darts player – help raise puppies before they are allocated owners.

It's all of a piece with a relentless hunger for public-spirited deeds. On the day we talk, Alan had finished his night shift, returned home, taken the dog for

a six-mile walk – and got a booster jab. “The feeling you get giving a dog back, knowing it's going to a nine-year-old boy – helping to change a life, that's special,” he says.

NOT GETTING CARRIED AWAY

His flights of fancy may propel him to greater things on the darts circuit, but the world No. 51 is not getting carried away. Back at the station, he's still “Soots” – and that's the way he likes it.

“Life's not much different – apart from the attention,” he says. “I think my

story has caught on because we've all had two years of absolute rubbish. Everyone wants to share in good news, and I guess I've got a decent back story.

“I get so many emails from different stations, watch commanders and fire fighters telling me they've watched me,” he adds. “Those sorts of things are brilliant. And the SFRS chief sent me a ‘good luck’ message, so that's great.”

Newcomer of the year on the PDC circuit, it looks as if the affable Alan will be playing both the flame and the fame game for a good while yet.

RECOGNITION

RETIRED FBU LGBT COMMITTEE CHAIR WINS NATIONAL AWARD

After more than two decades serving LGBT FBU members Yannick Dubois retired in August 2020.

Yannick was the longest serving member of the union's LGBT committee and had been the chair for the past 10 years and a committee member since the establishment of the committee.

LGBT committee secretary Pat Carberry said: "Yannick has been the heart of our section.

"I have learnt so much from her. On occasions when I have considered the often complex issues affecting our members and thought I had a grasp, Yannick was there to ask 'but have you considered this' and, all of a sudden, I have realised, just as I thought I had the solution, there is so much more to consider."

Yannick throughout her time on the LGBT committee was the education official and intrinsic in the planning and delivery of every LGBT

school. At one of the biggest annual LGBT events – Brighton Pride – Yannick again was at the heart of planning, delivering and also hosting attendees at this event.

As a consequence of the pandemic, the FBU has seen many officials reach retirement and leave without suitable celebration of their commitment and contribution and Yannick is one of them.

LGBT members look forward to an opportunity when they can celebrate Yannick's outstanding contribution in advancing understanding and inclusion.

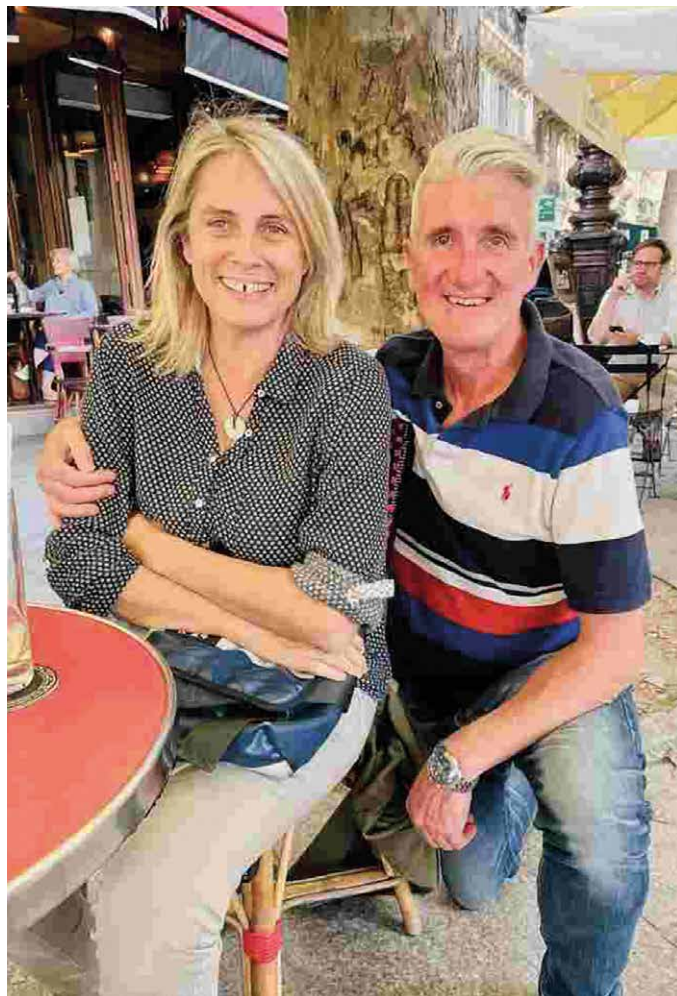
In 2019, *Fire Magazine*, as part of its Excellence in Fire Awards, introduced a number of new categories, including "Most Influential LGBT+ in the Fire Service."

The first winner of the award was our FBU LGBT committee secretary Pat Carberry.

The awards in 2020 were postponed because of the pandemic and the next awards were held in December 2021.

Yannick was amongst those nominated and went on to win the award.

Pat Carberry said: "Many of the nominees for recognition are well known to our committee and all were worthy of formal recognition



Yannick Dubois and Pat Carberry

for the award. They have all contributed to the advancement of understanding of LGBT+ issues and made significant contributions."

The judges selected Yannick to be this year's winner and it speaks volumes for the recognition and value attributed to the work of the FBU LGBT committee that the two times this award has been made it has been to our officials.

While we may not have been able to give Yannick the send-off she deserves, the timing of the award was welcomed by all the officials of the committee.

The LGBT committee has much to be proud of and continues to lead on the promotion and representation

on LGBT+ issues and this is formally recognised in the wider fire industry through awards such as Excellence in Fire.

As we celebrate LGBT history month this February, we send best wishes to Yannick on her retirement and thank her for her outstanding contribution to representing our FBU LGBT+ members.



IT SPEAKS VOLUMES FOR THE RECOGNITION AND VALUE ATTRIBUTED TO THE WORK OF THE FBU LGBT COMMITTEE THAT THE TWO TIMES THIS AWARD HAS BEEN MADE IT HAS BEEN TO OUR OFFICIALS



WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION

HOW TO IDENTIFY AND CHALLENGE IT

The pandemic brought into sharp focus the inequalities that the most vulnerable people in society face both in and out of the workplace. Here we focus on workplace discrimination and how the FBU can help members to both identify and challenge it in the workplace.

UNLAWFUL DISCRIMINATION

It is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 to discriminate against a worker because of a “protected characteristic”. There are nine of them:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION

There are different types of discrimination which apply in the workplace the key ones are:

Direct discrimination – this occurs when a worker is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic than the employer treats – or would treat – another worker who does not have that protected characteristic, in the same or very similar circumstances.

Indirect discrimination – this is when the employer applies a provision, criterion

or practice which disadvantages the worker and puts – or would put – other workers who share the protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage.

Discrimination arising from disability – this occurs when a worker is treated unfavourably because of something arising in consequence of their disability. For example, where a disabled worker is dismissed because of sickness absence which is related to their disability.

Harassment – this occurs where a worker is subjected to unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic which violates a worker’s dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. For example, when a gay worker is mimicked by a senior officer speaking in exaggerated tones.

Victimisation – this happens when a worker is subjected to a detriment because they raised a complaint under the Equality Act 2010. For example, where a disabled worker is refused a reference because they had brought a complaint of disability discrimination.

Employers also have a duty to remove obstacles in the workplace which put disabled workers at a disadvantage.

PROVING DISCRIMINATION

Although the law on discrimination is relatively easy to state, it can be difficult to prove without good evidence. This is because a difference in treatment between a worker who has a protected characteristic and one who does not is not enough to prove a claim.

Direct discrimination requires some evidence that the reason the worker has been treated less

favourably is because of the protected characteristic.

The best way of showing this is by comparing how others who do not have the same protected characteristic have been treated. For example, if a BAME worker has been dismissed for misconduct when a white colleague who committed the same misconduct has not, then this may point to discrimination.

If, however, the misconduct is different the difference may be the reason for the dismissal and not the worker’s race.

In a claim of indirect discrimination, there will need to be evidence that other workers with the same protected characteristic would not be able to meet the same provision, criterion or practice. For example, a requirement to work full time may put women returning from maternity leave at a particular disadvantage when compared to men.

An employer has a defence to a claim of indirect discrimination if they can show it can be justified. A tribunal will balance the needs of the fire and rescue service employer as against the discriminatory effect on the worker.

What action should someone subject to discrimination take?

It is important to keep a clear written record of what happened, when and where it happened, any witnesses and any reason for why it happened.

The burden is on the person who is subject to the discrimination to prove their case, so you should always seek the support of your FBU representative if you believe you have been discriminated against.



SATOSHI KAMBAYASHI



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TRADE-UNIONS/FBU](http://WWW.THOMPSONSTRADOUNION.LAW/TRADE-UNIONS/FBU)

WOMEN CAN'T WHAT?

In the build-up to International Women's Day on 8 March, the FBU shop has launched a range of **Women Can't What?** branded kit to celebrate women members across the UK fire and rescue service and designed to break down gender stereotypes and show that women firefighters are here to stay

Use code **IWD22** for 10% off all women's ranges in the shop on 8 March only

T-shirt: £14.99 • Tote Bag: £4.99 • Mug: £7.50

Metal flask: £17.99 • Metal water bottle: £9.50

Or buy a t-shirt, tote bag and mug together for only £22



A big thank you to South West members (l-r) Kellie, Kirsty, Emma, Charlie and Donna



A wreath was laid and a minute's silence observed at Stephen Maynard's red plaque in Poplar, East London, on the anniversary of his death in the line of duty, on 25 January 1980. The event was attended by his brother Dave and family with firefighters from Poplar station. His red plaque was unveiled on Firefighters Memorial Day, 4 May 2019.

■ redplaque.org.uk



'THIN RED LINE' SPECIAL EDITION FIREFIGHTER'S WATCH

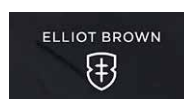
Built to an exacting standard befitting the harsh environments that firefighters can find themselves in, the "Thin Red Line" special edition firefighter's watch by Elliot Brown is made to order with a personalised engraving on the case back.

Beautifully detailed, yet thoughtfully designed with durability sitting at the core of every component, the special edition watch comes in two models, the Canford and the slightly smaller Kimmeridge. A stainless steel bracelet is an option.

■ For more information and to order your watch go to: bit.ly/EBFIRE

■ Place your order by 1 March 2022 for delivery in September.

£35 from the sale of each watch goes to Rock2Recovery, a community interest company that supports mental wellbeing among firefighter, blue light and military communities.



Rock2Recovery testimonials from firefighters:

"I am a serving officer in the fire service. Following some horrendous incidents I attended in close succession, which resulted in being diagnosed with PTSD, I contacted Rock2Recovery and with their help I was able to deal with it and get back to a rational way of thinking. They have always been there when needed. They genuinely have been like a rock to lean on."

"I was referred to Rock2Recovery when a colleague noticed that I was suffering. They were able to facilitate coaching away from my work environment and employed techniques that helped me to process my feelings without having to relive painful memories. Since working with them, I have been able to develop more coping mechanisms that assist me every day. Rock2Recovery have been there for my family too and continue to be there."

rock2recovery.co.uk

STATION CAT MUD, TREES AND RAGU

Don't
like cats?
See Buddy
awful



KELLY RAINALAMY

BULLY FOR TWO!

When a complaint of bullying was upheld against her, North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, Tory Julia Mulligan, decided not to stand for re-election.

Your Cat would like to reassure readers that Ms Mulligan is doing very nicely, thank you.

Since leaving North Yorkshire last May, Mulligan has been appointed as a senior director at the Independent Office for Police Conduct; the independent chair of the Police Advisory Board for England; and chair of the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority.

All three 'independent' appointments are courtesy of Home Secretary Priti Patel.

By coincidence, both Mulligan and the Home Secretary are Conservatives who have been found not to have treated people with consideration and respect.

STICK IN THE MUD

When Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service received a call to a very tricky rescue situation, they promptly despatched two crews, from Verwood and Ringwood, to the hapless victim's aid.

A spokesperson for DWFRS said: "On arrival, firefighters found a female casualty stuck ankle deep in mud and assisted her to the path."

You read that right. This person was in mud, right up to her ankles and called the fire service.

Sometimes you just cannot make it up.



PASTA CARING

Following a recent advertising campaign by the pasta sauce company, Ragú; firefighters from Tahlequah Fire Department – Station 1 in Oklahoma, decided to film themselves cooking with Ragú sauce "to boost communication and creativity among our team".

Firefighter Anthony Margarit (inset) posted the video to his Tik Tok account.

As a mark of appreciation for the publicity it then received, Ragú delivered 792 jars of pasta sauce to the fire station.

The firefighters are now planning a fundraising spaghetti supper for their community in the spring that will benefit Professional Firefighters Local 4099 tragedy fund.



Edinburgh that was evacuated because of a funny smell.

Two fire engines and Scottish Gas Networks (SGN) were sent to investigate after reports of a suspected gas leak.

However, SGN later reported that no gas leak had been found.

SGN tweeted: "The environmental smell in Edinburgh is moving from EH15 to town centre."

With all the bad smells coming out of Downing Street recently, your Cat is surprised that London Fire Brigade has not seen a rise in its response to environmental odours.

BUDDY AWFUL

Your Cat was perusing some newspapers that had been dropped in her basket when she came across some mews that is a little purr-plexing.

To say the least, she is a little agitated and all beclaws

of blatant discrimination in the UK's fire service.

Apparently, while firefighters in Lancashire were saving a person from up a tree in Carnforth, Essex firefighters from Basildon were busying themselves liberating a dog that had got its head stuck in a tin of baby formula milk, and Humberside Fire and Rescue Service was releasing a squirrel with its head stuck in a drain cover.

Meanwhile London Fire Brigade was refusing to go to the aid of a cat stuck in a tree!

Buddy, for that is his name, jumped into the tree after being spooked by fireworks. Buddy's furry owner claims firefighters refused to attempt a rescue, with one allegedly telling her: "I don't like cats."

Don't like cats? Too busy rescuing humans, canines and sciuridae* more like.

This feline is going to paws for a mewment and hopefully calm down a little.

Don't like cats indeed!

*Squirrels are members of the family sciuridae.



SOMETHING IN THE AIR

Your Cat has had a whiff of a story about a hotel in

25-YEAR BADGES



Glendon Kilminster (c), Lambeth River, London, receives his 25-year badge from regional secretary Jon Lambe (l) and SW London area secretary Dave Young



Steve Johns (r), fire protection, Oxfordshire, receives his 25-year badge from former brigade chair Jimmy Harris with Slade Park blue watch members looking on



Adam Tims (l), red watch, Brierley Hill, West Midlands, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Andrew Nixon



Paul Stokes (l), green watch, Temple, Avon, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Amanda Mills



Pete Smith (r), FBU executive council member, Yorkshire & Humberside, receives his 25-year badge from FBU president Ian Murray with the EC looking on



Simon Booth (l), Glossop, Derbyshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Dan Carter



Martin Walker (l), blue watch, Adwick, South Yorkshire, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Matt Clarke



Phil Bendall (r), Ashford, Kent, receives his 25-year badge from group rep and Ashford branch rep Malcolm Harmer with colleagues looking on



Paul Johnson (r), red watch, Aston, West Midlands, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Steve Gregory with watch colleagues (l-r) Phil Morrissey, Nick Devlin, Sean Murphy and Pete Bhatti



Gabby Heycock (r), Oxfordshire, receives his 25-year badge from officer section rep Chris Wilson with colleagues from fire protection looking on



Paul Chipperfield (r), Essex, receives his 25-year badge from FBU official Andy Finlayson at Basildon



David Bond (l), Cleveland, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Davy Howe



Tony Cassar (r), red watch, Orsett, Essex, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Scott Fretton



40-YEAR BADGE

Andy Dark (c), FBU assistant general secretary, receives his 40-year badge from general secretary **Matt Wrack** (l) and president **Ian Murray**



Steve Callear (r), white watch, Longton, Staffordshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary **Chris Craddock** with white watch colleagues looking on



Paul Clarke (r), Cambridge, receives his 25-year badge from national officer **Tam McFarlane** with green watch looking on



Dave Warby (l), community safety team, Surrey, receives his 25-year badge from **Gary Tester** of Leatherhead



Sarah Rapley, Essex, receives her 25-year badge from FBU officials **Alan Chin-Shaw** (l) and **Dave Hellion** at fleet workshops



John Mitchell (l), white watch, Bury, Greater Manchester, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary **Steve Wiswell**, with watch colleagues (l-r) **Dan Leveridge**, **Rick Taylor** and **Mike Watters**



Rick Taylor (l), white watch, Bury, Greater Manchester, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary **Steve Wiswell**, with watch colleagues (l-r) **Dan Leveridge**, **Mike Watters** and **John Mitchell**

Please send high resolution digital files or prints to: firefighter@fbu.org.uk

or Firefighter, FBU, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 7AE

For your image to look its best, we need the original, full-resolution image. One lifted from a website may not do justice to a unique occasion. We do our best with images that are low resolution, taken directly into a bright light or suffer from camera-shake, or have other problems, but cannot perform miracles. Please include details for each image – full names of everyone who is in it; their station/brigade/watch etc; where they are in the picture (eg: left to right); their union posts/branch if relevant; and where/when it was taken.

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Change of address or next of kin
Advise your brigade organiser of any
change of address and head office of
changes to next of kin or nominations
for benefits.

FBU FREEPHONE LEGAL ADVICE LINE

0800 100 6061

ENGLAND, WALES AND N IRELAND

0800 089 1331

SCOTLAND

The line provides advice for personal
injury, family law, wills, conveyancing,
personal finance and consumer issues.
For disciplinary and employment-
related queries contact your local FBU
representative.

T THOMPSONS
SOLICITORS

SIGN UP FOR THE UK FIREFIGHTERS CANCER AND DISEASE REGISTRY

The Fire Brigades Union needs all London firefighter members, particularly those who attended the Grenfell Tower fire, to be part of this unique registry. The information collected will help us to evaluate firefighters' health and their exposure to fire toxins, to gain an understanding of the future possible health consequences and finally to offer a proper long-term health screening.

We need to hear from **all firefighters** both serving and retired, from those who have never received a cancer or disease diagnosis and from those who have had or currently have cancer or other serious or chronic illness

HELP MAKE
FIREFIGHTING SAFER
SIGN UP FOR THE
UK FIREFIGHTERS
CANCER AND DISEASE
REGISTRY



In February 2021, as part of ground-breaking research into toxic contaminants, jointly funded by the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) and the Firefighters 100 Lottery, the Fire Brigades Union alongside UCLAN launched the UK Firefighters Cancer and Disease Registry.

The aim of this unique registry is to develop a better understanding of the increased occurrence of cancers and diseases among firefighters and to identify the association between a firefighter's occupation and exposure to fire effluents and residues.

Research study **objectives** are:

- **To offer** preventative health screening, education and support that is specifically designed to

protect firefighter's health.

- **To obtain** detailed knowledge of firefighter practise on an individual basis in relation to potential exposure to contaminants.
- **To identify** the frequency and severity of the most common diseases and cancers suffered by firefighters.
- **To correlate** the incidence of disease with specific work practices.
- **To provide** robust evidence of any occupational diseases in firefighters in the UK.

Why is it so important to join this registry?

More responses means more data which, scientifically makes this research more valid.

FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO THE UCLAN WEBSITE
WWW.UCLAN.AC.UK/RESEARCH/ACTIVITY/FCDR