

TUC/CBI Joint Statement on HIV/AIDS

Let's make it our business.

HIV/AIDS poses a formidable challenge to workers and employers alike throughout the world. Trade unions and employers are helping to combat the pandemic by taking action centred on the workplace.

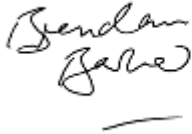
HIV/AIDS is having a devastating impact on labour, productivity and economic growth in many countries. While the highest prevalence continues to be in sub Saharan Africa, Asia, too, has a large number of people living with HIV and other regions are impacted as well. Globally, around 40 million people are currently living with it and nine out of ten of these are in the prime of their life.

The human cost is immense, counted in the loss of income for already poor families and emotional distress. Life expectancy in some parts of Africa has dropped to 36 years. National economies are finding it hard to deal with the consequences. HIV/AIDS deprives employers of their workforce and customers. It deprives unions of leaders and members.

At a basic level, UK multinationals are committed to ensuring that HIV sufferers overseas do not face discrimination. But many do much more, attempting to address the core of the issue through successful voluntary initiatives involving information, prevention, counselling and treatment. Unions, too, are mobilising their members through initiatives designed to prevent the spread of the disease and provide treatment, care and support. Employers and trade unions have produced excellent educational and information material such as the *Employers Handbook on HIV/AIDS* and *AFRO HIV/AIDS Manual for Shop Stewards*. The CBI and TUC also acknowledge the work of the many workers and employers organisations in the fight against HIV/AIDS. These include the Global Business Coalition, the International Trade Union Confederation and the Global Union Federations, all of which, often in co-operation with development partners and local trade union centres and business organisations, are involved in a large number of initiatives throughout the world. It is important that these initiatives are sustained over time, adequately resourced, properly co-ordinated and efficiently implemented.

Nor is there room for complacency about the situation in the UK where the level of awareness of the threat to public health has diminished over the years despite the fact that an estimated 58,000 people are currently living with HIV/AIDS. At the onset of the disease in Britain in the 1980s, the CBI, TUC and ACAS took the initiative to start formulating workplace policies on HIV/AIDS. Since then, they have been working to eliminate discrimination and challenging the stigma and marginalisation associated with the disease. In this regard, CBI and TUC welcome the application of the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act to people living with HIV/AIDS in the UK.

The CBI and the TUC are committed to working together to help our respective members deal with the issues raised by HIV/AIDS and we will look for opportunities to collaborate with others too. We will help to spread good practice by companies and unions whenever the opportunity arises. As we mark World AIDS Day, we hope that we can make our own small contribution to the collective attempt to eliminate HIV/AIDS.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brendan Barber", with a short horizontal line underneath.

Brendan Barber
TUC General Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Lambert", written in a cursive style.

Richard Lambert
Director-General, CBI