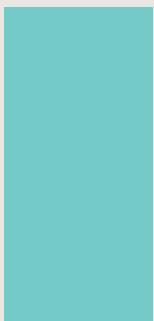


Inspiring learners to achieve

Unionlearn Annual Report 2017



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Foreword

In spite of challenges on many fronts, unions continue to prioritise learning and training in the full knowledge that this is a major boost to the life chances of individuals and the lifeblood of the union movement. This is in no small part sustained by unionlearn and the Union Learning Fund (ULF) which over the past year supported unions to help 210,000 people access some form of learning or training facilitated through ULF projects. If you add in the learners supported directly by unionlearn and the union reps trained by TUC Education the combined total benefiting was in the region of a quarter of a million during 2016-17.

It is a tribute to the work of all the unions involved and unionlearn that ULF projects once again performed above expectations and delivered 43,000 more learning outcomes than the target profile. It is especially welcome that the number of union learning reps (ULRs) recruited and trained saw a recovery following two consecutive years when this has proved to be very challenging.

Important as they are, the numbers tell just one part of the story. Crucially there is now a wealth of evidence showing the impact on people's lives and the wider role of unions in the workplace. Last autumn unionlearn published the final report of a major independent evaluation of the ULF and unionlearn commissioned from the universities of Leeds and Exeter. This research, based on extensive interviews with nearly 400 employers and survey returns from over 2,500 learners, tells a powerful story.

The research highlights once again that union learning reps have a unique talent in reaching out to and engaging people who have not achieved success in mainstream education. Over two-thirds of learners with no previous qualification and just under half with a qualification below level 2 got a qualification at a higher level as a result of ULF support according to the findings. As importantly, progression is another recurring theme of the research – nine out of 10 union learners said they were interested in further learning and a quarter of all qualifications achieved were at level 3 or higher.

The research also shows that union learning boosts career opportunities in a very practical way. One in five union learners said that they gained a promotion or increased responsibility at work and one in ten gained a pay rise (and these outcomes were greatly boosted if the person undertook more than one episode of union learning). Employers also cited a number of positive impacts, with nearly half saying it led to an increase in staff gaining qualifications and to improved employment relations across the workplace. The added value of union learning was another key theme – it is estimated that the ULF learning and training delivered an estimated net contribution to the economy of more than £1.4 billion as a result of a boost to jobs, wages and productivity.

Importantly, the evaluation unearthed one unique new finding that all trade unionists should advertise widely. Whilst a fifth of people commencing a ULF learning or training course were not union members at that stage, nearly half of them subsequently decided to join a union. The clear inference of this is that union learning is a potent recruitment tool for trade unions in addition to its many other varied benefits for workers and employers alike.

Trade Union Education continues to be of high importance to trade unions and reps across the economy. The innovation and strategic development of delivery, with a greater focus on digital and online learning, is enabling reps to access trade union education anytime anywhere and providing real flexibility for unions.

Over the past year unionlearn and unions have supported learning and training against a backdrop of change and a growing degree of uncertainty. Preparations for the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy has dominated the skills world and unionlearn quite rightly directed a lot of resources to supporting unions to use the levy as leverage to negotiate many more high quality Apprenticeships. At the same time unionlearn and ULF projects have maintained a commitment to the common cause of empowering workers from all corners of the labour market to revitalise their skills, regardless of their starting point.

One thing is for certain – the coming year will be no less challenging for unionlearn and the Union Learning Fund than the past 12 months. With a potential looming skills crunch, in part resulting from the impact of Brexit, the union role in support of learning and training will take on even greater importance. I am glad to say that on the basis of what has been achieved over the past year, I am very confident that unionlearn and the Union Learning Fund are up to the task.



Mary Bousted
Chair, unionlearn Board

Delivery

The Union Learning Fund

The Union Learning Fund (ULF) was established in 1998 to promote activity by trade unions in support of creating a learning society. Its primary aim is to develop the capacity of trade unions and Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) to work with employers, employees and learning providers to encourage greater take-up of learning in the workplace. It was transferred from BIS to DfE in 2016. In 2016-17 the Union Learning Fund supported 21 unions to deliver 28 projects at a total cost of £9.8 million.

ULF projects once again performed ahead of expectations and the total ULF learners via the union route was 210,000 which is 126% of the annual target profile. A key achievement this year was the recruitment and training of over 1,300 new ULRs (109% of profile) and the follow on ULR training of over 8,500 reps (127% of profile). These targets have been underachieved for the past two years. Projects supported over 14,000 Apprenticeships. Over 40,000 learners attended informal adult and community learning (IACL) both in workplace and community locations and over 37,000 learners took part in work related CPD.

All 28 projects have been managed by the ULF team, through direct support and a variety of events. This year saw improvements in ULF processes which included the introduction of learner tracking. The system will be piloted in 2017-18 along with the

introduction of a performance related payment system. The team supported unions in understanding the changes to the Round 18 Prospectus. Twenty nine bids were submitted and 25 of these were successful. More information on all the Round 18 projects are available on the unionlearn website: www.unionlearn.org.uk.

The team continues to assist ULF projects and to work with National and Regional TUC staff to promote learning opportunities and improve the responsiveness of the learning system to union learners needs. The team have held regular meetings with ULF Project Managers and provided training sessions on audit and equality and diversity. A new database was commissioned and established during the year, the database is working well and feedback from users has been very positive.

The economic climate has made employer engagement more difficult and Learning Agreements harder to negotiate. Nonetheless, 137 new agreements were signed. As previously reported the changes in funding for adult learning and HE have made it much more difficult to attract learners into these areas and unions have reported difficulties in obtaining learning (especially for smaller groups or at the workplace) as providers look more closely at the costs of provision.

In October 2016 a major evaluation of ULF Rounds 15 and 16 and the support role of unionlearn was published. These findings paint a very positive picture

ULF Performance Report 2016-2017: Key headline figures

	Profile	Actual	Variance (%)
New ULRs completing stage 1, via ULF	1,260	1,377	109.3
ULR Follow up training	6,742	8,569	127.1
English and maths learners, via ULF	31,587	27,501	87.1
IACL learners, via ULF	26,270	40,979	156.0
Learners on CPD, via ULF	22,177	37,318	168.3
New Employer Learning Agreements, via ULF	218	137	62.8
Total ULF learners	166,499	209,759	126.0

of the added value of union learning and the benefits accrued by employees and employers (see page 9 for more details).

Unionlearn Performance in 2016-2017

Unionlearn was completely restructured in 2014 and again in 2015 following redundancies in both years. The current staffing structure is very much focused on delivering dedicated support and performance management of the ULF projects. Another key priority

is to build the capacity of ULF projects and wider union engagement in order to support the expansion of high quality Apprenticeships and traineeships. Unionlearn is also tasked by government with strengthening the capacity of unions to reach out to the most disadvantaged learners, especially those who need to improve their English and maths skills. Since April 2016 the government has also asked unionlearn to evidence delivery of learning outcomes outside of the ULF projects. This approach is based on a target of 10,000

Union Learning Fund projects – some highlights

ULF projects have been very keen to share a wide range of stories, showing how their efforts have supported learning and skills in the workplace over the last year. Many of these stories have been posted on the unionlearn website, and shared via its social media platforms. These stories cover a wide range of ULF learning priorities including promoting English and maths skills and supporting Apprenticeships. Many projects have also shared stories of how they have engaged with national campaigns such as Learning at Work Week, Quick Reads and National Apprenticeships week.

- More than 100 UNISON members in the North-West, Yorkshire and Humberside and East Midlands regions have benefitted from pre-retirement workshops run for the union to support people to improve their maths skills and understanding of how to plan their finances.
- The Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union have been working with a number of food manufacturers across the country to build up English and maths skills amongst the workforce, and their members.
- Staff at DHL Argos in Castleford marked the success of their reading year with a special event, thanks to USDAW and the local Union Learning Rep, Sean Dixon, who has worked with Quick Reads to encourage reading skills.

- Staff at Manor Green Special School in Maidenhead have been signing up to study Apprenticeships thanks to partnership working between the school and the GMB union.
- The joint Union Learning Fund (ULF) project at Hinkley Point C, “Building a Learning Legacy”, has been supporting Somerset Care and Repair, a not-for-profit social enterprise providing training and work experience in Somerset.
- Fire Brigade Unions (FBU) member, Jane Gummery, has been a union learning rep for 10 years. After improving her English qualifications at the local Adult Education Centre, she has now gone on to achieve a BSc Degree with the Open University.
- Community union has worked with partners to support nearly 1,500 workers facing redundancy from Tata Steels Thrybergh and Scunthorpe sites. They helped workers develop a wide range of skills and many have found new jobs as a result.

These are just a small selection of the case studies that have appeared over the last year from ULF projects and many more are available on the unionlearn website: www.unionlearn.org.uk. The website also contains news stories promoting forthcoming events that projects have run and Guest Blogs from ULRs and others involved with ULF projects.

learner outputs for unionlearn, comprising of 2,500 Apprenticeships and 7,500 primarily English and maths learners.

The Strategy section of this report sets out the range of support services that unionlearn has provided over the last 12 months in support of Apprenticeships and English and maths learning. In line with the overall ULF performance, the number of English and maths learners was under profile at the end of the year. This was largely due to slippage in launching unionlearn's online assessment tool in the first half of the year and also the large amount of time expended on planning and preparing a series of English and maths events and campaigns that were delivered from the autumn onwards. In addition, significant investment was made in developing new online resources such as the Working with Figures and ESOL eNotes and delivering the successful English and maths campaigns. Learner outcomes did improve in the second half of the year as a direct result of these initiatives.

The Apprenticeship outputs delivered by unionlearn were similarly affected by the time and resources expended on organising and planning campaigns and events to build union engagement in Apprenticeships. The added demands of meeting a large number of requests for unionlearn staff to deliver union/ employer briefings on the Apprenticeship Levy also limited the ability of unionlearn to generate enough Apprenticeship outcomes to reach the profile target. However, ULF Apprenticeship outcomes were well above profile at the end of the year and there is a general consensus that unionlearn contributed greatly to this through the delivery of a large number of briefings/events and production of new guides/ resources that boosted union negotiations on Apprenticeships and incentivised joint plans with employers on implementation of the levy.

Unionlearn continues to support Adult Learning Week, Learning at Work Day and Celebration of Learning and a range of initiatives across the English regions

designed to boost workplace learning that can either be directly job-related or based on wider personal development. Informal adult and community learning is an important way of engaging new and hard to reach learners and also opens up opportunities for people to subsequently pursue qualifications and to access vocational programmes, including Apprenticeships. Unionlearn also continues to support workers to acquire key skills required in the modern workplace which are currently not covered by any entitlement to funding, including ICT and digital skills.

TUC Education

TUC Education has an unrivalled reach into Britain's workplaces to provide high quality education and training for workplace representatives.

Unions representing workers in major public and private sector employers from across the economy send reps for training which, taken together, represents a huge segment of the UK economy. Almost all unions participate in the programme, which is recognised for integrity, quality and innovation.

In 2016, there was a further dip in the number of reps attending TUC education courses to 24,252, down 6,116 on the 2015 figure. This remains a considerable programme of training, especially as paid release is under great pressure across the economy.

This year 562 trade union professional officers were trained, combining more flexible learning options with traditional classroom-based events. Programmes include Employment law, Mental Health at Work and Project Management.

Funding the programme

TUC Education is charged with providing a programme for all union representatives with the remit of building and supporting workplace organisation. It has been widely recognised by successive governments that it is in the interests of the economy, employers, workers and their unions that union representatives are properly trained to carry out their increasingly complex and sophisticated role. Despite the success of the programme the Coalition government took the decision to remove fee remission arrangements in 2016, leaving the provision without support. This, along with cuts in FE adult skills budgets, area reviews and college mergers compounded uncertainties in the sector. Maintaining and delivering a core education service to affiliates remains a major challenge.

The TUC Executive Committee established a short life working group to give some consideration to the funding, form and shape that trade union education should take over the next five years and beyond, maximizing new modes of delivery and engagement and retaining as much of the established offer as

could be cost effectively funded. As an emergency stop-gap measure, following up on the working group recommendations, TUC Education approached the Trustees of the TUC Educational Trust who agreed to funding of £1.4m for the maintenance of a network of college providers from August 2016 to July 2017. This funding was to anchor resources in supportive colleges to enable a programme for union reps to be offered as flexibly as possible and to encourage experimenting to reach out to union reps so far unable to make use of the service. A business plan has been developed which sets out how TUC Education is migrating to a predominately – though not exclusively – online education programme in 2017/18 and beyond. This migration will be underpinned by the work already being taken forward on eNotes, and the Ufl Charitable Trust project, which is: migrating key TUC Education courses online; providing resources including a new learning environment; and allowing reps to search for and apply for courses online.

TUC Education online

The Ufi-funded unionlearn Transforming Open Online Learning project is key to implementing the TUC Education strategy. A full online programme for reps is currently in development. The purpose of this is to transform the union reps programme so that it is freely available online, can be accessed as soon as a rep takes office at a time and place most convenient using a smart phone, tablet or PC. These programmes will be made available for wholly online self-paced study or for tutor-led blended courses and to enhance the delivery of classroom programmes. Maximising the online offer in this way will mean that TUC Education can deliver to potentially tens of thousands of union representatives getting to workforces we do not currently reach and to the next generation of union reps.

The new online Union reps stage 1, Health and safety stage 1 and Union learning reps stage 1 courses are all now available and a national campaign to drive up usage of the new materials is underway.

Information about all TUC Education programmes is available from the TUC Education website www.tuceducation.org.uk which includes a course directory for reps to look up and apply for any course (classroom, blended or online) across the UK. The site allows support to existing learners and embeds online and blended learning across the programme, with easy access for reps to TUC resources.

The site is also home to eNotes, a resource developed to help workplace reps stay up to date on key workplace issues. Each eNote is a self-contained elearning module that contains a mixture of text, video and quizzes, lasting between 10 and 45 minutes. There are currently over thirty eNotes available including the union learning advantage, Apprenticeships – know your rights, union learning reps – introduction, language support for workers, working with figures, mental health in the workplace and bargaining for skills.

TUC Education is also trialling a series of webinars to provide further support and updates for reps and officers. Webinars are advertised on the TUC Education website and topics for future webinars

include the Apprenticeship Levy, sexual harassment, stress, occupational cancer, and well-being.

Union learning rep training

The numbers of ULRs trained over the past few years reflect the continuing difficulties particular to the ULR role, which have been exacerbated by the economy and employment relations climate and the need for unions to prioritise pressing industrial problems at the expense of this agenda. Release for training is difficult to obtain, despite the underpinning rights, and courses fail to recruit. To help address this the unionlearn board decided to mainstream the learning agenda within the Union reps stage 1 course (the shop steward's programme). In 2016 this has meant that an additional 1,169 ULRs were trained in addition to the 436 ULRs trained on the dedicated programme, (making a total of 1,605 new ULRs trained) and 368 progressed to the Stage 2 programme making a total of 1,973 ULRs accessing training in 2016 through TUC Education. The new online union learning reps stage 1 and stage 2 courses are now available for rep training to support reps in their workplace.

ULRs accessing training through TUC Education



Strategy

Policy and research

In October 2016 unionlearn published an independent evaluation of the Union Learning Fund (ULF) and unionlearn's role in supporting ULF-funded projects. Following a tendering exercise in 2015, the Centre for Employment Relations Innovation and Change (University of Leeds) and the Marchmont Observatory (University of Exeter) were commissioned to undertake the evaluation. Throughout the research project the joint academic team reported regularly to a steering group comprising of ULF project managers, unionlearn staff, and a representative from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

The evaluation looked at Rounds 15 and 16 of the ULF covering a four year period, 2012-13 to 2015-16. The main objectives of the evaluation were to: assess the impact of union learning activity through extensive surveying of learners and employers; explore the challenges and barriers that ULF projects and unionlearn face when trying to achieve their objectives; and, use the analysis and findings to draw up recommendations to help ULF projects and unionlearn maximise their impact and value for money in the future. The researchers drew on findings from two new surveys involving telephone interviews undertaken with 385 employers and completed questionnaire returns from 2,550 learners.

The final report identified a wide range of positive impacts for both employees and employers from their engagement with union learning, including supporting those facing the greatest disadvantage. Over two-thirds of learners with no previous qualification and just under half with a qualification below level 2 got a qualification at a higher level as a result of ULF support. Over two-thirds of employers highlighted this aspect of union learning, saying that unions were particularly effective at inspiring reluctant learners to engage in training and development. However, the findings show that union learning also benefits people looking to achieve higher level qualifications (e.g. a quarter of all qualifications achieved through ULF support were at level 3 or higher).

The survey findings clearly showed that union learning is highly valued by individuals, stimulates a demand for further learning, and helps individuals to get on at work. Nine out of ten union learners said they were interested in further learning, two in three said the new skills they acquired made them more effective in their current job, and four in five said they had developed skills that they could transfer to a new job. In some cases people said participation in union learning had directly enhanced their pay and promotion prospects. One in five said they gained a promotion or increased responsibility at work and one in ten gained a pay rise and these outcomes were boosted through participation in successive episodes of union learning. For example, individuals who completed at least three episodes of union learning (compared with those completing only one episode) were three times more likely to receive a pay rise and six times more likely to attain promotion.

Employers also cited a range of positive impacts with more than three in four saying that engagement in the ULF had an overall positive effect in their workplaces. More specifically, over a half said union learning led to an increase in the number of employees gaining qualifications and just under a half said staff commitment had improved as a direct result of union learning. More than two in five employers pointed to improved employment relationships in their organisation due to the role of the ULF and a third linked it with improved organisational performance.

The added value of union learning was a recurring theme of the evaluation findings. For example, an analysis based on a methodology developed by government highlighted that the ULF learning and training delivered an estimated net contribution to the economy of more than £1.4 billion as a result of a boost to jobs, wages and productivity. The evaluation also estimated the return to the Exchequer from the boost to taxable income as being £3.57 for each £1 spent on the ULF.

Importantly, the research shows that union learning is a major boost to union membership levels as well as being a key factor in encouraging people to become

more active in their union. Twenty per cent of all learners surveyed were not union members before they engaged with learning or training via the ULF, but almost half subsequently went on to join a union. In addition, a third of those that engaged in union learning reported becoming more active in their union as a result.

The final evaluation report produced a number of recommendations to improve operational aspects of the ULF, including improving and integrating project monitoring, reporting and project evaluation systems in order to better track outcomes and assess overall impact over the longer term. These recommendations are currently being taken forward through a number of initiatives.

Over the past 12 months unionlearn has submitted a number of responses to consultations and calls for evidence by government departments, parliamentary select committees and other agencies. These consultations have largely focused on the ongoing government reforms relating to Apprenticeships, technical education, and English and maths provision. The Strategy team produces a quarterly *Learning & Skills Policy Update* newsletter to keep unions and other stakeholders abreast of policy developments in learning and skills and also produces other policy briefings for the unionlearn website. Unionlearn also led on a research project funded by the European Commission looking at the role played by union representatives in supporting skills and development in the chemical and manufacturing sectors.

Apprenticeships and young worker programmes

Unionlearn continues to support union engagement in high quality Apprenticeships, traineeships and other youth skills initiatives, including where access to an Apprenticeship is either not readily available or not appropriate to the individual's immediate circumstances. The last 12 months have been dominated by preparations for the launch of the Apprenticeship Levy, a policy which the TUC gave its support to, and which unionlearn has promoted as an

opportunity for unions to negotiate more high quality Apprenticeship opportunities with employers.

Pre-Apprenticeship programmes

A number of ULF projects have successfully negotiated high quality traineeships. A union tailored traineeship model comprises short duration work experience placements, where the trainee is supernumerary and rotated between work placements. Financial support is negotiated for the trainee which helps them to participate and complete their traineeship and to progress into an Apprenticeship or sustainable employment with training. Unions also negotiate pre-employment training which does not draw down traineeship funding, but in essence serves the same purpose as a traineeship, as it combines college based provision and work experience to help young people get into work. The Director of unionlearn is a board member of Movement to Work, which works with large employers to offer a bespoke, high quality work experience programme for young unemployed people.

Apprenticeships

Over the last year 14,505 Apprenticeships were supported by ULF funded projects, which was around double the number (7,292) reported in the previous year and nearly 30 per cent above the profiled target for 2016-17. Unionlearn also provides direct Apprenticeship support and over the past year this route helped 1,364 individuals. In total, ULF projects and unionlearn supported 15,869 Apprenticeships in 2016-17.

This work on Apprenticeships has ranged across a number of employers and ULF projects continue to do well in this area, adding value to Apprenticeship programmes already in progress through strong union support for apprentices in the workplace and also



negotiating with employers for the recruitment of more high quality Apprenticeships.

Over the past year unionlearn has delivered a number of significant outcomes on Apprenticeships and traineeships, including:

- Provided a large number of bespoke capacity-building initiatives for individual unions, employers and providers focused on preparing for implementation of the levy and using this development to drive up the number of high quality Apprenticeships. Unionlearn also delivered a series of regional events in the autumn and winter months that included a major focus on preparing unions and their partners for the introduction of the levy.
- This capacity-building strategy was greatly assisted by new resources for union reps produced by unionlearn, including a completely revised edition of the Apprenticeships Toolkit and a new pocketsize Apprenticeship Levy Negotiating Tips guide. Unionlearn also continued to promote the TUC Charters on Apprenticeships and traineeships, which contain best practice principles and help unions to negotiate good quality training.
- Supported ULF projects to develop their capacity to deliver more high quality Apprenticeships and also helped with the planning of new ULF bids in this regard.
- Worked closely with government departments and agencies and public sector unions in preparation for the rollout of the levy and the new Apprenticeships target across public services. The DfE Apprenticeships Team attended a meeting of the education unions organised by the TUC and unionlearn also supported the input of the health unions to initiatives on Apprenticeships being taken forward by Skills for Health, the National Skills Academy for Health, and Health Education England. As a result of discussions with the Cabinet Office and the DfE, a roundtable on public sector Apprenticeships is also to be facilitated through the Public Services Forum which brings together public sector employers, unions and government.
- Coordinated the hosting of a joint exhibition stand with affiliated unions at the annual Skills Show and Big Bang events in order to promote Apprenticeships as a high quality option for young people considering their career options.
- Unionlearn is represented on the DfE's Apprenticeship Stakeholder Board and also on a DfE Apprenticeships advisory group that is tackling challenges relating to equality and diversity.
- Responded to a number of government consultations relating to Apprenticeships, including the consultations on the Technical and FE Bill, the strategic remit of the Institute for Apprenticeships, and the future of the Industrial Training Boards. In September the unionlearn Strategy manager gave oral evidence to the Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Education, Skills and the Economy for their inquiry into Apprenticeships.
- A joint initiative with the TUC Equality & Strategy Department aimed at building union capacity to support disabled apprentices was developed, drawing on discussions with DfE officials and feedback from a meeting of the TUC Disabled Workers Committee. The first output of the initiative is a guide for union reps to help them support the recruitment and retention of disabled apprentices, which was launched in May at the TUC's Disabled Workers Conference.
- Developed a partnership with "Not Going to Uni" to promote the workplace rights and responsibilities of apprentices via their website and communication strategies.
- Supported unions with strategic advice on how the new Apprenticeship standards could be used to facilitate fully fledged Apprenticeship opportunities for existing employees.
- Supported the development of a new online learning module produced by TUC Education aimed at apprentices to make them aware of their rights and entitlement to quality training.

English and maths

Providing support for employees to improve their English and maths skills continues to be one of unionlearn's key priorities. Trade unions have a strong track record in supporting English and maths learners in the workplace. This is evidenced by the latest ULF data showing that 27,501 individuals took up an opportunity to improve their English and maths skills with the help of their union. This was up from 23,218 in the previous year but short of the more ambitious target of 31,587 learners set for 2016-17 (the 2015-16 target was 21,155). Unionlearn also directly supports English and maths learners and over the past year this route helped 5,131 people improve their skills in this area. In total, ULF projects and unionlearn supported 32,632 English and maths learners in 2016-17.

Over the past year unionlearn has taken forward a strategy to build on its support for English and maths learners by building the capacity of ULF projects and unionlearn itself to deliver for more learners needing to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Over the autumn and winter unionlearn delivered a series of regional events for unions and their partners, with one of the main priorities being to build union capacity to deliver more English and maths learning opportunities in the workplace. These events were also used to test out a number of new unionlearn resources, including the Use-it assessment tool (see below).

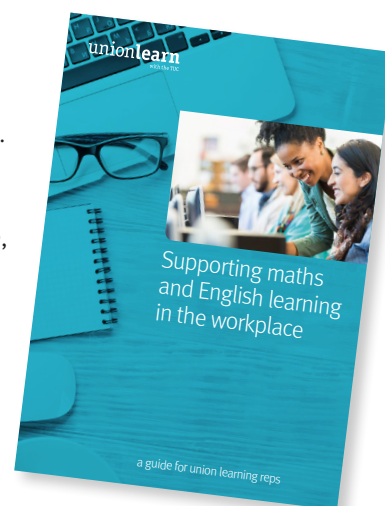
The new online Use-It initial assessment tool (www.unionlearn.org.uk/use-it) was designed to help unions engage with more English and maths learners who can use the tool for an initial assessment and to consider further learning options. Since its launch Use-it has proved to be a useful tool and has enabled thousands of people to take a first step into learning whilst also considering how they can progress their English and maths skills further with the support of their union and unionlearn. Unionlearn is committed to upgrading the Use-It tool to improve the learner experience while also developing other tools and resources to support English and maths learners.

Unionlearn also reached out to more English and maths learners by instigating two campaign weeks

involving a range of activities. The “Maths Workout” (#mathsworkout) week took place in October 2016 and the “Literacy Works” week (#literacyworks) took place in February 2017. Both campaigns featured social media activity, including daily quiz questions on Twitter. There were also a number of promotional events such as a very well received writing session with the Quick Read author Dreda Say Mitchell. Unionlearn also organised workshops to help union project staff and union learning reps to develop their strategies to reach out to and support more English and maths learners. A number of external stakeholders supported these two campaign weeks and provided additional resources, including various blogs published on the unionlearn website.

In order to promote reading skills, unionlearn launched an online poll at our annual conference in July 2016 to find out which books featuring a work theme are the most popular for workplace reading clubs. More details on the top ten books is available at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/vote-ultimate-list-books-workplace-readers.

In March a new guide for union learning reps – “Supporting maths and English learning in the workplace” – was produced. This short guide provides an introduction to English and maths learning in the workplace, including ideas and signposts to useful resources to help reps think of fresh approaches to engaging and supporting learners. www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/supporting-maths-and-english-learning-workplace-guide-union-learning-reps



Throughout the year unionlearn continued to engage in the development of the new functional skills standards being taken forward by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF). In this context we have continued to emphasise the need for contextualised maths and English learning with flexible delivery and assessment that benefits individuals accessing this provision in the workplace.

Unionlearn also worked closely with the government-supported Behavioural Insights Adult Skills and Knowledge Team who conducted research into how to engage adult English and math learners more effectively in all types of workplaces. We highlighted that the role played by union learning reps constitutes a highly innovative peer support model that is very difficult to replicate in a non-unionised environment.

Unionlearn submitted evidence to the inquiry on a national ESOL strategy for England undertaken by the National Association for Teaching English and other Community Languages to Adults (NATECLA). Our response endorsed the call for a national strategy setting out a coherent approach to ESOL learning in England and also highlighted the crucial role unions play in supporting ESOL learning in the workplace.

Unionlearn has also continued to disseminate information about the latest research and policy developments around English and maths provision through a range of media such as the regular policy update newsletters and briefings and blogs on the unionlearn website.

Union engagement with skills bodies

Unionlearn has continued to support union engagement in a range of skills bodies, including those with a national remit and others with a role at a sector/industrial level or at a local/regional level. There were major changes to national skills bodies during the past year, including the closure of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) and preparations for the launch of the Institute for Apprenticeships in April 2017. The TUC welcomed the establishment of the Institute and also the subsequent decision by government to extend its remit to cover the forthcoming technical education qualifications (T levels). However, the TUC has expressed concerns that appointments to the Institute's board did not include anyone with a union background and that this was very different to the "social partnership" arrangements governing Apprenticeship systems in most other European countries. The TUC is represented on the Apprenticeship Stakeholder Board by the unionlearn Strategy Manager. This forum was established by

government to get feedback from key stakeholders on the planning and implementation of the Apprenticeship Levy and related reforms.

Government funding for the main sector skills bodies – Sector Skills Councils and Industrial Partnerships – has been in decline for a number of years and this has led to a large degree of rationalisation, including a number of mergers and closures. However, many of these bodies have continued to play a significant role through alternative funding arrangements. Unionlearn continues to support union representatives, including Board members and trustees, on these sector bodies.

Unionlearn also supports joint union meetings for the health sector to support the work of ULF projects and to give union officials an opportunity to discuss collaborative approaches to union learning in these sectors. These network meetings also support union engagement with key skills bodies and in the health sector this has facilitated union engagement with Skills for Health, the National Skills Academy for Health, and Health Education England.

Unionlearn is also supporting union engagement in sector skills through other avenues, including major infrastructure initiatives being taken forward by the government. One key programme of this kind is the Strategic Transport Apprenticeship Taskforce which has been established to support the government's ambition to create 30,000 Apprenticeships in the transport sector by 2020 and to increase the diversity of the workforce. The Director of unionlearn is a member of the taskforce and the transport unions have also been engaged in various aspects of the work programme.

Devolution of the adult skills budget in England is currently being taken forward by government and this will increasingly give Combined Authorities, LEPs and other bodies a much greater influence over adult FE and skills funding. Unionlearn is supporting union engagement in this agenda, including facilitating union representation on a range of partnerships that are being put in place to support a strategic approach to addressing skills funding priorities at a more localised level.

Service

The Service Team include core unionlearn support work such as financial management, collecting information on learning activity, supporting learners and communications including the unionlearn website. This section outlines the main work of the team.

Supporting Learners

There has been a rolling three-year unionlearn Supporting Learners Strategy in place since 2008. Since this period unionlearn has evidenced a successful track record of supporting learners' activity. The previous Supporting Learners Strategy expired in March 2017, consequently a new three year Strategy for Supporting Learners has been developed. The new strategy includes the successful 'Network Model' for Supporting Learners. The model places work of union reps at the heart of the strategy. ULRs are ideally placed to support learners as they speak the same language as their members and have their trust. Learners then feel supported in accessing the right learning and courses for them or to consider their career options.

In 2016/17 almost 83,000 adults were supported with information, advice and guidance and ULF learner support referrals was almost 117,000. This was well above the target, highlighting the substantive amount of support provided by union reps.

Many working people are particularly in need of high quality free careers advice, including the development of career management skills so that they can take charge of their own working lives and overcome barriers to progression. Unions and unionlearn have been successful in working with traditionally hard-to-reach groups in the workplace, and in engaging with employers.

The DfE Careers Strategy will be published in late 2017, in the meantime, the remit for careers guidance has been given to the Apprenticeship and Skills Minister in the Department for Education. When the government strategy for careers is published unionlearn wants to see it contain:

- A commitment to tailored support for people most in need, at whatever stage of life
- High quality careers advice and support for everyone
- Support for those most disadvantaged and to support social justice

Seven 'Supporting Learners' events were organised across England between January and March 2017. The events were very well attended and the audience comprised of ULRs, union reps, officers and ULF project staff. The programme covered a wide range of learning and skills topics, this included the new TUC Education offer, Supporting Learners initiatives, maths and English sessions and workshops on Apprentices, Learner Progression and Mid-life Development Reviews.

Unionlearn with TUC Education have developed and updated a number of eNotes (bitesize online learning modules) to help keep reps up to date on key workplace issues. Each eNote is a self-contained module that includes a mixture of text, video and quizzes. The suite of Supporting Learners eNotes include; Supporting Learners, Supporting Mid-life Development, the union learning Climbing Frame, Apprenticeships, Supporting Learners into Higher Learning and Introduction to the ULR role. A new eNote entitled 'Apprenticeships – Know Your Rights' was launched in March 2017 during National Apprenticeships Week.

<https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/supportinglearners>

The union learning Climbing Frame

The Climbing Frame is an online tool for Union Learning Reps and other union reps supporting learning. Unionlearn has developed a suite of 20 Learning Themes that provide reps with information, downloadable resources and links to other useful tools, resources and websites covering a diverse range of subjects such as Equality & Diversity and Apprenticeships. The Learning Themes are regularly updated with new content added to provide users with the latest information and advice.

Alongside the Themes, a Learner Management area enables reps to record information from sessions with learners, helping them set goals and actions and record achievements. Reps can store their notes, upload documents and record their own learning activities and progression too. Getting started guides, an events section and case studies also feature.

An eNote on the Climbing Frame is available as a further user friendly guide to what the site has to offer. For reps who need access on the move there is a free Climbing Frame app.

The Climbing Frame has almost 7,000 registered users and our latest survey gave a strong endorsement from users across unions and sectors. When asked if they would recommend the Climbing Frame to a friend or colleague 94% of those who responded said yes. This was coupled with an insight into how reps use the site in their role, good feedback on site elements like availability of information, navigation and support, and a range of positive comments about the Climbing Frame from new and experienced users.

Reps were also asked how they felt the site could be enhanced and what they would like to see added. Their suggestions, alongside the continuing reviews of site content and plans to develop new case studies in the coming year, will help ensure the Climbing Frame remains a useful tool within unionlearn's Supporting Learners offer to unions.

Climbing Frame:

<https://climbingframe.unionlearn.org.uk>

Supporting Mid-life Development

This continues to be a popular agenda as unions contribute to support working people at all stages of their lives. As more and more people have to work longer due to shifting pension regulations and the changing jobs market this results in people needing to change jobs and retrain more often. The concept of a 'job for life' and working for the same organisation throughout life is no longer relevant to many people. It is believed that individuals on average will change jobs six times during their working life.

Unionlearn's campaign and influencing work for a mid-life development review entitlement for everyone at the age of 50 has been effective. This campaign work has resulted in the Cridland Review and the Skills Commission recognising the importance of mid-life reviews as a way to support and develop the skills people will need in the future. The Cridland Review recommended a new mid-life MOT to help people plan their later lives, addressing their lifestyle, their skills, paid and unpaid work, and their retirement income.

Unionlearn continues to train, support and encourage union reps to engage with the mid-life development agenda. To date this work has resulted in approximately 5,000 people undertaking mid-life and older workers' activities and a wide range of materials and resources have been developed to help support this work. The infrastructure available to support union reps has resulted in unions becoming the biggest deliverer of workplace mid-life career reviews.

During 2016 unionlearn undertook a survey to assess the continued impact of mid-life review activity for individuals, employers and families. The role of unions in the mid-life review process has never been more important. Unionlearn will continue to support unions to embed mid-life development reviews into their learning and skills work within the context of all-age, intergenerational approaches to supporting learners.

Higher Learning

Unionlearn is committed to supporting and developing pathways to higher learning for union learners and has secured agreements with some higher education institutions to support this agenda. Birkbeck University and the University of Wolverhampton offer a 10% discount on courses to union members and this continues to prove popular.

For the period April 2016 to March 2017, ULF projects reported that the total number of higher education (HE) learners via the union route was 3,757 which is well ahead of the 1,613 profiled. This is a very positive position particularly in light of the decline in part-time HE learners as a consequence of the changes to HE funding.

Unionlearn has worked in partnership with the Open University to support the production of free online information, advice and guidance and eLearning materials. The Part-Time Education for Adults Returning to Learn (PEARL) website is aimed at adults who are looking for part-time and flexible learning opportunities primarily across England. It provides a comprehensive range of information and signposts sources of support and resources which will help to identify academic and vocational pathways through post-compulsory to higher learning.

The website contains case studies to inspire adults to return to education, letting them know that they are capable of achieving their goals through education. There is also an 'Advise Me' tool on the website, which gives personalised learning options to suit learner's individual circumstances.

Unionlearn was also a key partner in the development of the six free online courses that take about 15 hours to complete. Learners can collect online badges, which can be shared with employers, displayed on social media sites and kept in their TUC Education backpack.

The six courses are:

1. Planning a better future
2. Introducing practical healthcare
3. Supporting children's development
4. Caring for adults
5. Taking part in the voluntary sector
6. Starting your small business

<https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/forms/ou-national-networks-collaborative-outreach-project>

Communications

The unionlearn Communications Strategy was developed to identify the messages and channels that help best engage with learners, unions and employers, encourage two-way dialogue and understanding, build profile, and build continued support for the union learning agenda. Unionlearn's communications activity is focused on working with

affiliates, employers, partners and others to promote, the impact and value of union-led learning.

During the year over 80 case studies and 40 blogs were produced and posted to the unionlearn website and the unionlearn social media platforms. These highlighted the range of support that unions had been giving members in workplaces and focused on a number of the years priority campaigns such as English, maths and Apprenticeships, whilst also giving a platform to examples of learning around health and wellbeing, community engagement, digital inclusion and more. There were also a large number of news stories produced to highlight activities, new resources (such as eNotes) and promote union learning events throughout the year.

The unionlearn website www.unionlearn.org.uk continues to be our most accessible public face and is at the centre of our communication strategy. The website is an important channel for introducing people to unionlearn's work, persuading them to get involved, promoting specific activities and publicising the value and impact of unionlearn's work.

The website is the first place to go for news, case studies, blogs and resources and this year has seen a huge rise in the amount of content being regularly posted up. The constant flow of new material keeps the site fresh and interesting and has resulted in registrations continuing to rise and the amount of visitors to the unionlearn website was over 250,000 for the year.

The continued rise in accessibility to the internet through smart phones, tablets, computers, and other mobile devices has made engaging with social media even more invaluable for promoting and improving unionlearn's work and events. Unionlearn's social media presence continues to grow, with the Facebook page (www.facebook.com/tucunionlearn), Twitter account @unionlearn and a page on LinkedIn, all gaining an increase in followers over the year and the introduction of an Instagram page has helped to get our message out to a wider and diverse audience.

With social media and case studies becoming such an important platform for getting the message across about the benefits of union learning this year the unionlearn team ran a series of workshops. These were held at national and regional unionlearn conferences and at trade union events for Union Learning Reps and Learning Organisers. These workshops proved popular, and a very useful source of material, and will be running again this year.

The Learning Rep magazine continues to be popular with our thousands of subscribers, the e-magazine is published four times a year. Producing the magazine in an online format means the latest technology (e.g. embedded links) can be used to improve communication with ULRs. The magazine continues to provide a range of information on unionlearn's resources and activities, information from Union Learning Fund projects, inspirational stories, partner information for ULRs and discussion on adult skills.

Through our email alerts service, unionlearn create and send email alerts that highlight and promote the work that unions and our partners are conducting. This service has over 7,000 registered subscribers. Users register through the unionlearn website, selecting individual subject areas of interest. Improvements have been made to unionlearn's online mailing services, such as the launch of a weekly news digest, in order that users continue to receive high quality information and advice on union-led learning initiatives.

The unionlearn annual conference, celebrating our 10th anniversary, took place on 4 July with over 400 delegates registered and showcased some of our key achievements over the past decade. The broader agenda was focusing on skills development through learning of individuals and communities, meeting the needs of a modern workforce, and the vital role of skills in a sustainable economic recovery. Speakers included:

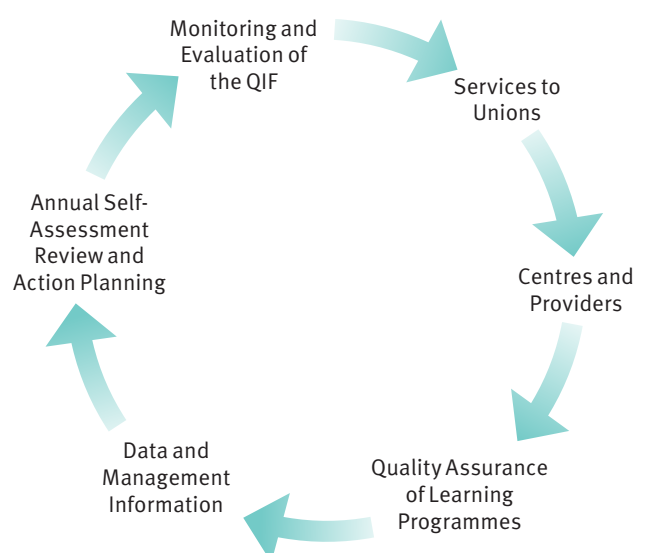
- **Frances O'Grady** TUC General Secretary
- **Dreda Say Mitchell** award-winning crime novelist

- **Francesca Martinez** writer, speaker and comedian
- **Simon Kirby** Chief Executive of High Speed Two (HS2)
- **Tommy Dawkins** MBE GMB Organiser
- **Barbara Byrd** Secretary-Treasurer for the Oregon AFL-CIO

Over the coming year unionlearn will continue to expand its communications methods and ensure strong engagement with partners and decision-makers.

Quality Improvement

The unionlearn Quality Improvement Framework (QIF) has been in place for over six years as a tool to meet strategic priorities to support unions and learners in all aspects of learning, maintain and drive up our professional standards, and provide for reflection on work practice through self-assessment leading to continuous quality improvement. The framework has six stages:



Within these stages there are mechanisms and processes in place that evidence quality assurance and quality delivery. Unionlearn has embedded the following processes:

- monthly ULF project finance and performance outcome reporting
- a cohesive, independent auditing schedule of both ULF projects and internal business processes and management
- quarterly organisation and team operational plan reviews
- a user-friendly and active risk register
- a communications strategy.

Unionlearn continues to hold an annual self-assessment review (SAR) that all staff contribute to. The SAR results have shown a steady improvement each year. The key identified areas for improvement in 2017/18 are:

- all unionlearn staff to contribute to non-ULF targets and outcomes.
- delivery of the plans for promotion and marketing of the TUC Education online offer.
- increase collaboration between unionlearn and other TUC departments.
- further improvement of unionlearn cross-team communication.

Quality Awards

The unionlearn Quality Award is available to learning providers, careers information and advice services and Apprenticeship programmes; the focus of the latter has evolved towards employers for their Apprenticeship programmes. The Award is made based on our good practice criteria and helps signpost union learning reps (ULRs) and learners to providers that are working successfully and flexibly with unions. The Award celebrates the commitment and diligence of ULRs across the country who promote training and learning in the workplace on behalf of union members. Almost 100 Awards are currently active.

For more information go to:

<https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/quality-award>

Finance

Total funding to unionlearn in 2016-17 was £13,270,000.

This funding is comprised of £900,000 from the TUC; £12,000,000 from the Department for Education (DfE); and £370,000 from other sources, including the UFI Charitable Trust and the European Commission.

Funding from DfE is the largest component and is detailed below:

Budget Heading 2016-17	Budget £	Actual Outturn £
ULF – Grants to Unions	9,873,594	9,849,046
Delivery and Support of the National ULF Programme	1,205,677	1,185,447
Service, Quality and Standards	337,605	394,388
Strategy and Research	274,657	232,138
Trade Union Education	308,467	326,373
TOTAL 2016-17	12,000,000	11,987,393

Appendix 1 Publications

TUC Education courses for all union reps
www.tuceducation.org.uk/findacourse

TUC Education eNotes on over 30 subject areas
<https://tuceducation.org.uk/eNotes>

Learning Rep magazine (various issues)
www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications

Supporting Learners News (various issues)
<https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/supporting-learners-news>

Learning and Skills Policy Update newsletter (various issues)
www.unionlearn.org.uk/policy-briefings

Union Learning Fund Prospectus: Round 18, 2017/2018
www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications

Unionlearn strategy for supporting learners: Providing quality information, advice and support for learning
www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/unionlearn-strategy-supporting-learners-2017

Apprenticeships Toolkit (revised edition)
www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications

Apprenticeship Levy: 15 Useful Negotiating Tips
www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications

Youth Employment Guide for Union Representatives
www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications

Supporting maths and English learning in the workplace: A guide for union learning reps
www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications

Health and Safety and Organising: A guide for reps
www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications

Getting active: A resource pack for union reps to support mid-life development
www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications

Supporting Learners at Mid-life mini guide
www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications

Supporting Mid-life Development Survey report
www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications

Evaluation of the Union Learning Fund rounds 15-16 and support role of unionlearn
www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications

Unionlearn Annual Report 2016: Our 10 years
www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications

Changing lives through learning: The first 10 years
www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications

Various submissions to government consultations on learning and skills
www.tuc.org.uk/industrial-issues/skills-policy

Appendix 2 Contacts

Regional offices

Southern and Eastern

Congress House
Great Russell Street
London WC1B 3LS

020 7467 1212

Midlands

47 Summer Lane
Birmingham B19 3TH

0121 262 6380

Yorkshire and the Humber

Room 102, West One
114 Wellington Place
Leeds LS1 1BA

0113 242 9296

Northern

1st Floor, Unite building
John Dobson Street
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8TW

0191 227 5550

South West

Church House
Church Road
Filton
Bristol BS34 7BD

0117 947 0521

North West

Jack Jones House
4th Floor
1 Islington
Liverpool L3 8EG

0151 482 2711

Wales and Scotland have arrangements external to unionlearn. Contact details are:

Wales

Transport House
1 Cathedral Road
Cardiff CF11 9SD

029 2034 7010

Scotland

TUC Education in Scotland
4th Floor,
John Smith House
145–165 West Regent Street
Glasgow G2 4RZ

0141 221 8545

National office

Congress House
Great Russell Street
London WC1B 3LS

Kevin Rowan
Jackie Williams
Iain Murray
Ian Borkett
Dave Eva
(Liverpool base)

Director
TUC Education manager
Strategy manager
Service manager
Delivery manager

krowan@tuc.org.uk
jwilliams@tuc.org.uk
imurray@tuc.org.uk
iborkett@tuc.org.uk
deva@tuc.org.uk

020 7467 1383
020 7467 1254
020 7467 1264
020 7467 1228
0151 482 2710

Appendix 3 Glossary

BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
CPD	Continuing professional development
DfE	Department for Education
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Fund (previously the ESF)
ESOL	English for speakers of other languages
FE	Further education (typically in local colleges)
HE	Higher education (typically in university)
IACL	Informal Adult and Community Learning
IAG	Information, Advice and Guidance
ICT	Information and communication technology
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
Level 1	Also known as ‘foundation level’ or ‘basic skills’; equal to standard of a primary school leaver; subdivided into Entry Level 1, 2 or 3
Level 2	Broadly equivalent to grades A-C at GCSE, i.e. expected achievement at age 16
Level 3	Broadly equivalent to A Level, i.e. expected achievement at age 18
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
QIF	Quality Improvement Framework
SAR	Self-Assessment Review
SERTUC	Southern and Eastern Region of the TUC
UKCES	United Kingdom Commission for Employment and Skills
ULF	Union Learning Fund
ULR	Union learning representative

This title may also be made available, on request, in accessible electronic formats or in Braille, audiotape and large print, at no extra cost.

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Congress House
London WC1B 3LS

Tel 020 7079 6920
www.unionlearn.org.uk

 [tucunionlearn](https://www.facebook.com/tucunionlearn)

 [@unionlearn](https://twitter.com/unionlearn)

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