

A man with grey hair and glasses, wearing a dark suit and a striped tie, is shown in profile from the chest up. He is speaking and has his right hand raised with fingers spread. The background is dark with some blurred lights, suggesting a conference or event setting.

LR

LEARNINGREP

unionlearn.org.uk | Autumn 2016

Celebrating our first 10 years

▶ *Unionlearn conference*

▶ *Skills for stable staff*

▶ *Festival of Learning*

▶ *New Apprenticeships Toolkit*

▶ *Numeracy Challenge*

unionlearn
with the TUC



HERE'S TO THE NEXT 10 YEARS

IT WAS WONDERFUL TO SEE SO MANY ULRs at our tenth anniversary conference at Congress House in July so actively engaged in bringing learning opportunities to workplaces all over the country.

And it was great to see some of the people who played such important roles in the early years, like my fantastic predecessor Liz Smith and Alan Johnson MP, who gave an inspirational speech about his own union learning journey and continues to support our work, just as he did while education secretary a decade ago.

What a brilliant event the conference was. It says a lot about unionlearn that we can both celebrate the importance of helping adults learn to read for

the first time and welcome the development of HS2, the rail infrastructure project that will deliver more than 2,000 high-quality Apprenticeships with trade union support. That's the real breadth of what we do.

We may live in very uncertain times but we have not let that affect our vital work: we are already developing the latest Union Learning Fund prospectus with the Department for Education, which we aim to launch as

"We have made a massive difference to adult learning over the past decade: we intend to do exactly the same over the next."

this magazine goes live. We are also preparing our new English and maths campaign for the autumn. We have made a massive difference to adult learning over the past decade: we intend to do exactly the same over the next. 

Liz Rees is Director of unionlearn



Department
for Education

unionlearn
with the TUC

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NEWS + VIEWS

RCN trainee saves holiday girl's life with CPR skills



Royal College of Nursing (RCN) member Ken Chilton saved a child's life by putting his learning into practice while on holiday.

Trainee nurse Ken, a student at the University of Wolverhampton, was holidaying in Lanzarote when the young girl got into difficulties in a nearby pool.

"I heard a scream for help and ran straight over. As I pulled the girl from the pool, I was shocked to see that she was not breathing. I called out for help and initiated CPR. After two cycles of CPR, the little girl screamed out, I felt a sigh of relief, she was breathing once again," he says.

"My family and I still keep in contact with her family," says Ken. "They sent me a picture of her on her first day at secondary school, saying this wouldn't have been possible without me. Without the training and the support I had received from the university, it may have been a different story."

Ken, who left school with no qualifications, went to night school to gain his A Levels in order to enrol at university, even though

at the time he thought he had no chance of higher-level learning.

"I am proud to say I am now in my third year and loving my life and potential future. I am proof that you are never too old or too restricted to achieve something that you really want in life, and in 10 months' time I will be determined to wear those blues with pride."

Last year, unionlearn signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the university that offers trade unionists 10 per cent discount on their course fees.

[Click here](#) to find out more about the University of Wolverhampton union discount

POA centre raises ADHD awareness

The Prison Officers' Association (POA) Eastchurch Learning Centre on the Isle of Sheppey is raising awareness of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

POA Learning project workers Bev Nolker and Gareth Williams set about creating their own ADHD awareness course after attending a 'train the trainer' course in Managing ADHD in the Mainstream Classroom.

"Coincidentally my son was going through the ADHD diagnosis so I was interested in finding out more information," Bev explains.

Bev and Gareth teach the course to various groups within the prison, including uniformed and non-uniformed staff working with vulnerable adults. "Some inmates may have had an ADHD diagnosis and some are going through the process," Bev says. "We travel to the Isle of Wight and Dartmoor to deliver training on a regular basis."

As there were no resources available for Isle of Sheppey families that have received a diagnosis, Bev has started an ADHD support group that now has more than 1,000 members. She also raises awareness in local schools, has trained a group of trainee social workers in Manchester and organised the island's first ADHD conference with international speakers in June.

"My aim is to break down the barriers and stigma associated with ADHD, particularly as it is included in the Equality Act of 2010. POA Learning has helped to create a wonderful, supportive resource on the Isle of Sheppey," Bev says.

Firefighters get fit on FBU Apprenticeship

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) national learning centre is offering adult Apprenticeships in personal training for firefighters to help staff stay fit for longer. The A-Level equivalent course is already attracting interest from 30 out of 46 fire and rescue services in England.

By qualifying as fitness training advisers, firefighters will gain the tools to encourage co-workers to maintain a healthy lifestyle and get fit and stay fitter for longer.

"This is a really great opportunity for us to assist firefighters to be as healthy as they can be both at work and at home," says FBU National Officer Sean Starbuck.

Click here for more information about the personal training Apprenticeship or any other FBU ULF course

RCM celebrates maternity workers

Royal College of Midwives (RCM) ULR Sara Fripp got together with some of her colleagues to organise a Time4You conference for

maternity support workers (MSWs) in Poole.

"There is a real need for learning events aimed at maternity support workers: they are valued members of the maternity care team, but learning opportunities available for this group of staff are few and far between," Sara explains.

The event was a fantastic opportunity to promote the work of the RCM learning reps at Poole, Sara says. "It gave us the opportunity to explain our role, talk about past events, ongoing and future learning opportunities and how they can access help."

Feedback about the day was very positive and the ULRs achieved their aim of creating an opportunity for MSWs to spend some time away from the workplace to focus on their own health and well-being.

"We really enjoyed the opportunity to meet staff from other trusts, share stories and experiences and network," Sara says.

Robert Halfon is new skills minister

Robert Halfon has been appointed the new minister for Apprenticeships and skills, while adult skills has been moved back into the Department for Education as part of the shake-up by new Prime Minister Theresa May.

Since his election as an MP in 2010, Robert has hired four apprentices to work with him in Parliament, and set up the Parliamentary Academy Scheme, which places apprentices in the offices of MPs from across the political spectrum.

REPTECH

Test your penalty skills

Football-mad learners can fill the gap between the end of Euro 2016 and the beginning of the domestic season with a new penalty shoot-out game from OpenLearn.

Academic research shows pre-penalty routines and player selection can make a huge difference when it comes to the crunch, though luck will still play a part.

The online game uses that research into the science behind penalty-taking, giving players the chance to step into a manager's shoes during a nail-biting penalty shoot-out, pitching themselves against a friend or their computer.

Players pick five penalty-takers based on their experience, confidence and status and then choose their tactics and the direction of their shots. Then they watch as the shoot-out unfolds with each penalty-taker taking their chance.

Win or lose, the results will be based on real academic research – and a bit of luck of course!

Click here to test your skills in the online game



© Tim Smith



© Kent Messenger



WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK ABOUT WORK?

Unionlearn has launched a search for the best books with a workplace theme to help promote reading at work. You can vote for your favourite work-related read or suggest another online (details below), and the top 10 will be announced to coincide with unionlearn's new English and maths campaign in the autumn.

Already, Alan Johnson MP has suggested the addition of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* – “a book that describes in graphic detail what working life was like for the Chicago slaughtermen,” he says.

Unionlearn Project Officer Kirsi Kekki says the workplace book club aims to boost interest in reading and literacy skills. “We are posting the list of books that we have come up with and would encourage as many people as possible to vote for their favourite or suggest their own additions to the list,” Kirsi says.

Unionlearn is also micro-blogging about union members' favourite books. To feature, simply email unionlearn@tuc.org.uk with the title of your favourite book plus a paragraph or two on why you would recommend it and a photo of yourself holding a copy.

These will be posted on the unionlearn website and shared via social media with the hashtag #ULBookClub16. **LR**

▶ [Click here to find the list of books](#)

▶ [Click here to vote for your favourite](#)

UNISON welcomes back Derbyshire apprentices

UNISON is aiming to sign a new Apprenticeship charter with Derbyshire County Council before the end of this year now that the authority has brought its apprentices back in-house after a four-year relationship with a local Apprentice Training Agency (ATA).

The council decided it made sense to terminate its ATA contract given that public sector bodies have to create Apprenticeship opportunities for 2.3 per cent of their workforce from next April and organisations with a £3m-plus annual wage bill are liable to pay the new Apprenticeship levy.

Under the terms of the contract the authority signed in 2011 with Learning Unlimited, the ATA employed the apprentices on the National Minimum Wage for Apprentices, a rate so low it didn't even cover their travel expenses.

“The way it was running, the apprentices couldn't afford to get themselves to work and back as the money they were earning wasn't even paying for their bus fares,” explains UNISON learning rep Jayne Barry.

Bringing the apprentices back in-house means they will be employed on the same terms and conditions as the colleagues they work alongside and they will be eligible to join the branch and take on active roles, which was not possible under the old ATA regime, Jayne says.



Usdaw partnership pays off for home shopping firm

Home shopping company JD Williams was commended in two different categories for its work with

Usdaw in the Skills for Business 2016 Awards.

The company was runner-up in the Retail award and shortlisted in the

Large Business of the Year award at the event, which celebrates the contribution that skills and learning make to businesses across Greater Manchester.

Usdaw has two learning centres at the company, which have enabled staff to undertake various learning opportunities, including Apprenticeships, NVQs, Business Improvement Techniques qualifications and team leading courses.

New health project helps older female staff

A successful Royal College of Nursing (RCN) pilot project to help staff at Cheshire and Wirral NHS Foundation Trust complete mid-life development reviews has been developed into a series of successful two-day workshops.

By the end of the cohort next spring, more than 200 50-plus staff, mostly women, will have participated in the ‘Later Life Transitions – working longer and living life to the full’ workshops, which cover emotional resilience, career and later life planning, well-being, flexible working, life care

planning, goal setting and action planning.

Following the RCN pilot, the Trust applied for funding from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation to continue to support its older workers, says Head of Staff Support and Psychological Wellbeing Jane Smethurst.

The Trust has collected positive feedback on the new workshops, which continue to feature unionlearn's Value My Skills cards from the pilot. "Staff feel empowered to do something about their life and take action," Jane says.

- Unionlearn has just produced a new set of publications to support mid-life learners. Four guides cover financial planning and pensions, helping carers, health and well-being and mental health, while *Getting active!* is a resource pack to help engage staff in the workplace.

▶ [Click here](#) to download your copies of the signposting guides

▶ [Click here](#) to download *Getting active!*

Manchester PCS staff try mindfulness training

Manchester PCS learning rep Helen Haymes is running mindfulness training to help her colleagues at Salford HMRC combat workplace stress.

As the branch ULR, Helen had been on the look-out for interesting and useful learning opportunities for the members at her

workplace so she set up training and now runs regular sessions.

"I began to prepare a mindfulness session that would be inclusive and specific to the needs of my colleagues in Trinity Bridge House," she says.

"I had been aware some colleagues are less mobile than others and I have devised several different sessions to incorporate this. Some sessions use mats on the floor, some are sitting and I have recently organised a 30-minute session of mindful movement," says Helen.

The sessions are proving popular with Helen's co-workers. "I have been having trouble sleeping recently and after your session yesterday I slept much better than I have in a while," commented one participant. "I have also recommended it to a work friend who also has stress symptoms at the moment as I am sure it would help her."

Mental health trust promotes new agreement

Northumberland, Tyne and Wear Health UNISON branch held roadshows to promote learning and development opportunities for staff and a new learning agreement this summer.

The agreement was signed with the mental health and disability Trust, one of the largest in the country, which employs 6,000 staff across 60-plus sites.

"The idea behind the

agreement is to encourage employees to engage in a range of learning opportunities to develop their potential," says Joint Branch Secretary Susie Taylor.

Skills share festival helps locals try learning



Unionlearn linked with community groups and unions across Dorchester to support a Try This community skills share festival in July, offering local people the chance to develop new skills by attending volunteer-run workshops.

"Many people find the sessions spur them on to wanting to learn even more in the future: I am sure it will continue to grow and be an even bigger success than it was this year," says unionlearn Project Worker Keith Hatch.

Organisers include West Dorset District Council, Dorchester Town Council, Dorset Community Action and unionlearn as well as young people and volunteers.

Online resources to aid career development

Learners looking to move up in their career or considering a change of direction will be able to take advantage of a new website and six

free online courses that the Social Partnerships Network (SPN) is launching in the autumn.

The Part-Time Education for Adults Returning to Learn (PEARL) website will provide a point of reference for people looking for progression and study opportunities, from short, free, online courses through to higher-level learning.

The six new online courses available from September are:

- Introducing Practical Healthcare
- Supporting Children's Development
- Caring for Adults
- Starting Your Small Business
- Taking Part in the Voluntary Sector
- Planning a Better Future.

Each course will take about 15 hours to complete and learners will be able to collect online badges, which can be shared with employers and displayed on social media sites.

Unionlearn, UNISON and The Open University are three of the ten organisations working together to support and promote workplace and lifelong learning through the Social Partnerships Network.

▶ [Click here](#) to register your interest or email any questions



Now we are 10

Unionlearn celebrated a decade of democratising education with an upbeat annual conference this summer that looked forward to the next 10 years of helping working people move on up.

♦♦ Martin Moriarty



Trade unions have played a crucial role in educating British people for generations, Labour MP (and former education secretary) Alan Johnson (pictured right) told the tenth anniversary unionlearn annual conference this summer.

“My mantra inside and outside government is that the trade union movement’s contribution is the untold story of education in this country,” he told the 350 participants.

Alan revealed he still retains copies of the correspondence course certificates he gained through TUC Education after becoming an activist in the postal workers’ union in his mid-twenties.

“To this day, the only educational qualifications that I possess are the certificates from the TUC correspondence courses – for me, the trade union movement virtually educated me and hundreds and thousands of people like me,” he said.



While the then Education Secretary David Blunkett had overseen creation of the Union Learning Fund (ULF) in 1998, Alan was proud of the part he played in developing the programme when he himself became education secretary a few weeks after the launch of unionlearn in 2006. “It was, of course, one of the biggest successes we’ve ever had,” he said.

Earlier, TUC General Secretary

“The trade union movement virtually educated me and hundreds and thousands of people like me.”

Frances O’Grady said trade union values had helped unionlearn achieve its goals over the past 10 years.

“Our record speaks for itself: we have democratised education, we have given working people the chance to get on in life, and reached out to those who need us most – people without qualifications, sometimes let down by the education system and sometimes let down by employers too,” she said. “By working together, we have set out to tackle inequality and unfairness in our skills system.”

Leeds University Business School

Faculty Research Engagement Manager Dr Jo Cutter said that the latest evaluation of the ULF showed learning projects were engaging record numbers of learners, with more than 533,000 learning episodes across 78 projects over four rounds of the Fund.

“The target for overall learning activity across those projects has been smashed. It’s 30 per cent higher than forecast and I think that’s an amazing result, especially given that the ULF rounds took place in the aftermath of recession,” she said.

Union learning also had an excellent track record on accessibility and inclusion, she pointed out. “Union learning is particularly effective in engaging older workers, learners from minority ethnic groups, learners with no formal prior qualifications and those working in operative roles,” she said.

Progression rates were also impressive. “One in five union learners do achieve a qualification at a higher level than they came in with, and 70 per cent of people that come into union learning without a formal qualification gain some kind of qualification,” she revealed.

HS2 Chief Executive (and former British Rail apprentice) Simon Kirby emphasised how the major rail infrastructure project would play a crucial role in training the next generation of engineers and others.

“We’re committed to high-quality Apprenticeships, with the emphasis on high-quality: over 2,000 apprentices and many new graduates will have their first job working on HS2 – Apprenticeships like these will



be considered a high-value currency in the industry,” he said.

Union involvement would be crucial to achieving the project’s high expectations on skills, inclusion, equality and diversity. “I truly believe HS2 in partnership with the unions is the only way to achieve step-change in the industry – that’s why in April Frances O’Grady and I signed the HS2-TUC Framework Agreement.”

Novelist Dreda Say Mitchell (pictured below), who is writing one of the 2017 Quick Reads, recalled the vital importance of her local library when she was growing up in London’s East End. “Whitechapel library used to be



called the university of the community: we didn’t need many books in our house because the library was round the corner,” she said.

Stand-up comedian Francesca Martinez (pictured left) won a standing ovation for her call to arms in support of difference and diversity. “Never let those in power breed fear of difference: without diversity there would be no evolution – diversity makes us stronger.”

Former ceramics worker Tommy Dawkins recalled how he was only able to overcome his problems with reading and writing when he helped launch union learning at the Steelite International factory in Stoke on Trent – and thanked all the ULRs who had

“Without diversity there would be no evolution – diversity makes us stronger.”



FIVE ULRs WIN NEW AWARDS

Five ULRs won unionlearn’s first ULR awards at the conference for their exceptional work in supporting learners across five categories. The awards were presented by Alan Johnson and Frances O’Grady.

Two UNISON learning reps won awards: Newcastle City Branch ULR Jane Yugire (pictured above) won for supporting Apprenticeships and apprentices at the local authority, while Bridges to Learning Project Coordinator John Wears won for numeracy work at The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

USDAW mobile union learning rep Jo Cahill won for the English work she has supported at Tesco, while CWU learning rep George White won for supporting disadvantaged learners at work, and Unite learning rep Brian Clarke won for supporting disadvantaged learners in the community.

helped workers in similar situations.

“Everyone in this room is really special: because of people like you I can now catch the bus, I can get a train, or if I don’t understand something, I’m not embarrassed any more.”

After 38 years on the factory floor, Tommy started a new job with the GMB last year. “I want to promote learning again to explain how unions changed my life,” he said. **LR**



The going is good for stable staff

The National Association of Stable Staff's learning project is helping hundreds of its members build more successful careers in and around the racing industry.

♦♦ Martin Moriarty

Kevin Parsons (pictured above) still remembers his very first morning as a stable lad 20 years ago. He'd just left the British Racing School in Newmarket with his NVQ Level 3 and moved down to a yard in Marlborough run by top trainer Roger Charlton.

Still in his teens – he hadn't left school long before – he had arrived with a young man's belief in the possibility of reaching the pinnacle of the profession that had been his passion since he was a boy.

"I'm there on my first morning thinking, 'I want to be a jockey,' when one of the older lads literally says to me, 'Go and get yourself a proper career while you've still got the chance!'" he recalls. "That's always stuck with me throughout my time in racing."

And of course the older lad in question had a point. The majority of people working in the industry may sign up to follow their Derby-winning dreams but only a tiny handful will ever make it to the top (it's a lot like football that way).

Most will spend their working lives getting into their yards at 6am six days a week, take

three horses out in succession over the morning, and then put in another couple of hours in the stables in the afternoon/evening, or transport the horses to their meetings on race days, when they might arrive home at midnight only for the alarm to go off again at 5am.

However passionate you are in your youth, that routine is going to be very hard to sustain over an entire career – if you are lucky enough to have one. Injury is a constant threat, and every rider is only one bad moment on a startled horse away from a career-ending accident (or worse). "We've had people break legs, pelvises, ribs," Kevin points out. "And it's often only when they have one of those accidents that they ask themselves, 'If I can't ride, what could I do?'"

These are the reasons why the National Association of Stable Staff (NASS) learning project is so important for the union's 7,500 registered members across the country, one-third of whom are based in Newmarket. Since taking on the role of project manager four years ago, Kevin has helped hundreds of members gain the confidence and the skills to build rewarding and successful careers with the help of their union.

"You see people scratching their heads after their initial assessments and then you see them come in and build their confidence and actually finish the course – it's great."



“To stand up in front of a group of people and speak was really out of my comfort zone.”

Kayley Bolton (pictured above) was one of the first NASS members to take the skills course in the IT suite that the union opened four years ago at the industry’s headquarters at Newmarket. The course made an enormous difference to her – although having to make a three-minute presentation to the class at the end of the course was a challenge at the time, she says.

“To stand up in front of a group of people and speak was really out of my comfort zone, had I not been on the course, I probably would have never had the confidence to do it!” she says.

With the boost to her confidence that the course provided, Kayley successfully applied for a new job as racing secretary to champion trainer John Godsen. “Now when the phone rings in the office, with potentially an important owner on the other end of the line, I feel confident with my speech and ability to handle any situation,” she says.

Jenna Gray (pictured below) has also moved on after completing the NASS skills course, by starting her own dog-grooming business, which she runs in the afternoons between riding her horses in the mornings and getting them ready for bed in the evenings.

“It gave me the confidence to construct a business plan, apply for a small business loan and successfully run my own business,” she explains.



“It’s enabled me to communicate with clients professionally, store information on a database and gradually gain a work-to-life ratio that I am happy with.”

Based on the first floor of The Racing Centre in Newmarket, the NASS learning centre is busy every day: as well as the skills course on Tuesdays and Thursdays and ICT on Fridays, there is English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) on Mondays and Wednesdays, a course that has helped stable staff from Asia and Eastern and Western Europe.

The courses all run during the early afternoon break in the day, when stable staff usually grab something to eat and catch up on sleep – which means that the union doesn’t need employers to agree release. But while a handful of very old-school trainers don’t see the need for their staff to improve their maths, most are supportive, says Kevin.

“John Berry, who was our local mayor in Newmarket last year, says what we’re doing is brilliant – in fact, there’s a fair few who have said, ‘What you’re doing is brilliant’,” he says.

Kevin himself is enjoying being office-based for the first time in his working life. “On a sunny day in Newmarket, there’s nothing better than going up Warren Hill: you’ve got your T-shirt on, the wind is blowing in bright sunshine, it’s fantastic,” he says. “Of course when it’s minus 10 in January and you literally cannot feel your fingers and toes, you’re thinking, ‘Why am I doing this?’”

Perhaps that’s why he is more fulfilled these days by helping people move on, the buzz he can get whatever the weather. “It’s been really good: you see people scratching their heads after their initial assessments and then you see them come in and build their confidence and actually finish the course – it’s great,” he says.

With a 9am start these days, Kevin could still, in theory, ride out of a morning before work, which is what NASS Services Manager Carina McKeown and Chief Executive George McGrath still do. But after spending almost every evening coaching either for Ipswich Town FC or Newmarket Town FC, Kevin’s got other ideas.

“I’d rather have a lie-in!” he says. **LR**

“It gave me the confidence to construct a business plan ... and successfully run my own business.”

What a feeling!

With a flashmob in Blackpool, a camera course in Basingstoke and a learning bus in Liverpool, unions have been using Learning at Work Week and the Festival of Learning to engage more people in new opportunities.

✦ Astrid Stubbs

Patients and visitors at Blackpool Victoria Hospital were treated to a flashmob spectacular as two dozen staff raised awareness of Learning at Work Week with a fully choreographed dance routine in the main entrance (pictured right).

The hospital's trio of UNISON ULRs planned the event in conjunction with the Trust's Learning and Development department to launch the week of events, all linked by this year's theme of 'connect'.

"This was a great way to publicise the week, which will help staff become more involved in training they may not normally have access to," says lead ULR Jane Eyre.

"We put on a number of courses, as diverse as flower arranging and business plan writing, with the aim of offering learning opportunities to staff that they may not otherwise be able to access and engage employees in their own development."

UNISON helps staff face change

The UNISON branch at Dorset County Council marked Learning at Work Week with a packed programme including one-day UNISON courses held every day alongside lunchtime sessions on a wide variety of subjects.

Courses covered building your resilience and understanding your skills and also included training on



CV writing and making the most of the internet.

Over the week, 25 separate drop-in sessions covered areas such as digital skills, health and well-being, customer care and Apprenticeships.

"As with many local authorities, many staff are facing an uncertain future – so courses on CV writing, recognising and developing skills and facing change are important to support people and build confidence," says ULR Roger Bell.

• UNISON sponsored one of the five Impact Awards to mark Learning at Work Week, which will be presented in the autumn. The new

award recognises two union and employer partnerships that best demonstrate successful delivery of engaging Learning at Work Week activities that supported employee needs and organisational goals.

Taking the challenge

Liverpool Adult Learning Services offered staff the chance to try out the National Numeracy Challenge on board a bus driven by Peter Ellison (pictured right with staff from

Learning at Work Week
16th to 22nd May 2016

Festival of Learning

the council's mayoral office).

The Museum of Liverpool also hosted a free family day of fun and learning activities in partnership with Merseylearn, unionlearn, the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and the Liverpool City Region authorities.

Events included arts and crafts, Tai Chi, digital inclusion, getting on with reading, financial awareness, accessing Apprenticeships, lifelong learning information and activities, health and well-being and living a healthier lifestyle.

Merseyside Choir demonstrated the benefits of singing and careers advice was on offer for young people.



Unite spreads the message

Unite Regional Learning Organiser Orlando Martins (pictured right) ran a stall at the very first Workers' Educational Association (WEA) Norfolk Festival of Learning in June, a free one-day event at The Forum in Norwich promoting a variety of

learning activities within the region.

Many Unite members and people from the wider community stopped to see what the stall was about and what was on offer. "They were able to find out how Unite is helping its members to achieve their potential by improving their skills and education," says Orlando.

Promoting payoffs from learning

The Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU) supported a Learning at Work Day roadshow at the Hull factory of Aunt Bessie's, famous for its frozen Yorkshire puddings and roast potatoes.

Learning Project Worker Janet Goodwin, Organising Regional Secretary Sarah Woolley and the factory's Branch Secretary Shaun Orr promoted distance learning courses through Leicester College.

Among those who signed up on the spot was Michelle Coates, who opted for a mental health awareness course she hoped would help with her voluntary work supporting homeless people



© Peter Everard-Smith



PHOTOGRAPHY COURSE IS SNAPPED UP BY RAILWORKERS

Railworkers snapped up a chance to join a photography course in Basingstoke when train drivers' union ASLEF negotiated a discounted rate with Jessops, and train operator South West Trains agreed to fund the difference.

The course was quickly over-subscribed when ASLEF ULRs from South West Trains' network promoted it, with drivers, guards and clerical staff from across the rail unions signing up.

The day covered the different types of digital cameras, with the main aim of taking people away from the safe automatic settings on their cameras and starting to get to grips with manual settings.

"I really enjoyed the course and would like to go away and practise and come back for another course," commented one learner afterwards.

in her area. She also has a child living in her neighbourhood with autism, and she thinks doing a course about autism will increase her understanding of the condition and help her communicate better with him.

"Once Michelle has finished this course, she will be a strong voice in the workplace promoting not only learning but the benefits of being a member of our union," says Janet. **LR**

New toolkit boosts Apprenticeship campaign

Revised and updated resource includes everything you need to promote high-quality programmes at work.

Unionlearn and the TUC have revised and updated the Apprenticeships Toolkit, the resource pack for union learning reps, workplace reps and union negotiators that was originally published six years ago.

The print version of the toolkit is a wallet containing 12 indexed factsheets that cover all the key issues facing unions in the promotion of high-quality Apprenticeships in the workplace,



including pay, health and safety, training and widening access to under-represented groups.

Individual factsheets and a digital version of the complete toolkit will also be available for download from the unionlearn website.

The new toolkit includes the latest details of the government's new Apprenticeship Levy, which is expected to raise £12bn over the course of this parliament once it comes into operation for eligible employers across the public and private sector next April.

It also sets out the TUC Apprenticeships Charter, detailing the eight key principles to a skills development programme that can benefit apprentices, their employers and society as a whole. **LR**

[Click here](#) to order your copy of the new Apprenticeships Toolkit



Most employers won't pay new levy

Only 2 per cent of employers will pay the new Apprenticeship Levy from next April, according to the latest government guidance about the operation of the new scheme.

Employers with a payroll of £3m-plus will be compelled to pay the equivalent of 0.5 per cent of their payroll, although they will have a £15,000 tax allowance they can offset against their levy payments.

They will also be able to recoup their levy payments by taking on apprentices, who can be new entrants aged 16 or over and/or existing staff.

The government will be putting safeguards in place to ensure eligible employers cannot divide their operation into smaller businesses to avoid reaching the payment threshold.

From April, the government will also be phasing in a Digital Apprenticeship Service (DAS) in England to help levy-paying employers source and pay for Apprenticeship provision and assessment (and not associated costs such as wages, travel or Traineeships).

The government is also setting up the new Institute for Apprenticeships to set, monitor and enforce quality standards, and the TUC is calling for trade union representation on the board to safeguard the interests of apprentices themselves.

UNION SEAT ON TRANSPORT TASKFORCE

TUC Head of Organisation and Services Kevin Rowan has been appointed to the new Strategic Transport Apprenticeship Taskforce (STAT), set up to help create 30,000 Apprenticeships

in the sector and increase the diversity of the workforce over the next four years.

"Supporting high-quality Apprenticeships and skills development for adult employees

is at the heart of unions' negotiating strategies across the sector, as is tackling equality and diversity challenges," says Kevin.



Cash in your qualifications

You could complete a degree sooner than you think by transferring study credit from higher-level learning to The Open University.

After using his HND in Business to go straight into the final stage of study with The Open University (OU), Philip Cooper (below) has progressed his career with the help of his degree.

“I was really keen to improve my personal skills and professional qualifications in order to advance my career. As I was used to old-fashioned classroom training, I was concerned about how I would cope overall,” he says.



But Philip realised he need not have worried. “I found that with the support from lecturers and my fellow students, I was never alone,” he explains.

And not long after completing his degree, he gained promotion and began managing a team of 25.

“Having a big team was quite daunting, but the OU had given me some essential tools in my new role as a manager,” he adds.

Darren Grey (right) knew computers were the career for him after trying out a number of jobs, so he studied for a HNC in Software Development at college and applied for a job as a software developer – only to be told

that he needed a degree.

That’s when Darren took advantage of the Open University offer to ‘cash in’ on what he had already learned by putting it towards a new qualification.

Those who may not have completed their education at another university, or who have done equivalent, university-level study, including HNDs, HNCs and many professional qualifications, may be eligible for this opportunity. It allows them to save time and money and potentially change their life by achieving a qualification they may have thought was beyond their reach.

Because Darren already had an HNC, he didn’t have to take all the OU modules as his HNC counted towards his final degree. And he was able to put his learning into practice right away.

“Even while studying, my career was progressing faster. I was picking things up on the course I could use at work. The OU has been one of the best experiences of my life,” he says. **LR**

▶ [Click here](#) for more information

▶ [Click here](#) for previous study finder



CREDIT TRANSFER: HOW IT WORKS

If you have previously studied elsewhere, you may be able to count your study towards an Open University qualification, for example if you have:

- studied some modules or courses at university level
- completed part of a degree
- completed a professional or vocational qualification listed on the Ofqual register
- completed an HNC or HND
- studied at a university overseas
- completed other study listed in the OU previous study finder.

To transfer study credit:

- 1 Check if your previous study is eligible for credit transfer.
- 2 See how much credit can be transferred into your chosen OU qualification.
- 3 Make a formal application for credit transfer.

If you are planning to start your studies in October 2016, the deadline for credit transfer applications is 11 August 2016.

Anna leads on online learning

Anna Fitzjohn has joined TUC Education to deliver and market new online learning opportunities to help union reps keep their skills up to date.

✎ Astrid Stubbs

Anna Fitzjohn will be bringing commitment and creativity to her new role as TUC Education projects officer, after working in various roles for Creative Skillset, the Sector Skills Council for the creative industries over the past eight years.

"I have spent my career working in universities and Sector Skills Councils, passionately building on the skills agenda," Anna says.

"Through various projects, I have been able to play a part in the up-skilling of thousands of individuals, from new entrants to directors: I have worked on Apprenticeships, Traineeships, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and, most recently, a suite of innovative Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) for the creative industries, where I developed a passion for online learning," she says.

The suite of free online courses covered a wide range of sectors, including radio, film and TV, animation, film-making visual effects (VFX) and computer games as part of an Industrial Partnership funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

Anna also helped manage and promote a large-scale diversity project, which provided over 1,000 training opportunities to under-represented groups in the creative industries, another area that she is deeply committed to.

As part of her new role, she will be



"I am very excited to be working in this role. I can bring together my experience of project management with my passion for skills and equality."

working on a Ufi Charitable Trust-funded project to deliver and market the new suite of online learning opportunities, enabling more people to undertake training and to encourage increased membership and union reps.

"I am very excited to be working in this role for TUC Education, where I can bring together my experience of project management and marketing with my passion for skills and equality all into one role," says Anna. **LR**



LEARN HOW TO PROTECT PREGNANT WORKERS' RIGHTS

The TUC has produced an essential new eNote covering pregnancy and maternity discrimination following ground-breaking research by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) that revealed 77 per cent of working mothers had experienced pregnancy discrimination.

The new eNote:

- details the research findings from the EHRC
- outlines the law on pregnancy and maternity rights
- gives practical examples for union reps on how they can support colleagues.

"I thought this was great, very informative," said one rep on the TUC Education forum. "It's a real shame that we have to still deal with issues like this in the workplace in this day and age."

Another rep commented, "I am sure it will prove invaluable in my role."

✎ [Click here](#) to see the EHRC pregnancy discrimination report
✎ [Click here](#) to find out about all eNotes

You can count on Michelle

Like ULRs across the country, Usdaw's Michelle Whitley is helping Home Retail Group staff overcome their mental blocks about maths by taking the National Numeracy Challenge.

✦ Astrid Stubbs

Usdaw Learning Coordinator Michelle Whitley hates maths, which is what makes her the perfect person to become the first National Numeracy Challenge Champion for the Home Retail Group call centre in Widnes.

"I'm absolutely rubbish at maths – I'm terrified," she says. "But I've passed all my Functional Skills tests and know now how to brush up whenever I need it and I can tell people about how they can keep revisiting and looking up things they don't understand or struggle with."

Before the Challenge was launched at her workplace, numeracy issues came to the fore only when people approached Michelle because they were in trouble at work.

Customer care staff who needed numeracy skills to help shoppers size curtains or rugs often dreaded coming into work because of the maths part of the job.

But now Michelle has a maths tool with which to support staff in a way that is comfortable and non-threatening to them. And she doesn't even need a room or a learning centre to encourage staff to take the challenge – it can all be done on a laptop or even a smartphone, she points out.

Now Michelle's team of seven ULRs is training to



"I'm absolutely rubbish at maths... but I've passed all my Functional Skills tests and know now how to brush up whenever I need it."

take the message out to the 2,000-plus workers on the Widnes site.

Over the last year, retail union USDAW has signed up 22 Challenge Champions like Michelle, to raise awareness through leaflets, posters and social media and help co-workers improve their maths skills through one-to-one and workshop support.

"The National Numeracy Challenge has gone down really well in retail and managers love it," explains USDAW Project Worker

Denise Gordon. "Upskilling the workers kicks off loads of different things; there are fewer errors and members get the confidence to apply internally for better jobs – it's a win-win for all."

• Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is believed to be the first in the country to sign up to a review of numeracy skills for its staff.

More than 400 staff – from healthcare assistants to managers – have taken part in the survey so far and 200-plus have taken

the National Numeracy Challenge Check-up.

UNISON Blackpool Health Branch Lead ULR Jane Eyre says health unions and Trust management are looking forward to receiving the results and working together to help staff improve their numeracy.

"We are very happy to be one of the first union/Trust partnerships to sign up to undertake the National Numeracy Review and hope that this will encourage other unions and trusts to do the same," Jane says. **LR**

NUMERACY CHALLENGE IN NUMBERS

- 76,817 learners so far
- 898 resources to help you
- 1,084-plus ways to use numeracy

Click here for more info

CITIZEN MATHS VIDEO

There's a new Citizen Maths video explaining the work it does.

Click here to take a look

BOOST YOUR MATHS SKILLS

You can boost your maths confidence and gain the skills to pass employers' numeracy tests by taking the free online course Numeracy Skills for Employability and the Workplace from Loughborough University through FutureLearn.

Click here to test your maths skills



Learning puts workers in the driving seat

Bentley Motors, synonymous with handbuilt, luxury cars, is now working with Unite to provide high-quality training for its workforce in Crewe.

◆ Keith Hatch

The seven-strong team of Unite learning reps at the Bentley Motors workshop in Crewe has helped more than 120 members complete Functional Skills English Level 1 or 2, more than 150 members complete Functional Skills Maths Level 1 or 2 and 60-plus complete ITQ to Level 2.

Much of this is down to the learning agreement that the union negotiated with Bentley. “We have a 50/50 learning agreement in which Bentley give one hour at the end of the shift and members give an hour in their own time,” says Union Learning Coordinator and Senior Union Representative Paul Morrey.

“This agreement is extremely popular as we have generally given members a new-found urge to learn.”

Feedback about the courses has been overwhelmingly positive. “Together the company and union have helped me improve my skills,” says one learner, while another says, “No matter what happens in the future, my union is looking after my future as the union has campaigned for me to become skilled in my profession.”

“We promote learning, health and well-being and, of course, the benefits of being a union member.”

While ULRs at Bentley keep busy all year round, they target Learning at Work Week and other national initiatives to help promote learning onsite, Paul says.

“We have run lunchbox sessions across the site with motor sports experts, we have had famous sports personalities give talks around learning, training and development – both work and non-work related – we promote learning, health and well-being and, of course, the benefits of being a union member.”

Paul feels that working together in the training, educational and development partnership is extremely beneficial to both union and company as well as the learners themselves – and the company agrees.

“Bentley has a strong working

relationship alongside the trade union and its union learning reps: the trade union involvement helps to create a positive culture of workplace learning,” says the HR Board.

Apprenticeships are a case in point. Unite has successfully campaigned for more Apprenticeships including adult Apprenticeships – and the ongoing Apprenticeship intake supports the future of the company at a time when many are worried about a skills gap.

Unite’s North West Regional Learning Organiser Steve Turner is full of praise for the job the ULRs have been doing at Bentley. “Led by Paul, our ULRs have been an inspiration at Bentley’s by working in partnership with the company to encourage employees to develop their life skills,” Steve says.

“The dedication of our team at Bentley’s has not only opened the doors of education for all employees but it has given them the confidence to come forward and learn with their friends. Employees at Bentley’s see the value of sharpening their skills and know our Unite ULRs are a source of information and support.” **LR**