

LR

LEARNINGREP

unionlearn.org.uk | Spring 2020



*Alison is putting
her learners first*

- ▶ *Trailblazing new union standard*
- ▶ *Training Safe for young workers*
- ▶ *PFA scores community goals*
- ▶ *Promoting health and wellbeing*
- ▶ *New skills fund on the way*

unionlearn
from the TUC



FIRE IT UP IS WHAT WE DO

AS I WRITE THIS MESSAGE IN FEBRUARY, we have just been celebrating National Apprenticeship Week, with its Fire It Up theme of improving diversity and inclusion.

"All the research shows that apprenticeships still do not fully reflect the communities we live and work in."

We fully supported this focus, as all the research shows that apprenticeships still do not fully reflect the communities we live and work in – and many of the young apprentices we work with tell us the same thing.

But as we always aim to do, we don't just talk the talk, we walk the walk. So this year, in addition to the guides we have already produced to help ULRs and

other workplace reps combat gender segregation and remove barriers to youngsters from Black and minority ethnic (BME) communities and disabled people, we published new guidance on creating LGBT+ inclusive apprenticeships.

That same commitment to action is exemplified in the work of the trade union Trailblazer group that has spent the past 18 months developing a detailed new trade union official apprenticeship standard. Its collaborative work has created a new pathway for the next generation of union organisers and officials, which we are proud to have been able to help.

And don't forget that when you are engaging with apprentices in your own workplaces, you can help them get the most out of their programmes by encouraging them to use the excellent Apprenticeship Essentials app and web-based tool that we have created to help them as they start their working lives. 

Kevin Rowan is Director of unionlearn



Department
for Education

unionlearn
from the TUC

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NEWS + VIEWS

RMT builds new portal for maritime learners



RMT Learning is developing an online portal for the union's maritime members to help them find learning opportunities more easily and then access the learning online, at the time and place best suited to their needs.

The portal will bring together in one place as many relevant providers and opportunities as possible in order to help a group of learners that is hard to reach because of the irregular hours and shift patterns that are usual for seafarers, dockworkers, divers, oil rig workers, wind farm maintenance staff and river cruise workers.

"They all work irregular hours and staggered shift patterns, depending on the needs of the job, so regular learning is very difficult to access balanced with work, home commitments and a work/life balance that is already precarious," explains Ivor Riddell, the RMT's lead learning organiser for maritime.

The plan is to include some bespoke courses suggested by the maritime

members themselves as well as functional skills, vocational learning and personal development.

The portal is due to be launched as a pilot for testing at the RMT National Education Conference in March, Ivor says.

"As always, there will be a few teething issues to sort and once it has been evaluated and tweaked we are looking to give it a full launch in September," he says.

The launch will coincide with a recruitment drive for maritime ULRs to help promote the portal and support learners, as well as monitoring and expanding the content further as time goes by.

Birmingham UNISON offers something for everyone

Birmingham UNISON members took part in a theatre workshop on disability, a wellbeing session and an event to mark International

Human Rights Day as part of the branch's learning programme in December.

The monthly programme is put together by the branch's Union Learning Fund (ULF) Officer Donald McCombie, and every session is free and open to everyone.

More than three dozen members took part in the theatre workshop, which blended short scenes examining the workplace barriers faced by disabled workers with discussion of the issues by the participants.

Held in the theatre at Birmingham Library, the session was led by Hubbub Theatre Company, an integrated ensemble of learning disabled and non-disabled performers, and Face Up Theatre, which specialises in running workshops to inspire social change.

"A creative, interactive piece of theatre was not something anybody in the room had experienced before, so that was different in a good way for people," says Donald, who organised the event in partnership with the branch's disabled members' self-organised group.

The next day, a dozen people attended a wellbeing workshop in the branch office, which included Tai Chi and mindfulness meditation delivered by branch member Mark Winter.

Later in the month, the branch marked International Human Rights Day with another dozen people attending a session on the Holocaust and its influence on post-war human rights campaigns, which was led by two branch members

who had recently visited Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland on a trade union visit.

Get set for Literacy Works Week



Unionlearn will be supporting reading, writing and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in the workplace during this year's Literacy Works Week, which runs from Monday 9 to Friday 13 of March.

It's the week when ULRs could encourage colleagues to use SkillCheck to take an initial assessment of their English skills; promote the latest batch of Quick Reads or any other book-related scheme; or encourage creative writing with a competition or an author visit.

Unionlearn will be running a daily literacy quiz online, as well as publishing case studies, news stories and guest blogs on the website. You'll get alerted about them by hitting the orange 'subscribe' button on any page of the unionlearn website.

When you tweet about anything, make sure you get the biggest possible audience by using the hashtag #literacyworks and tagging @unionlearn in the tweet to alert us to retweet it.

ULRs and project workers are welcome to attend the 'Making skills count: Unions' English, maths and digital network' meeting on Tuesday 10 March in London. The agenda includes information about the UNISON survey on skills, NEU's transversal skills project and ideas on how to make English and maths learning fun.

Click here to find out more information and to register

Nominate a ULR for this year's awards

Unionlearn is looking for nominations for union learning reps (ULRs) that deserve the recognition of a ULR award at this year's annual conference to celebrate the difference they have made in their workplace.

To nominate a ULR you know for one of the awards, all you have to do is complete a short form explaining what they have done and why they deserve the award. All applications must be signed off by a senior union officer. The deadline for nominations is Friday 10 April 2019.

The six award categories reflect unionlearn's key priorities:

- apprenticeships
- English (literacy)
- maths (numeracy)
- supporting disadvantaged learners
- supporting older workers
- digital.

Preparations are underway for this year's

conference – keep a look out for the unionlearn alert with news about the date, location and speakers.

Click here to request a nomination form

REPTECH

Apprentices get new app

ULRs that have engaged new apprentices during National Apprenticeship Week in February can show them how to learn more about their rights and responsibilities by using unionlearn's new Apprenticeship Essentials app and web-based tool.

Available for Apple and Android devices and on the web via unionlearn's website, the app is a user-friendly guide to help apprentices navigate the world of work; check they are getting the pay they are entitled to; and learn about joining unions and getting involved.

The app also includes a discussion forum where apprentices can discuss problems at work or get help with job applications, plus a guide to employment rights and training entitlements.

Click here to find out more





BFAWU OPENS NEW LEARNING CENTRE

Food workers' union BFAWU General Secretary Ronnie Draper formally opened a new learning centre at the Hatfield, Hertfordshire, site of warehousing and logistics company PCL Transport 24/7.

Held in December, the celebration was also attended by BFAWU Organising Regional Secretary Lukasz Bemka, alongside the union's Learning Services Project Manager Lisa Greenfield and Project Administrator Julie Oakley.

There was also high-profile support from the company, in the shape of National General Manager of Operations John McNamara, Business Development Manager Paul Winter and HR Manager Lauren Hindley and her team.

"We had the official cutting of the ribbon at the learning centre, performed by Ronnie Draper, who said it was great to see learning moving forward with PCL," says Lisa.

"Everyone then had a look around the centre and discussed the courses we would run and how the centre can be used as a union office for the reps on site and also a quiet study room as the computers are all internet-enabled."

- Sarah Woolley, who will replace Ronnie Draper as general secretary later this year, has credited BFAWU Learning Services with giving her the confidence to stand for election to the top job in the union. The Wakefield-based organising regional secretary will become the first woman to lead BFAWU in July. **LR**

Next managers boost literacy skills



Managers at the massive Next distribution centre in South Elmsall, West Yorkshire, have improved their written communication with warehouse staff, team leaders and each other thanks to a Writing Matters course organised by Usdaw ULRs and delivered by the Royal Literacy Fund (RLF).

The idea for the course emerged from a meeting between the HR manager on site and the learning reps, which discussed the lack of clarity in some emails and the weak command of tone in others.

"It was felt there was room for improvement in internal emails due to some confusion in some instructions and misinterpreting an email's tone," explains ULR Kirsty Lumb.

Delivered by RLF tutors Mary Colson and Clare Shaw, the course of four two-hour workshops for managers focused on clarity, accuracy, structure and tone – and they went down a treat with the participants.

"This is without a doubt one of the best courses I have been on in my time at Next," commented Assistant Site Manager Charlotte Kenney.

"I finally feel confident in my ability to check my own work and send a grammatically correct

email. I really believe this should be mandatory for all members of the management team."

Kirsty says the course delivered much more than anyone expected. "The passion from Mary and Clare inspired so much confidence within the learners to open up and work on their weaknesses," she says.

"The things that the learners have gained have been passed around to people outside of the sessions, which has prompted some amazing conversations about writing and people learning things they thought they already knew."

New guide to help promote Quick Reads

Unionlearn has produced a new guide, *Ready to Read*, to help ULRs and other reps promoting learning make the most of Quick Reads in the workplace.

Quick Reads are the short, punchy books that are published in groups of six every year to engage less confident adult readers and people who have fallen out of the reading habit.

The guide sets out how reading for pleasure boosts confidence, knowledge and empathy, and helps people better understand what is going on in their workplace and in society at large.

It shows how ULRs can use Quick Reads as conversation starters to engage members and potential members



about learning, or use them to start a reading group with co-workers – and includes useful tips on good questions to ask that help structure reading group discussions.

Real-life examples of how ULRs and learning projects are already using Quick Reads are scattered throughout the guide.

▶ [Click here](#) to download the unionlearn guide

▶ [Click here](#) to download the Reading Agency's Quick Reads resources

Improving skills is key priority for 2020s

The 2020s will become a decade of growth only if we invest in improving skills, according to new research by Learning and Work Institute (L&W) for the Local Government Association (LGA).

Six million people in England risk either being without a job or in work they are over-qualified for by 2030, according to the research.

The research also warns that by 2030 there could be 5.1 million low-skilled people chasing 2 million low-skilled jobs (a surplus of 3.1 million low-skilled workers) and 12.7 million people with intermediate skills chasing 9.5 million jobs (another surplus of 3.1 million).

However, the research suggests there might be a deficit of 2.5 million workers when it comes to filling the 17.4 million high-skilled jobs that will be needed.

“Improving skills is central to making the

2020s a decade of growth,” commented L&W Chief Executive Stephen Evans.

“We now need a decade of investment, in order to boost life chances, economic prosperity and to level up the country – and that investment needs to be delivered through a partnership between national and local government, employers and trade unions.”

Spreading the mid-life message in Europe

Unionlearn showcased its new Value My Skills online tool in front of an international audience of trade unionists, academics and lifelong learning specialists at a conference in Italy in December.

Held at the University of Milan Bicocca, the conference was part of a campaign building support for a new European-wide entitlement to a Mid-life Skills Review when workers reach the age of 50.

Communications & Contracts Manager Ian Borkett and National Projects Officer Jane Warwick demonstrated the new tool in their joint session at the event, which helps users identify transferable skills in the same way as the Value My Skills card game resource it is based on.

Participants were also able to brainstorm how the new tool could be taken forward in one of the workshop sessions at the conference.

To help the tool potentially

engage many more users, unionlearn is currently managing its translation into Polish, Romanian, Lithuanian and Latvian.

Unionlearn developed the new tool itself as part of the two-year Mid-Life Skills Review Project, co-funded by the TUC and the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union (EU).

▶ [Click here](#) to use the Value My Skills online tool

▶ [Click here](#) to find out more about Erasmus+ Mid-life Skills Review Project

▶ [Click here](#) to read the Supporting Mid-life Development learning theme on the union learning Climbing Frame

Apprentice gender pay gap is growing

The gender gap in apprentice pay is growing,

according to the latest Apprentice Pay Survey, which reveals that men on apprenticeships are now paid 6 per cent more than women on average, double the rate since the last edition of the survey in 2016.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (DBEIS) survey also reveals that just 40 per cent of women receive formal training as part of their apprenticeship compared to 57 per cent of men.

The survey also revealed that 19 per cent of Level 2 and Level 3 apprentices are being paid below the national minimum wage, with non-compliance almost twice as high in children's

care (34 per cent) and two-and-a-half times as high in hairdressing (48 per cent), occupations where gender segregation means many more women are training than men.

“This report once again highlights the sexism and discrimination that young women face even at the very beginning of their careers,” commented Young Women's Trust Chief Executive Sophie Walker.

“We must end the discrimination which limits the choices young women can make and invest more in vital social infrastructure, like childcare and social care, so that working in these sectors is valued and offers the same level of pay and security as other apprenticeships,” Sophie said.

▶ [Click here](#) to download your copy of the survey

New resources for Numeracy Day

National Numeracy has produced a set of downloadable resources that ULRs can use to help promote Numeracy Day on Wednesday 13 May (the week before Learning at Work Week).

The resources include activities suitable for anyone 16 or older, activities for families and real-life stories of people who have helped themselves in various ways by improving their numeracy skills.

▶ [Click here](#) to download activities for adults and case studies





Setting standards for union organisers

A group of trade unions has got together to create a new apprenticeship standard to help develop the next generation of organisers and officials.

A new training framework for trade union organisers and officials developed by trade unionists themselves was launched at events in London and Manchester during this year's National Apprenticeship Week in February.

Put together over the past 18 months by a Trailblazer group of 10 unions, with the help of unionlearn, the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU) and three union-friendly training providers, the new Trade Union Official Apprenticeship Standard is now all but ready to go into operation.

"This apprenticeship is the first of its kind and we are really proud of what we have achieved," commented Unite's HR Director Barbara Kielim, who chaired the Trailblazer group, at the Congress House event in London.

The 18-month Level 4 apprenticeship enables unions

to equip the next generation of officials with the same set of skills they need to grow the movement, regardless of their pathway into the role.

Whether they are experienced reps and convenors, existing staff in support roles, existing officers or new starters with the necessary capabilities – all four groups will emerge from the programme with the same set of skills, including at least Level 2 English and maths.

GMB National Project Director Colin Kirkham, a member of the sub-group that undertook the detailed development work on the standard, said the apprenticeship opened up an important new pathway into union work.

"Hopefully one day in the future, when people ask, How did you become a trade union official? you'll say, I took a Level 4 trade union official

apprenticeship. And people might just have a certificate on their desk saying that they know what they're doing," he said.

While the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has agreed the standard itself, the Trailblazer group is currently awaiting signoff of its proposed end point assessment model before the apprenticeship is finally ready for delivery.

As is clear from the branding of the apprenticeship, with its image of black and white figures learning together, the standard has been created with the express intention of helping unions develop officials and organisers from more diverse backgrounds.

"One of the things that we really are keen for this to do to make a difference to our movement: we need to (a) reflect our membership and (b) be



“We really want to target our apprenticeship at our own membership and give them that opportunity to work for us full time – and we want to focus particularly on engaging our young members.”

more attractive to our membership so that we can grow our unions,” Barbara said.

The flexibility of the new apprenticeship is exemplified by the different approaches to implementation planned by the GMB (which is large enough to pay the Apprenticeship Levy) and the TSSA (which is not a Levy-payer).

The GMB will recruit its first cohort to the programme this summer, according to National Education Officer Carl Parker. “Come June, we will take the 10 most recently appointed officers and they will start the programme; any new officers that join throughout the year, once we’ve got groups of three or four, they will then be inducted into the programme,” Carl explained.

The union will also be opening the apprenticeship to its existing officers, as well as using the standard to formalise the training component of its existing admin staff-to-officer programme.

Transport union TSSA will be using the apprenticeship to identify new talent, according to HR Manager Sarah Jane McConnell (another member of the Trailblazer sub-group).

“TSSA have created a new role, which we’ve called organiser apprentice, with a new job description, grade and salary,” she said. “We really want to target

CREATING LGBT+ INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES FOR APPRENTICES

Unionlearn has produced new detailed guidance to help union negotiators promote participation by, and support achievement of, apprentices who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans (LGBT+).



LGBT+ inclusive apprenticeships: a resource for union negotiators and reps was launched in February to mark both National Apprenticeship Week and LGBT History Month.

Government equality monitoring of apprenticeships does not currently cover either sexuality or gender identity. But there are justifiable fears that many LGBT+ young people may:

- apply only for apprenticeships in sectors perceived to be safer for them
- reject the apprenticeship route entirely because they do not believe they could be open about themselves with employers.

Either way, that means LGBT+ people are limiting their career choices and employers are losing out on LGBT+ talent.

The new guide offers practical advice on what unions can do to help remove barriers to participation, from ensuring recruitment information includes specific anti-discrimination statements to creating inclusive work environments through zero tolerance of harassment and bullying.

The guidance includes detailed breakdowns of how to make workplaces welcoming to trans and non-binary apprentices. It also spells out what reps can do to educate themselves on the issues and challenge discriminatory attitudes they encounter from managers and colleagues.

The guide is the latest unionlearn guidance addressing apprenticeship equality issues and sits alongside publications relating to women in under-represented industries, Black, minority and ethnic (BME) workers and disabled workers.

▶ [Click here to download the new guide](#)

our apprenticeship at our own membership and give them that opportunity to work for us full time – and we want to focus particularly on engaging our young members.”

In addition, to help upskill TSSA’s existing organisers, the union will be training them to coach its new apprentices.

Regardless of the different models used to implement it, the new apprenticeship has the potential to change the movement

for the better, says GMB General Secretary Tim Roache.

“This is the shape of things to come,” he said. “Not only does it mean we can claw back that huge amount of Levy we give to the government – we can claw it back by investing in our own staff. And the levels that they achieve will be beneficial to our members, to prospective members, to workplaces, to agreements and to organising.” **LR**



Putting learners first with the POA

Put your learners first. That was Alison Manion's mantra when she used to manage a POA learning centre. And it's still the light that guides her today in her role as acting project manager of POA Learning.

✎ Martin Moriarty

Way back in 2007, when Alison Manion (pictured right) was managing the POA learning centre at Hatfield Young Offenders Institution, someone from the local community showed up who was the definition of a reluctant learner.

Very apprehensive because of his bad memories of school, Scott Close had needed a lot of persuading by one of Alison's union learners to get him there.

(POA Learning has always opened its doors to friends and family of POA members and local communities as well as all prison and secure hospital employees.)

Because she's always believed in putting her learners first, Alison knew exactly how to put Scott at ease.

"I was made to feel welcome and valued," he remembers. (Result!)

Within a couple of days, Scott had enrolled on his first course and went on to complete Level 2 qualifications in English, maths and IT that helped him progress to A Level ICT at the local college.

"Alison and the rest of the staff at the learning centre were extremely flexible and allowed

me to access my learning around my work and childcare commitments," Scott recalls.

After volunteering at the centre for a couple of years and completing his Level 5 Certificate in Education there, Scott had all the qualifications and experience he needed to apply for a learner support post in 2009.

Not only did he get that job, Scott later won promotion to Alison's old role of centre manager. "Without POA Learning, I would not be where I am today," he says. (And all because Alison's always put her learners first.)

Hatfield is one of the eight regional centres that are the core of the POA Learning project, and where the majority of the 18-strong team of learner support workers and centre managers work. The others are in Dartmoor (Devon), Eastchurch (Kent), Full Sutton (York), the Isle of Wight, Maghull (Liverpool), Newbold Revel (Warwickshire) and Nottingham.

"The regional centres are where our bread-and-butter work is," Alison explains. "That's where the staff work every day delivering functional skills courses themselves, as well as taking part in the wellbeing days the Prison Service offer their staff and building up links with other establishments," Alison explains.

"Staff work every day delivering functional skills courses themselves, as well as taking part in the wellbeing days."





“Over the past three or four years, we’ve forged a really strong relationship with POA Learning because by partnering with each other, we’re able to help more and more people.”

In addition to the regional centres, the project runs 40-plus link centres that help promote learning opportunities across the Prison Service.

As well as English, maths and IT, the regional centres offer learners the chance to improve their awareness of a range of issues including mental health, dyslexia, autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

The project is also supporting apprentices (new starters and existing staff) as the Prison Service gradually expands its apprenticeship programme. In addition, with the help of a successful innovation bid to the ULF, the project launched an Apprenticeship Support Network on the Isle of Wight earlier this year, to offer support and guidance to apprentices in any sector on the island, protecting them from exploitation and making them aware of their workplace rights.

POA Learning also offers an expanding portfolio of distance-learning opportunities, its partnership with The Skills Network enabling the project to offer accredited Level 2 courses including business and leadership, childcare and education, health and social care, retail and hospitality and public services.

As is the case in any sector, some establishments engage more than others, but in general, progress is in the right direction. “We’ve reached the stage now where there’s more establishments that do engage with us than don’t at the moment,” Alison says.

At national level, the hard work the project has undertaken to develop a positive partnership with the Prison Service is also paying off.

“The relationship we have now is brilliant, it’s probably the best it’s been and a lot of that is due to Brett Stringer, the Skills for Life Manager, who’s based at the Prison Service College at Newbold Revel: we have a really good relationship and Brett promotes us wherever he can,” Alison says.

Brett himself says that the partnership between the service’s learning and development team and POA Learning helps both sides reach more learners.

“Over the past three or four years, we’ve forged a really strong relationship with POA



Top, Brett Stringer, Prison Service skills for life manager
Bottom, Amalia Remblin, project comms officer

Learning because by partnering with each other, we’re able to help more and more people – it’s a fantastic opportunity to get to the wider community of the service as a whole,” he says.

The main challenge for Alison and her team is securing time off for staff to learn. “Time out for learning is the major challenge, which I’m sure is the case everywhere, not just in the Prison Service,” Alison says.

“People are interested in learning and want to do this for their own development: every day I get emails from members of staff in establishments across the country who want to be signposted to learning they can do – and not because they’ve been told they need to but because they want to, which is a testament to the way staff want to progress their own development.”

Working with her brilliant team and helping members return to learning are the two elements of her job that offer the greatest fulfilment for Alison. “Working with the team I’ve got gives me great satisfaction: they’re all absolutely fantastic and as passionate about learning as I’d like to think I still am even after all these years,” she says.

“And helping people get back into learning when they may have had a bad experience before, helping them overcome that so they can then aspire to whatever they want to do and whatever they want to be in life, that gives me great satisfaction.” Fifteen years since she started managing Hatfield regional learning centre, Alison is still putting her learners first. **LR**



New app alerts young workers about safety

One of this year's Union Learning Fund innovation projects has developed an app to engage apprentices and other young workers about staying safe.



Greater Manchester Hazards Centre (GMHC) has launched a new app to help apprentices and other young workers stay safe in the workplace – especially if their employers don't recognise a trade union.

GMHC developed the app, Training Safe, with the help of an innovation project through the Union Learning Fund (ULF) that also backed the production of a portfolio of printed resources to help young workers.

The need for the kind of awareness-raising that the app can deliver is clear from the data. According to the latest TUC report on young workers, every month a worker aged under 25 is killed at work and over 300 suffer a major injury.

"It's absolutely imperative that apprentices and all young workers are better educated about health and safety because we know most of them are not going into union-organised workplaces," explains

Project Worker Janet Newsham.

"That means they're in really vulnerable positions in workplaces where their health, safety and welfare isn't going to be one of the top priorities, so it's essential to get them direct support, which we can do through the app."

Placing young people, with their

beliefs in their own invincibility, in workplaces where safety is not prioritised, let alone improved through training, can have consequences that range from the dangerous to the fatal.

In addition, recent apprenticeship reforms have not always supported health and safety, Janet points



“It’s absolutely imperative that apprentices and all young workers are better educated about health and safety because we know most of them are not going into union-organised workplaces.”

out. For example, removing the requirement on training providers to undertake detailed risk assessments of the workplaces where their apprentices are working has resulted in rigorous checks being replaced by the circulation of checklists.

When GMHC secured the funding, it set up a steering group to oversee the work that included unionlearn National Apprenticeship Project Officer Mark Rowe and ULF National Coordinator Julia Jones plus two of Janet’s colleagues from GMHC, Caroline Bedale and Hilda Palmer.

Other members able to contribute their own expertise to the project included Dave Foy from LOCHER, which works to help young workers understand workplace safety; Damian Holohan, the senior rep at the nuclear fuel operation Westinghouse, who is the lead on the in-house apprentice mentoring scheme; Mary Sayer from Unite in Schools; and Manchester College Trade Union Education Tutor Nigel Williams.

The first thing Janet did was ask young people themselves what they would want and need from the new app.

She interviewed a group of apprentices at British Aerospace at Samlesbury and Westinghouse and consulted apprentices at the Barrow shipyard about what they thought it would be useful to have.

Janet also distributed questionnaires to a wider range of young workers themselves and consulted with unions like Unite (which organises young

workers at Sports Direct) and BFAWU, which has recruited many McDonald’s workers.

Once the project knew what it wanted to include in the app, Janet approached Elite Sport Technologies to translate those ideas into digital form.

Launched on the Apple Store and Google Play in the autumn, the app includes:

- an A-Z of advice issues from acoustic shock to work-related musculoskeletal disorders
- useful statistics on pay rates and workplace injuries
- a newsfeed with the latest stories young workers need to know
- updates about events such as this year’s International Workers’ Memorial Day on Tuesday 28 April
- a chat function.

While the app is the jewel in the crown of the project, ULF funding has also enabled GMHC to produce a useful set of print resources, including booklets on mental health, mentoring and safety advice plus a pocket-sized guide to employment rights and health and safety.

The project organised a very successful dissemination event at the end of last year to showcase developments to date.

The project has also secured some additional funding from the ULF that will help them create a web-based equivalent of the app, which will be targeted at young people who work in organisations where they only have online access through laptops and desktop computers.

The key priority now for the project is getting the message out about the app so that it reaches the young workers who would find it most helpful (the project is organising another dissemination event in Liverpool in March).

“We need to get the information out about the app to as many people as possible because the app will enable us to reach people we wouldn’t be able to reach in any other way to let them know this is available for them to use and get help from,” Janet says. **LR**



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USDW HELPS DHL STAFF PLAN FOR RETIREMENT

More than 180 workers at the DHL/Sainsbury’s Stoke distribution centre found out more about how they were prepared for retirement during a very successful week-long pension awareness campaign delivered by Usdaw’s union learning rep team on site last autumn.

Management offered its full support, agreeing to paid release for all the ULRs, including the senior shop steward, so they could deliver the campaign across all shifts over one week in September.

The ULR team secured a wide range of resources from Usdaw’s pension department, the DHL pension voyageur scheme and the Money Advice Service to help them offer impartial advice and guidance and, most importantly, signpost colleagues to further support. The team also organised for training provider Axia Solutions to run maths taster sessions, functional skills maths assessments and a pensions quiz.

“Running the campaign was a real eye-opener for people, learning things about additional voluntary contributions (AVCs) and the terms of their pension – I learned just how many people did not know how much or what was on offer,” says Senior Shop Steward Mick Deakes.

“We received some great feedback from colleagues and the management and a great number of thanks for our help. It was well worth running the event: the numbers themselves speak volumes and I was really surprised at just how many people we reached.”

Helping community learners score with the PFA



Community trusts and foundations shared the best ways of engaging trainees, apprentices and other young learners at a successful best practice day run by the Professional Footballers' Association.

• Martin Moriarty

Community engagement workers based in football grounds around the country pooled their ideas and shared their experiences of supporting learning at the latest Best Practice Day organised by the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) learning project last autumn.

Co-hosted by the PFA's Union Learning Fund (ULF) project and QPR in the Community Trust, the event mixed presentations and networking to help staff at community trusts and foundations develop new and better ways of engaging the wide variety of learners they support.

It was held in the west London club's ground, re-named the Kiyan Prince Foundation Stadium at the start of the current season. QPR made the change to help promote the local charity named after the former youth team player who died trying to break up a knife fight outside his school in 2006.

Participants travelled from across the country to take part, coming from Barnsley, Brighton, Bristol, Exeter, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Reading, Southend, Swindon and Watford, as well as London clubs including Brentford, Chelsea, Crystal Palace, Millwall, West Ham United.

"With all the trusts and foundations facing similar challenges, especially around funding, this was a very positive day, and everyone left with something to take away to improve their own programmes at their respective clubs," says PFA Education Adviser Riz Rehman, who has organised all four of the learning project's best practice days.

In his presentation, unionlearn Communications Officer Yusuf Dadabhoy took participants through the unionlearn resources that some community trusts and foundations are already using and others could take up or expand, including the

"There are always things you can learn, so if another club is doing something better than what we're doing, I'm always interested in figuring out how we can make it work where we are."

SkillCheck initial assessment tool and the Apprenticeship Essentials app. He also discussed the benefits of Career Kickstart reviews.

Looking at post-learning pathways, Bethan Norfor, People and Culture at London Ambulance Service NHS Trust, detailed the employment opportunities available to young

people who have progressed through the community trusts and foundations.

For Sarah McAdam, the further education manager at Brighton-based Albion in the Community, it was particularly useful to hear more about SkillCheck.

“We do use SkillCheck already but maybe not to the breadth and depth that we could, so hearing how the app can be used across our apprenticeships and full-time delivery – that will only further enhance what we’re delivering to our learners,” she says.

Sarah, who has attended all four best-practice days over the past four years, says there is nothing quite like the event.

“This is the only one where it’s just the PFA learning centres, which is really good because you know we’re all in the same boat and all delivering similar courses, so that’s really beneficial,” she says.

PFA union learning rep Richard Witt, who is Reading FC’s Community Trust social inclusion manager, says he always leaves the best practice days knowing more than when he arrived.

“There are always things you can learn, so if another club is doing something better than what we’re doing, I’m always interested in figuring out how we can make it work where we are,” he says.

Richard organises fun educational activities every week for hundreds of children and young people, many of whom have been excluded from school, struggle with mental health issues or live with autism spectrum disorders. He won the 2019 Inspiration Award at last year’s Pride of Reading Awards for his work at the trust.

The trust’s traineeship and other post-16 programmes have very impressive progression rates. “The majority who come through the programmes end up going on to employment elsewhere or end up working for us,” Richard says. “In the social inclusion department, we haven’t employed anybody from outside one of our programmes in more than five years and all of our junior mentors and coaches are all from one of our programmes.”

“For us, as a player foundation, it’s about taking the learning about what people are doing in the clubs and adapting it for a smaller organisation like ourselves.”

One of the first-time visitors to the day was Otis Roberts, chief executive officer of the Jason Roberts Foundation, the player foundation that has been delivering opportunities for young people in the UK and Grenada since it launched it in 2007.

Otis, a former player himself who also worked at what is now the Fulham Football Club Foundation, took away lots of ideas from the day.

“To have people coming from far and wide, that was the best thing – it gives you an insight into what a lot of people are doing and you can take a look at what is being developed,” Otis says.

“For us, as a player foundation, it’s about taking the learning about what people are doing in the clubs and adapting it for a smaller organisation like ourselves,” Otis says. “I’ll be bringing one or two of my colleagues to the next best practice day!”

QPR’s deep roots in its local community, evidenced for all to see in its response to the 2017 tragedy at Grenfell Tower, made it a natural choice to co-host this year’s best practice day.

The club’s director of football Les Ferdinand and Andy Evans, the chief executive of the Community Trust, both threw themselves into the relief efforts within hours of the fire breaking out. (Les moved onto the Lancaster West estate as a child, while Andy grew up only a few streets away.)

The trust delivered clothing and water to the tower while firefighters were still battling with the blaze; the club opened up the stadium as a relief centre; and Andy spent a week working with around 70 volunteers sorting through the food and clothing donations arriving at the ground.



Main photo, opposite: PFA Education Adviser Riz Rehman (left), Albion in the Community coach Danny Cullip (centre) and PFA ULR Richard Witt

Top photo: Danny Cullip (left) and Albion in the Community colleague Guy Butters

Bottom photo: The best practice day offered trusts and foundations the chance to share their ideas about what works

The trust went on to organise a free summer programme for children from the Tower whose families were in temporary housing locally and helped organise the Game4Grenfell, which raised £1m for the survivors. It continues to provide a key worker based by the Tower to work with young people in the area.

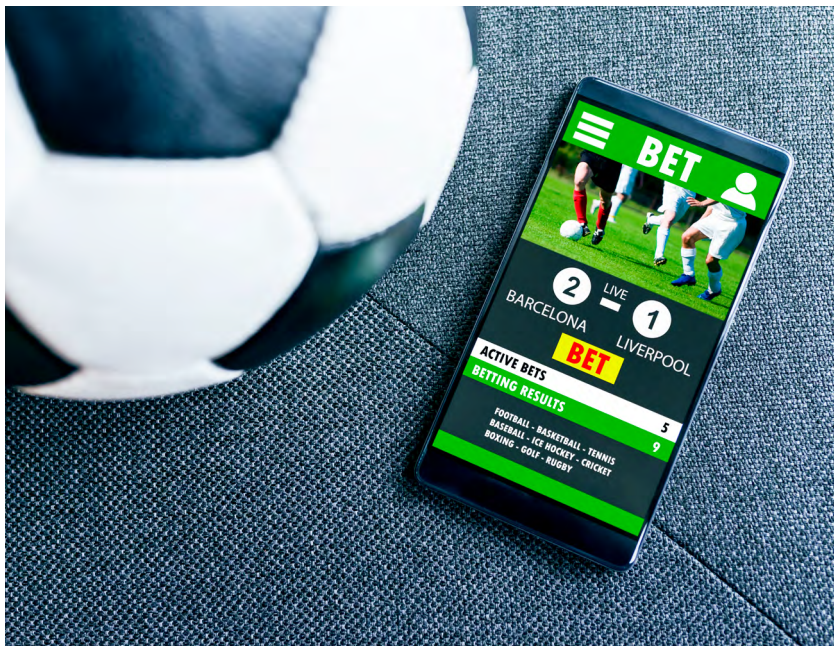
For Andy, who welcomed participants to the best practice day, the trusts and foundations all share the same community-focused collaborative values exemplified by the QPR response to the fire.

“In football, we’re all in competition for fans, for points on the pitch, for the best players in academies,” he says. “But when the football clubs’ community organisations come together, there’s a real sense of collaboration and supporting each other and sharing best practice.” **LR**

Improving wellbeing by learning

Union learning projects have an excellent track record when it comes to promoting health and wellbeing in the workplace.

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Several Union Learning Fund (ULF) projects showcased their work supporting health and wellbeing at a TUC North West conference at The Liner Hotel in Liverpool in January.

Around 80 participants from a wide range of unions attended the event, which was designed to spotlight some of the most effective union work in support of members experiencing anxiety or depression, struggling with stress or living with the after-effects of trauma.

In the fire and rescue service, where firefighters can experience enormous trauma in the line of duty, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Union Learning Fund (ULF) project has been helping people rethink the way they tackle mental health

“Gambling is the biggest issue in football right now: players present with depression, anxiety and stress.”

issues, explained Project Manager Mark Dunne.

“For the last nine years, we’ve been delivering a Level 2 mental health awareness course. It’s been our most popular by far in the last six years: you’re probably looking at in excess of 2,000 fire and rescue service personnel doing this course,” he said.

ASLEF ULF Project Manager Shirley Handsley explained how the union has also been helping change attitudes to mental health on the railway network through its ULF project.

“The ULF project has been heavily involved in creating the train driver apprenticeship standard, and within that we’ve enshrined the health and wellbeing of the train driver and we’ve enshrined trauma support as well, because unfortunately trauma is an occupational hazard,” Shirley said.

Unite has recently launched a problem gambling workplace charter (with the help of its ULF project) and is promoting courses to help reps and members understand the issues, explained North West Regional Learning Manager Jane Broome and Construction ULF Project Manager Keith Lewis.

After organising a conference on problem gambling in 2016 and a fringe meeting at TUC Congress the year after, Unite launched its problem gambling charter last September. Already several employers have signed up to its seven-step strategy to help people overcome their addiction issues.

Michael Bennett, director of player welfare at the Professional Footballers’ Association (PFA), revealed how more and more players are now running into problems with gambling.

“Gambling is the biggest issue in football right now: players present with depression, anxiety and stress, which is a symptom of something – and when you find out what the root issue is, it is usually gambling,” he said.

But whether they are battling addiction or dealing with other mental health issues, more and more players are now accessing the support services offered by the PFA, he reported.

Last year, more than 650 PFA members organised one-to-one sessions with the union’s national network of counsellors; while 800-plus people phoned the union’s 24-hour helpline. **LR**



New skills fund on the way

The government is pledged to invest £3bn over the lifetime of this parliament in a National Skills Fund that will reboot the country's training system.

The new government is to invest an additional £600m a year in a new National Skills Fund and introduce a new Right to Retrain, according to an analysis of its skills policy in unionlearn's latest Learning & Skills Policy Update.

The pledge to establish the new fund was the main skills announcement in the manifesto and was also included in the Queen's Speech that opened the current session of Parliament

in December.

Further details will emerge in the Budget and first Spending Review later this year.

The Right to Retrain was announced in a separate press release that accompanied the manifesto.

The manifesto said the challenges of the fourth industrial revolution required a "dramatic rebooting" of the UK's training system to help public services, business and individuals.

The centrepiece of this shake-up

will be the new National Skills Fund, which will involve a total of £3bn in additional skills spending over the lifetime of the current Parliament.

The fund aims to "help to transform the lives of people who have not got onto the work ladder and lack qualifications, as well as people who are keen to return to work from, say, raising a family, or switching from one career to another".

It will both provide matching funding for individuals and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) for high-quality education and training; and reserve a proportion for a further strategic investment in skills.

In the run-up to the general election, the Conservatives committed to widespread consultation on the Fund. "The Treasury will consult widely on the final design of the Fund to ensure that the money is invested wisely and delivers the best possible outcomes for individuals and businesses," according to the press release accompanying the manifesto, which also promised to put in place "strong quality assurance mechanisms".

The new Right to Retrain will be designed to "give individuals and small businesses the chance to level up with high-quality education and training".

The press release suggests the government will not introduce the new right immediately.

"Over time, it is our ambition to establish a Right to Retrain for all adults ... to empower millions of people in the future with the skills to achieve their potential, keep pace with technological change and embrace lifelong learning," it says.

None of the pre-election documents mention the National Retraining Scheme or the National Retraining Partnership.

But a recent Parliamentary answer confirmed that the National Skills Fund "will build on existing reforms, including ongoing work to develop a National Retraining Scheme, an end-to-end service designed to help workers prepare for the changing labour market". **LR**

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Getting creative with Usdaw

Retail workers in Yorkshire learned new ways to express themselves at a series of workshops organised by Usdaw's learning project.

Members of retail union Usdaw at three sites across Yorkshire explored different ways to boost their creativity in a series of nine workshops last autumn.

Staff at the DHL distribution centre in Castleford, the Next distribution centre in Elmsall and the Tesco distribution centre in Goole were able to try song writing, creative writing, poetry and origami through three two-hour sessions on each site.

The workshops were all led by successful practitioners and artists (most of them local) who had the skills to engage the workplace learners. They included songwriter Scott Lavene; poet, playwright and lecturer Bob Beagrie; author Ian Clayton; and origami master Nick Robinson.

It was important to reach out to participants who might never have considered taking part in anything like this before, explains David Kendall, who ran the project in partnership with Usdaw Lifelong Learning Project Worker Martyn Warwick.

Because of his work with several union learning projects on Reading

Ahead and its previous incarnation the Six Book Challenge, David knew that partnering with a union would be the best way to engage potential participants.

"I knew the only way of doing it was with a union because nobody else would have that reach, nobody else would understand what I wanted to do and nobody else would have a network of learning reps that could make it happen," he says.

"And I knew Usdaw would leap at the chance because DHL Castleford had run creative writing workshops and they'd had author visits so they would understand what was on offer – and then we could try a couple of places where it hadn't been done before."

The participants were very enthusiastic about their experiences. "Scott was such an incredible musician," said one learner from Elmsall. "He explained things so simply and made everyone feel like they could do what he does." Bob's creative writing workshop went down equally well. "I learned a great deal on how to put sentences and paragraphs down and form a story: really enjoyed

"Scott was such an incredible musician. He explained things so simply and made everyone feel like they could do what he does."

it," said a Castleford learner.

The workshops showed how workplace learning can help people with more than English, maths and ICT, Martyn says. "They were a superb way of engaging with staff and getting people involved in a way that was very different from many people's last experience of learning, which may have been school."

David's company Loud & Clear Productions, which manages reading and writing projects with prisoners, excluded schoolchildren, migrants and people experiencing homelessness, secured most of the funding for the project from Arts Council England (ACE), with Usdaw contributing the rest. **LR**