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LEARNINGREP

unionlearn.org.uk | Summer 2017

Training the train drivers of the future

- ▶ *Promoting reading for change*
- ▶ *Renewing jobs on Humberside*
- ▶ *Scoring for equality in Barnsley*
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unionlearn
with the TUC



TACKLING OUR TOP PRIORITIES

PROMOTING HIGH-QUALITY Apprenticeships is one of unionlearn's top priorities for the coming year, as the government's new Apprenticeship Levy beds in and more employers gain access to vital funding that will enable them to recruit more people onto Apprenticeship programmes in their workplaces.

We've made it the theme for this year's annual conference, when we are looking forward to hosting the Skills Minister and Transport for London Commissioner Mike Brown, who also chairs the Strategic Transport Apprenticeship Taskforce (STAT), where I sit on the board as the representative of the TUC. TUC General Secretary and longtime learning advocate Frances O'Grady will also be making a keynote speech.

"We want to remove the barriers that have prevented young women from joining non-traditional industries."

Our Supporting Learners events in the spring made sure ULRs all over the country were up to date with the tools they need to promote high-quality Apprenticeships with their employers, and support the apprentices enrolled on those training programmes.

We want to remove the barriers that have prevented young women from joining

non-traditional industries and open the doors to young BAME and disabled workers who are currently under-represented on Apprenticeships. And we are determined to ensure that all our learning reps have everything they need to support the next generation of workers as they start out on their careers. **LR**

Kevin Rowan is Director of unionlearn



Department
for Education

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NEWS + VIEWS

Unionlearn showcases support on offer to ULRs



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Unionlearn has delivered a series of Supporting Learners conferences around the country aimed at showcasing the tools and support on offer to union learning reps.

From Liverpool to Plymouth, the conferences have briefed ULRs on the range of new services developed to support them – the training available, the tools and resources they can access and ways of working with other activists.

Reps also took part in workshops looking at Apprenticeships, mid-life development (where reps were also keen to talk about opportunities for older apprentices), and progression routes for learners.

"Our latest events brought together reps new and experienced, from different unions and workplaces, and shared the support, resources and training available from unionlearn and TUC Education too," says Projects Officer Andy Moss.

"Apprenticeships are currently high on trade union agendas, which we saw reflected at all the events.

But there was no doubt that the range of other support reps give is still vast, from encouraging colleagues to make their first moves back into improving their skills through to organising mid-life development reviews and increasing people's confidence with maths and English."

In Plymouth, Andy Harding, Ivan Judd and Kevin Watts from the Prison Officers' Association (POA) gave an engaging presentation on the work they do in prison service learning centres, says unionlearn Policy Officer Kirsii Kekki. "They do some brilliant work on maths and English," she says.

And in Liverpool, Merseytravel union learning reps Tony Norbury and Norman Hunter gave a thought-provoking presentation about their approach to delivering learning, says unionlearn Projects Officer Jane Warwick.

"The way they look at local workplace and union issues and entwine them with wider regional learning and

skills priorities is a fresh way of looking at things and their different reading initiatives raise awareness of literacy skills, such as Moved To Read in partnership with Liverpool City Of Readers, which engages staff and external customers,” Jane says.

Unite signs learning agreement with Eurotunnel

Unite has signed a new learning agreement with Eurotunnel to help bring more learning opportunities to the Channel Tunnel company’s 1,400 staff.

The agreement covers the entire workforce – train drivers, bus drivers, security, office, shop, freight, ground and maintenance workers as well as electricians.

“The importance of the agreement is to offer affordable and free training to Eurotunnel employees covering a range of subjects, not just work-based, and will help to broaden their lives going forwards,” says Unite Regional Officer Phil Silkstone (pictured left with Eurotunnel HR Director Nick Hawley).

Midwives take steps to boost well-being at work

Many members of the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) took part in the union’s Walk at Work Pedometer Challenge this



spring, as part of the union’s Caring for You campaign.

The campaign aims to improve RCM members’ health, safety and well-being at work so they are able to provide high-quality maternity care for women and their families.

The workplace that racked up the most steps during the two week duration of the challenge stood to win a £100 prize for its RCM branch.

[Click here](#) to find out about the campaign

Shopworkers keep up with digital skills



Every little helps when it comes to digital skills, which is why Usdaw reps at Tesco are trying to ensure all staff are up-to-date with technology.

The shopworkers’ union staged a Tesco digital skills seminar at its national learning centre in Warrington in March, which was opened by General Secretary John Hannett.

The pilot was a chance for the union to find out how prepared reps and stewards are to support staff with

changes in the pipeline at Tesco, such as online ordering and online wage slips. Usdaw Project

Worker Martyn Warwick said the event was a huge success, with reps joining in activities, including testing their skills using the new unionlearn Use-IT app, giving the union a chance to gain information on how best to help members.

Udaw is compiling the information from the pilot to use in discussions with Tesco on supporting staff.

Confidence training leads to conference speech



Thanks to confidence training through UNISON, Tamar Dixon (pictured left with her mother, Sharon) took to the stage like a pro when she moved the first motion at the union’s Black members’ conference this year.

The Wolverhampton Teaching Assistant (TA) says it was the confidence she gained on a UNISON course that enabled her to stand up and deliver the motion on behalf of the union’s young members.

“I’ve gained the confidence to speak to people I don’t know, to not be afraid to ask questions and to be more assertive – and now I want to get more education and training,” Tamar says.

“It’s the people that really make it – members, staff, committees: they’re all really committed.”

REPTECH

Women Byte Back



UNISON’s Learning and Organising Services and Strategic Organising Unit ran a new, day-long course celebrating women in IT at the National Museum of Computing at Bletchley Park in March.

Women Byte Back was designed to encourage women members to embrace IT and all it has to offer.

As well as practical sessions examining effective techniques promoting online safety and tackling cyber-bullying, there was a tour of the Museum, which includes a multimedia tribute to female pioneers of computing in its new Women in Computing gallery (pictured above).

The event also included a visit from former members of the Women’s Royal Naval Service (WRENS) who worked on the machines code-breaking Enigma during World War 2.

Feedback was enormously enthusiastic about the ground-breaking event. “I most enjoyed the visit from the WRENS – inspirational and hilarious!” commented one participant.



ULRs ENDORSE CLIMBING FRAME IN NEW SURVEY

Union learning reps (ULRs) continue to find the Climbing Frame a valuable tool for finding information and recording learners' progress, according to a new survey, which reveals that 94 per cent would recommend it to their colleagues.

"It's easy to use and there's lots of helpful resources," commented one Unite ULR, while a GMB rep said: "It enables me to maintain and access my learners' details wherever I am."

There are many ways the Climbing Frame helps its nearly 7,000 registered users support learners, according to the survey. "I signpost information and show them how to use the site for resources and search for their own learning needs," explained an RCN rep. "Best of all, I circulate the e-newsletter widely."

Project Officer Andy Moss says it's very helpful to collate the views of ULRs on the Climbing Frame and hear how it's being used to support workplace learning.

"We also like to find out what unionlearn can do to keep developing the Climbing Frame and to enable even more reps and learners to use it," Andy says.

"We encourage reps to share the Climbing Frame with colleagues and sign up learners, as the more users, the better the tool will become." **LR**

▶ [Click here to login or register to use the Climbing Frame](#)

UNISON ULR proves talk can make a difference



UNISON learning rep Laney Walsh invited the union's general secretary, Dave Prentis, to visit one of her branch's Time to Talk sessions, which are helping dozens of staff and leading to a drop in sickness rates.

UNISON is a keen supporter of the national Time to Talk campaign, which aims to tackle the stigma of mental health issues. The quarterly Time to Talk sessions are making a real difference in Laney's Redditch and Bromsgrove branch in the West Midlands.

Dave was able to see the impact of the scheme as well as meet members who have benefitted and some of the team providing support.

"At our last session, 244 people came along and I really believe we helped every single one of them," says Laney, who was determined to help others after experiencing depression herself.

"We know we have had a significant impact on sickness rates, with a 20 per cent reduction over the years. We have also seen an impact when people do have absences: people aren't phoning in and just saying they are sick, they are now saying they are stressed and bringing it to their manager's attention."

The most recent event

included hand massage tasters, guerrilla keep fit sessions, a finance expert to help with money worries, trainers offering health MOTs, Tai Chi classes and a neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) trainer to offer support and relaxation.

Laney herself has trained in NLP, which encourages new ways of thinking, and became a master practitioner last year. She wants more reps to access the training to help them support staff with mental health issues.

NLP provides help, she says, to anyone who wants to support someone by hearing what they are not saying.

Laney has helped persuade both Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District councils to sign the Time to Talk employer pledge – a promise by employers to commit to changing attitudes towards mental health and to support employees with mental health problems.

▶ [Click here to find out more about Time to Talk](#)

▶ [Click here to watch a YouTube video about Laney Walsh](#)

New guide to support English and maths

Unionlearn has produced a handy short new guide to help union learning reps (ULRs) encourage their co-workers into English and maths learning.

Supporting maths and English learning in the workplace offers ULRs practical advice on tackling



literacy and numeracy issues at work, using some of the numerous best-practice activities unions have developed over the years, as well as up-to-date information on the main policy changes.

English and maths learning is one of unionlearn's and the Union Learning Fund's (ULF) two priorities for the coming project year and the new guide is aimed at offering food for thought on learner engagement.

Click here to download the guide

Latest Hinkley learning centre helps local jobless

Hinkley Point C (HPC) unions have helped open a new learning centre in Bridgwater, Somerset, to deliver employment and training opportunities

to people who are currently unemployed or under-employed.

The Under Construction centre will offer a range of courses, including informal English classes, and help with CV writing and interview skills.

"The aim is to better equip people to take up the opportunities that having Hinkley and associated developments, which are right on our doorstep, give us," says Sedgemoor District Council.

"We are aiming to attract all local residents, including those who are unemployed,

under-employed or looking for a career change."

The centre is a partnership project between the Union Learning Fund-backed project Building a Learning Legacy (which brings together HPC unions GMB, Prospect and Unite), EDF Energy, major construction companies and their supply-chain, local authorities, training providers and community projects.

New hotels, housing projects and businesses are opening in the town and Under Construction will also be looking to host recruitment events with local employers.

EDF has funded the three-year lease for the centre and the ULF project has helped equip the centre with furniture and equipment as well as learning resources.

Help us celebrate at July conference



Book your place at this year's unionlearn Annual Conference at Congress House on Monday 3 July and help celebrate all the achievements in union learning over the past year, including this year's Union Learning Rep (ULR) awards.

Organised on the theme Apprenticeships are Union Business, the event features a keynote address from the Skills Minister, with major contributions from London

Transport Commissioner Mike Brown and TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady.

The event will showcase the launch of the new online ULR Stage 1 course and also hear from inspirational ULRs, feature uplifting videos and provide many opportunities for networking, plus a wide variety of exhibition stands and workshops.

Click here to register to attend this free event

New mentors all set to support apprentices

Twelve reps from PCS, UNISON, Unite and Usdaw have trained as apprentice mentors to help them support the ever-increasing number of apprentices joining the workforce.

TUC Education ran the brand new three-day course in April in order to equip the reps with the tools to mentor and coach apprentices in their workplaces and learn in detail about the government's new Apprenticeship Levy.

The Levy is expected to generate billions of pounds over the next few years for employers to spend developing high-quality Apprenticeships.

The private sector reps came from aerospace company Airbus UK, construction firm Carillion, supermarket giant Tesco and logistics operation Wincanton, while their public sector counterparts came from the Home Office, HMRC and NHS Southport.

"We used student-centred activities that allowed participants to explore the role of the mentor and understand the Levy, but all from the perspective of their own workplaces," explains tutor Jerry O'Neill.

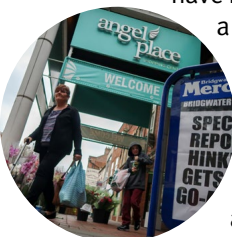
"They were interested in workplaces where unions and employers had already agreed an Apprenticeship policy, such as HMRC and Southport NHS, which was where two of the reps on the course worked."

The students found the unionlearn Apprenticeships Toolkit very useful throughout the course.

"They shared the toolkit in small groups and they put it to good use: I could see them taking notes from it all over the place," Jerry says.

As well as looking at running the course again later this year, TUC Education is also looking into incorporating some of the activities from the mentoring course into the workplace reps stage 1 and stage 2 courses, to help spread the ideas from the course more widely.

"Even though the Apprenticeship Levy is still in its infancy, I can look at the process and feel confident in helping others," commented one student; "I can leave the course with a definite mentoring and learning plan," said another; "I've been made aware of all the different types of issues that may arise with the new Apprenticeship scheme – the pros and the cons – and feel fully confident in addressing them," reflected a third.



Every open door leads somewhere

After 12 full-length novels, Rowan Coleman has written a Quick Read inspired by the 70s TV saga Poldark. She talks about how discovering her dyslexia changed her life and the challenges of shorter form, and offers ULRs a message about trying something new.

◆ Astrid Stubbs

© Carolyn Mendelsohn



Q: Why did you agree to write a novel for the Quick Reads series?

I was very keen to write for Quick Reads from the moment it was launched, for two reasons. Firstly, because I think it's so important to have adult material suitable for adult emerging readers, short books that are both grown up

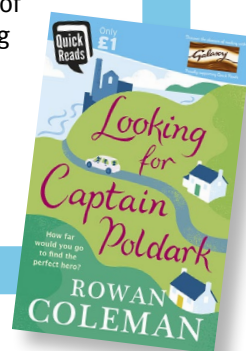
and accessible – that anyone might read on the bus.

Secondly, I found out in my 20s that I'm dyslexic. This discovery made a huge difference to my whole life, in how I understood both who I was and what I am capable of.

For me, my school education was a mixed bag. I liked school, but academically I was always in 'remedial' sets and I

had very low self-esteem and expectations for my future.

Many people fall through the considerable gaps in an education system under pressure for a variety of reasons, and anything that helps encourage adults back to reading and literacy is something I'm very passionate about.



“It’s worth trying something new, or trying something you find frightening and difficult, because the rewards are so great.”

Q: How did you decide on your theme in *Looking For Captain Poldark*?

I had just emerged from an extended period of anxiety, and I found it very difficult. I wanted to write about some aspect of that, but also about how daring to step outside of your comfort zone is often the fastest route to feeling safe again.

Q: How hard was it to write the Quick Read compared to your novels?

Technically, I really enjoy the challenge of writing shorter pieces of work: to quickly create relatable characters and get a plot moving and resolved in a short space is fun! In terms of language, you are always trying to be accessible, pacy and engaging: that isn’t too different from what I do in full-length novels.

Q: What books are you reading yourself at the moment?

I just finished reading *The Escape* by CL Taylor, a very pacy exciting thriller, and before that I read *The Queen Of Wishful Thinking* by Milly Johnson, a lovely heartfelt tale about trusting yourself.

Q: What message would you like union learning reps to take away from your book?

That it’s worth trying something new, or trying something you find frightening and difficult, because the rewards are so great. Every opened door leads to another possibility (unless it leads to a broom cupboard).

• Rowan’s latest full-length novel, *The Summer of Impossible Things*, is published in June. **LR**



HELPING US UNDERSTAND THE LIVES OF OTHERS

Crime writer Dreda Say Mitchell, another of this year’s Quick Reads authors, is very happy to see unions continuing to play a key role in the promotion of reading for pleasure to their members.

“I’m delighted that unions are playing their part because literacy is so important both to their members and to wider society,” says Dreda. Her Quick Read, *One False Move*, is another gritty tale from the Devil’s Estate in London, the setting she used in her recent *Flesh and Blood* trilogy.

As a youngster growing up in a poor part of the capital, and later while she was working as a teacher, Dreda saw at first hand the damage that can be done when people struggle with reading.

“While the focus is often on employment and life chances, it’s worth remembering that literacy has a far wider role than merely helping in the jobs market,” Dreda says.

“Reading helps people understand their own lives, the lives of others and the world around them: not only is it important for the individuals concerned, it is vital for society as a whole.”

There’s a group for that!

Reading groups can be a fantastic way to inspire colleagues to pick up a book, help people feel more connected and build their confidence.

The Reading Agency’s Reading Groups for Everyone network offers tips and ideas, book giveaways and author interviews. It’s

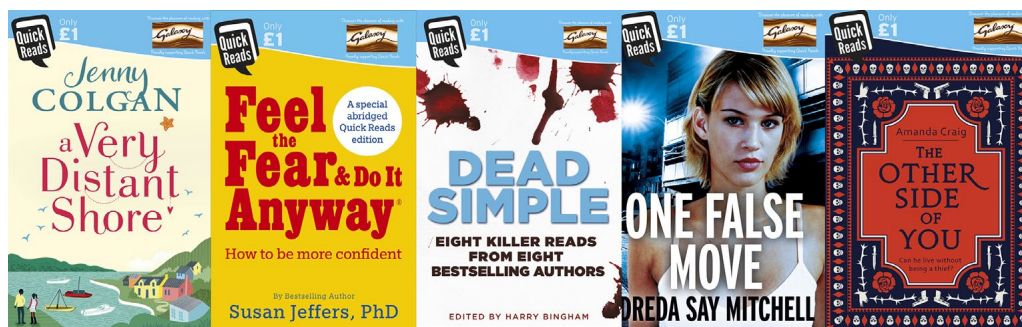
great to join whether you already run a group or are thinking of setting one up.

If you are already in a reading group and would like to use the website, first sign up and add your group to the network. Once you’ve done that, you can head to the noticeboard to apply for reading group

offers and review the books you’ve read.

As well as useful resources such as ‘How to run a reading circle’, the site also includes themed lists to inspire your reading group’s next choices, from crime to Irish writing.

[Click here](#) to find out more



A photograph of three young people, two men and one woman, inside the cab of a train. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. The woman is seated in the driver's seat, while the two men stand behind her. The background shows the train's control panel and the view through the front window of the tracks ahead. The text 'Helping young people into the driver's seat' is overlaid in large white letters.

Helping young people into the driver's seat

Rail union ASLEF has partnered with Virgin Trains to create the very first Apprenticeship programme for train drivers that sets a new benchmark for the rest of the industry.

◆ Martin Moriarty

Three young people in the North West have become the very first apprentice train drivers at Virgin Trains, after the company, drivers' union ASLEF and training provider TQ Training launched a brand new, high-quality programme earlier this year.

Simon Tyrer, Sam Jones and Joe Wilson started their 52-week programme in February. They undertake their on-the-job training from the different Virgin Trains depots where they are based (Preston, Manchester and Liverpool, respectively) and come together in Crewe once a week to work on the NVQ component of the programme.

Sam Jones, who is 23 years old, was already working as an onboard caterer for Virgin Trains when she applied for the programme. "Everyone – the drivers I've been working with, the driver management team at the Talent Academy, TQ Training, ASLEF – have all been really supportive," she says. "If I've got any questions there will always be people willing to help me – it's been really good."

Simon, the oldest of the three at 29, had been managing a branch of Carphone Warehouse before applying for the Apprenticeship. "I knew I had quite a gap to bridge from phone shop

manager to train driver so this Apprenticeship has been an absolute godsend: it's allowed me to get from where I was to where I want to be," he says.

Joe may be the youngest of the three at 18, but this is already his second Apprenticeship – he had completed two years on an automotive technician programme at Peugeot Citroen before deciding to make the move to the railway. "I knew from my previous experience how good Apprenticeships were for young people but I'm enjoying this one more because of the challenge – it's a big learning curve," he says.

All three are currently shadowing mentor drivers in their depots, accompanying them to see how they all tackle the different daily challenges of safely transporting thousands of passengers on their routes. Sam recently took the chance of travelling down to London with Lee Stevenson, who is the ASLEF rep on the drivers' company council from Manchester, where she is based.

"Sam came out with me and we went down to London together: she's got plenty of enthusiasm, as have the other two," Lee says. "I think the Apprenticeship is a great way of introducing young people into the rail industry:

"Everyone – the drivers I've been working with, the driver management team at the Talent Academy, TQ Training, ASLEF – have all been really supportive."



if we can get some more into the driving grade – especially with the enthusiasm these three have – that would be fantastic.”

At the end of their Apprenticeships, Sam, Simon and Joe are guaranteed entry to the driver training programme. And while they are earning £15,000 this year, their salary will more than double when they start driver training, which will take between two-and-a-half and three years.

The pioneering programme was put together by a small working group last autumn, under the joint leadership of representatives from Virgin Trains’ operations team and ASLEF’s lifelong learning department.

“We weren’t doing it because Apprenticeships are the hot topic of the week: we’ve been trying for a long time to get an employer in the sector to buy into our vision,” says ASLEF’s Union Learning Fund (ULF) Project Coordinator Shirley Handsley.

“But all the people around the table wholeheartedly believed in this programme and could see the benefit of it: right from the early negotiations, everybody involved has believed this is the right thing to do.”

Virgin’s Operations Project & Competence Manager Sam Edwards agrees. “There was a lot to do in a very short space of time but everybody involved had a real passion to get this up and running – and if we’d had any longer, I still think we would have got the same results,” he says.

Shirley started talking to the Virgin Trains’ learning and development team about a possible new driver Apprenticeship programme back in May 2016, after the concept was negotiated by ASLEF Industrial Officer Kevin Lindsay. But it was only once Sam became involved from the operations side four months later that everything really began to pick up speed.

“Once the operations side became involved, the process moved from conversations into a real programme, which demonstrates the importance of operations leading on a programme like this,” says Shirley.

With a short timeframe to design the programme, Sam and Shirley set up their working group in September 2016. It comprised the two of them and a couple of people from provider TQ Training, with occasional input from Virgin Trains’ learning and development team. They met once a fortnight to exchange ideas and in between times they talked to the key people in the operations side of the business and the industrial arm of the union to ensure everyone was happy with all the key components they were planning to include.

When he started working with Shirley last year, Sam himself had only recently



“It was a fantastic course: at the end of it, I came out with a degree, three years of experience in different departments within Virgin Trains and got a job out of it!”

completed a Degree Apprenticeship in Business Management at Manchester Metropolitan University, through the Virgin Trains Red Track Programme.

“It was a fantastic course: at the end of it, I came out with a degree, three years of experience in different departments within Virgin Trains and got a job out of it!”

That experience has helped him work on the Driver Apprenticeship programme, he says. “Red Track is a new scheme, just like the one I’m running now, so I could use that experience to throw into this programme,” he says.

While the programme is in its early stages, both sides are very happy with how it is shaping up so far. “Virgin Trains has set the benchmark with this programme and I hope that others within the industry follow,” Shirley says.

Sam believes his effective working partnership with Shirley has paid dividends for the Driver Apprenticeship programme and beyond. “Shirley has been accommodating to me, I’ve been accommodating to her and, to be honest, it’s strengthened the relationship not just between us as individuals but also between the company and the trade union,” he says.

Shirley is equally proud of what they have achieved. “We’ve both learned from each other: it’s been an absolute pleasure to work together. This shows that together we can do something that’s really worthwhile: from an employer and a trade union point of view, it shows that partnerships can actually make good things happen,” she says. **LR**





Renewing Hull through green jobs and training

Unions, employers and training providers are working together to create jobs on Humberside, with an emphasis on high-quality Apprenticeships for young people.

◆ Martin Moriarty

Unionlearn joined forces with Yorkshire and the Humber TUC in March for a joint celebration of National Apprenticeships Week and Hull City of Culture that focused on the developing partnerships promoting high-quality Apprenticeships in the city.

Held at the city's Kcom sports and concert venue, the event focused on how unions, employers and providers can work together to deliver the kind of jobs and training that will be vital to the city's future.

Opened by the Lord Mayor, Sean Chaytor, the day featured speakers from the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), wind turbine blade manufacturers Siemens, East Riding College and Unite.

Marking National Apprenticeship Week in Hull made sense for two reasons, according to TUC Regional Secretary Bill Adams.

First, the city has been forging a reputation as a world-class centre for renewable energy, with many stakeholders committed to Apprenticeships; and second, the arts-led City of Culture 2017 programme is changing people's perceptions about what the Humberside port can offer.

"We wanted to showcase how Hull is a growing city with an amazing amount of potential as a gateway to the world: being City of Culture will bring a lot more people to Hull and open them up to the city's potential," Bill says.

"With the introduction of the

"We wanted to showcase how Hull is a growing city with an amazing amount of potential as a gateway to the world."

government's Apprenticeship Levy, we thought it was an ideal time to show local firms how they could take advantage of that funding to take on apprentices and give the youth of Hull better opportunities than they've had in the last 30 years."

The last three decades have been hard on the Humberside city that

was once the third-largest port in the country, as the docks and the fishing industry that had provided work for generations were decimated and successive governments failed to help generate new jobs.

But the renewable energy industry centred on Green Port Hull is set to change all that, with the help of the organisations taking part at the Apprenticeships event.

“The key issue was the opportunities that are available for young people in



Hull,” says unionlearn Apprenticeships Project Officer Mark Rowe. “What is vital is that all the different partners – employers, unions, the LEP and colleges – work together not only to create high-quality Apprenticeship opportunities but also to ensure that young people are fully supported to take them.”

Siemens, a company with a long-established reputation for investing in its workforce, has led the way at Green Port Hull by building its new wind turbine blade manufacturing plant on the waterfront.

The factory’s 700-strong workforce includes 16 youngsters between the ages of 16 and 23 on a three-and-a-half-year Apprenticeship programme, who are being rotated throughout the

“This is obviously the next generation of engineers, so it’s about innovation, it’s about challenging that status quo, it’s having that inquisitive mind and having fresh ideas.”

site during their training to help them gain a range of skills.

“This is obviously the next generation of engineers, so it’s about innovation, it’s about challenging that status quo, it’s having that inquisitive mind and having fresh ideas that they can bring forward,” Siemens Regional Training Manager Tricia Vincent told the 40-plus participants at the event.

Unite Regional Education Officer Andy Pearson highlighted the key role trade unions play in supporting young people on Apprenticeships. “We have our network of union learning reps in workplaces, we’ve got workplace representatives as well, so if they’re struggling with the learning, a ULR can be there as a mentor; and if they’re struggling with industrial issues, the workplace rep can keep them on the straight and narrow,” he pointed out.

Bill Adams wants to bring all the key players back together before the end of the City of Culture programme to look at the progress he hopes everyone will have made over the next few months. In the meantime, he is optimistic about what the future holds.

“This Apprenticeships event may have been a turning point because we’re all singing from the same sheet: we had good employers there who are committed to quality training and well-paid jobs; we had the LEP there committed to attracting business and making it a good environment for people to invest in Hull; and we had decent educational facilities that want to help train young people up to really good standards. It’s our job now to make sure we keep moving along that road as fast as we can to improve things.” **LR**



UNIONS STAND UP FOR NEW CIVIL SERVICE APPRENTICES

Civil Service unions have signed an important new agreement with the Cabinet Office that will see both partners working closely together to help achieve the government’s target of delivering at least 30,000 Apprenticeship starts by 2020.

Signed in February, the Principles of Agreement cover all the key issues that will enable government departments and unions to work together to ensure the best results for the apprentices themselves and the departments that train them.

“The agreement will be beneficial to everyone: we’ll be able to support the apprentices as union members from the start and government departments will have the benefit of being able to partner with unions not only for the support we can offer individual apprentices but also for our ability to source training providers for them,” explains PCS Education and Learning Officer Keith Johnston.

For PCS, by far and away the largest union in the Civil Service, the next steps will include developing more online materials and additional training to put its ULRs in the best position to help implement the agreement at local level, as well as setting up an Apprentices Forum to give apprentices a space to discuss the issues they will face, whether that’s help completing their qualifications or securing employment when they have finished their training.

Barnsley FC scores a goal for equality

A group of young women will leave school this summer to start a BTEC programme at Barnsley FC in September, thanks to the help of the Professional Footballers' Association's ULF project.

➡ **Astrid Stubbs**

Thanks to the help of the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) Union Learning Fund (ULF) project, Barnsley Football Club has recruited a cohort of young women onto a Level 3 BTEC football and education programme starting next season.

The club's community charity, Reds in the Community (RITC), began working with local schools last autumn on a targeted approach to encouraging female pupils leaving this summer to consider progressing to study sport at Barnsley.

With the support of the PFA, RITC then hosted two engagement events at The Oakwell Stadium (the club's home ground) that attracted a total of more than 90 female pupils from the Barnsley and Wakefield area.

The first event, a women's sports festival in December, gave the 70-plus participants the chance to quiz seven current professionals about their experiences as women working in the sector. The guests included professional footballers Amy Turner (Notts County/England),

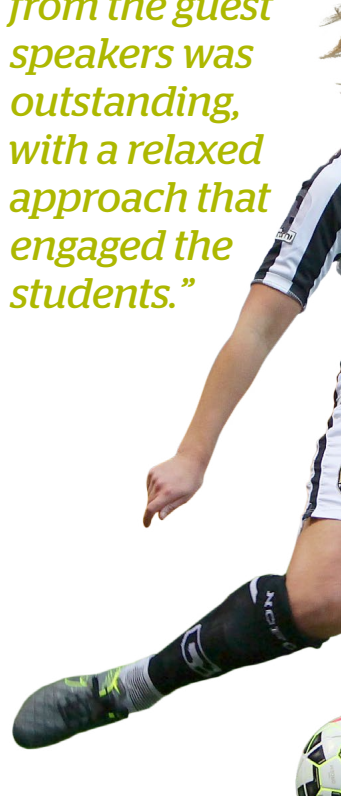
Angharad James (Notts County/Wales) and Barnsley FC physiotherapist Ruth Titterton, who each spent time answering questions from rotating groups of the participants.

"This was a very rich activity, with every participant fully engaged, asking a range of excellent questions," says RITC Education Officer Mark Crossfield. "The support from the guest speakers was outstanding, with a relaxed approach that engaged the students in asking appropriate questions on studying sport after school and what opportunities it can create."

In the afternoon, the pupils took part in a football tournament where schools competed against each other on the indoor and outdoor AstroTurf facilities, and visited the PFA classroom that overlooks the pitch to get a feel for the stimulating learning environment at the club.

At the follow-up event in February, Janie Frampton gave a presentation in the morning to the 20-plus female pupils that told her inspirational story, from leaving

"The support from the guest speakers was outstanding, with a relaxed approach that engaged the students."





“These activities pushed the girls beyond their comfort zone, improving self-confidence and decision-making.”

school to becoming the first female Premier League referee.

After lunch, the girls took part in a mini refereeing course, which equipped them with a basic knowledge of refereeing commands before putting them in situations where they had to make decisions on the spot. “These activities pushed the girls beyond their comfort zone, improving self-confidence and decision-making,” Mark says.

The PFA support for both events included help with planning, promotion and publicity, lunch for participants and educational packs, including funding for the refereeing packs produced by Janie.

As a result of the campaign, RITC and the PFA have helped recruit at least eight young women to start the new BTEC this September, with the possibility of more joining as the summer progresses.

Mark is very grateful for the support of PFA ULF Project Manager Kris Irwin. “Barnsley FC’s Reds in the Community would like to thank Kris Irwin and everyone at the PFA for their continued support to grow the educational offer at Oakwell and successfully address the under-representation of females studying at our club,” the charity said. **LR**



Amy Turner, who plays for Notts County in the FA WSL and the England national team (© Daniel Smith/Getty Images)

HELPING LOCALS GET A GOOD DEAL FROM HINKLEY

Thanks to support from the multi-union Union Learning Fund (ULF) project Building A Learning Legacy, The Valley in Dulverton is the latest community employment hub to help locals take advantage of the employment opportunities offered by the Hinkley Point C (HPC) construction project in Somerset.



HPC will be one of the largest construction projects in Europe, creating around 25,000 employment opportunities during its scheduled 10-year construction phase – good news for an area with the lowest average wages in the South-West, where many people have traditionally relied on seasonal work.

The Valley, which opened in March, joins sister hubs in Williton, Stogursey, Watchet and Minehead that offer valuable help and practical advice for local people looking for work or training opportunities, and even business start-up support.

“Having the five hubs across West Somerset is really helping,” says Learning Organiser Rob Garrett. “We are only too pleased to support an initiative that helps local people develop the skills and confidence they need to gain employment, either locally or at HPC.”

The ULF project enables the HPC unions GMB, Unite and Prospect to work with EDF Energy, construction companies and their supply chain, local authorities, training providers and community projects to develop learning and training opportunities for people living near the site. Up to now, many locals have had to rely on public transport to be able to access learning and skills provision further from home.

The hubs all aim to reach out particularly to people without qualifications, those who are unemployed or under-employed, including seasonal workers, and those with health conditions and disabilities.

Improving life for apprentices

ULRs can use the latest eNote from TUC Education to support apprentices in their workplace.

New apprentices – and union reps that support them – can find all the key information about what makes a genuine quality Apprenticeship from the new TUC Education's eNote, Apprenticeships – know your rights.

The 10-minute interactive module spotlights the key components people thinking about or starting an Apprenticeship should look out for:

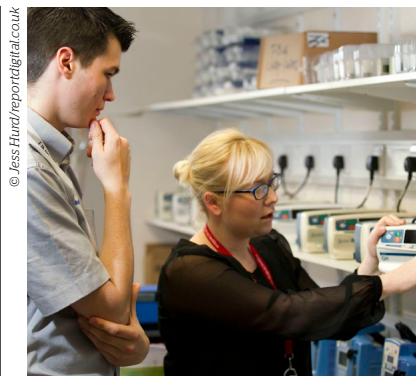
- at least 30 hours a week work and training
- Functional Skills training for anyone without a Level 2 English and maths qualification
- a minimum of 280 hours of guided learning (knowledge and skills development on the job) in the first year.

It also details what should be included in an employment contract or Apprenticeship Agreement and Commitment Statement, and the key pay and conditions elements, including the current minimum wage for apprentices (16 to 18-year-olds and over-19s).

Learners can take short quizzes to test their knowledge of what their contract or Apprenticeship Agreement should contain; the benefits of joining a union; and how to prepare to make a good impression from day one.

The eNote also includes short case studies of four apprentices that show both the range of sectors and the level of qualifications on offer.

"The new Apprenticeships – know your rights eNote is the latest in a series of informative and interactive resources that TUC Education and



© Jess Hunt/reportdigital.co.uk

"The new eNote is the latest in a series of resources that gives unions, reps and others the information they need to support workplace members."

unionlearn have developed to give unions, reps and others the information they need to support workplace members," explains TUC Education Manager Jackie Williams.

"If you are an apprentice, support apprentices, are in a workplace with apprentices or know someone looking at becoming an apprentice, then this new eNote really is for you."

New eNotes have recently been added covering health and safety and organising, Citizen Maths, religion or belief, language support for workers, working with figures and mental health in the workplace. **LR**

Click here to access the new eNote



SUPPORTING ESOL LEARNERS IN BOLTON

Refugees and asylum-seekers in Bolton are getting support in their English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) studies through a partnership between Bolton Languages School and the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), supported by road transport union URTU.

Most of the learners are from conflict areas such as Somalia, Eritrea, Syria, Ethiopia, Congo, Kazakhstan and Sudan who were rarely leaving their communities except to come to the language school or the Jobcentre.

Keen to explore how the learners could practise English outside the classroom, tutors organised a visit to the library: more than 30 of the learners joined with help from library staff, who were on hand to process their applications and answer their questions.

After the library service manager explained to the group how the library could help with a range of activities and services free of charge, the learners are now planning to use its services to organise events, including family days out.

Making mid-life reviews work for everyone

Two different reports have recommended employers embrace mid-life reviews for older workers. But they have to remain impartial and independent to be truly effective, warns unionlearn.

Unionlearn has welcomed calls for enshrining mid-life career reviews in UK workplace culture that have recently emerged from two different reviews, but warned that they must remain independent and impartial if they are to be most effective.

The recommendation for a ‘mid-life MOT’ is one of the key proposals to emerge from the government review into state pensions conducted by John Cridland, former director-general of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI).

The review also proposes an increase in the state pension age to 68 some time between 2037 and 2039.

“A mid-life MOT is a useful trigger point to encourage people to take stock, and make realistic choices about work, health and retirement,” argued the report. “We recommend that people should be able to access a mid-life MOT and that this should be facilitated by employers and by the government using online support and through the National Careers Service.”

As an organisation that has been leading the way on mid-life career reviews, unionlearn welcomed

© Yun Accurs/Getty Images



“The Cridland review has recognised the importance of these reviews as a way to support and develop the skills people will need in the future.”

the Cridland review recommendation.

“The trade union movement’s extensive network of well-trained and motivated Union Learning Reps has been supporting older workers explore future options for developing existing skills and learning new ones for some time,” said unionlearn Director Kevin Rowan.

“Unions are the largest

provider of workplace mid-life career reviews in the country and it is good to see that the Cridland review has recognised the importance of these reviews as a way to support and develop the skills people will need in the future.”

A similar recommendation was also included in a new report into the ageing workforce from The Skills Commission,

the independent body made up of leaders from the education sector, the business community and major political parties.

“Employers should incorporate mid-life career reviews into regular, team-wide appraisals in order to encourage dialogue about training needs later in life, and SMEs should be provided with government-funded advisers to carry these out,” argued the report, *Lifelong Learning for an Ageing Workforce*.

The commission said that its recommendation was an attempt to combat the negative stereotyping common in human resources departments, where older workers are perceived to be harder to train and more likely to take sick leave than their younger colleagues.

But while unionlearn has been making the case for mid-life reviews for at least four years, it is firmly convinced that they should remain outside the appraisal process and be conducted by a trusted ULR who can discuss an individual’s development needs in a holistic context that includes lifestyle and commitments.

“While we welcome the recommendation that people should be entitled to a mid-life career review, unionlearn’s experience shows that, rather than through an appraisal process, these need to be independent and impartial,” Kevin says.

“Union learning reps are best placed to conduct them, as peers see them as trusted intermediaries, and many have been trained by unionlearn to deliver reviews.” **LR**

[Click here to download the Cridland review](#)

[Click here to download the Skills Commission review](#)



Promoting learning beyond the checkout

Usdaw ULR Liz Moore-Wilson doesn't only promote learning to her colleagues; she spreads the message in the local community too

by Astrid Stubbs

Usdaw learning rep Liz Moore-Wilson (pictured right), who works for Sainsbury's in Darlington, was nominated for colleague of the year by her co-workers for her dedication to helping union members and the local community.

Liz, who is also an Usdaw shop steward and health and safety rep, not only promotes lifelong learning in her Sainsbury's but also visits other local stores to encourage colleagues to take advantage of the learning opportunities on offer to them through Usdaw.

"I'd like to think that education doesn't have to stop when you've left school and got a job," Liz says.

"I like to think of it as broadening people's knowledge and showing

colleagues that it isn't all doom and gloom and that it's different from being in school or college – education is all about you and how you learn and develop as an individual and that you can take control of your own education."

Liz has arranged many courses, organising distance learning in mental health, equality and diversity and understanding diabetes, and also encouraged her colleagues back into reading by building up a workplace library and running the Reading Ahead challenge (where participants commit to reading and reviewing six books, stories, magazines, poems or online articles).

And she doesn't only help people in her workplace: when she heard how a local school was struggling to build

"Being in the union and being a shop steward, health and safety rep and ULR have taught me more about being a better person and looking at the bigger picture of what I can do to make a change in people's lives."

its library, she visited to find out what was needed and then put up posters in her store and other local businesses asking for unwanted children's books. The great response from the public has led to people donating many books that the school's pupils are now enjoying.

Liz always undertakes every course on offer before she starts to promote it to others, explains Usdaw Divisional Mobile Union Learning Rep Jayne Chapman.

"Liz is a fantastic rep for Sainsbury's and has become a great activist for the community: she is extremely dedicated to helping her fellow colleagues and is always on the lookout for new interesting courses she can put on," Jayne says.

Liz has also recently lobbied Mike Coupe, the chief executive officer of the supermarket's parent group J Sainsbury plc, asking him to help colleagues communicate with their deaf customers by providing staff with an educational DVD around non-visual disabilities. Mike has promised to look into her suggestion, she says.

Liz believes that learning builds people's confidence and self-esteem, which helps them make better decisions throughout their lives – it definitely has in her case, she adds.

"Being in the union and being a shop steward, health and safety rep and ULR have taught me more about being a better person and looking at the bigger picture of what I can do to make a change in people's lives or even in the way of business accepting change or what we need to do to help with change or how to support colleagues more," she says. **LR**