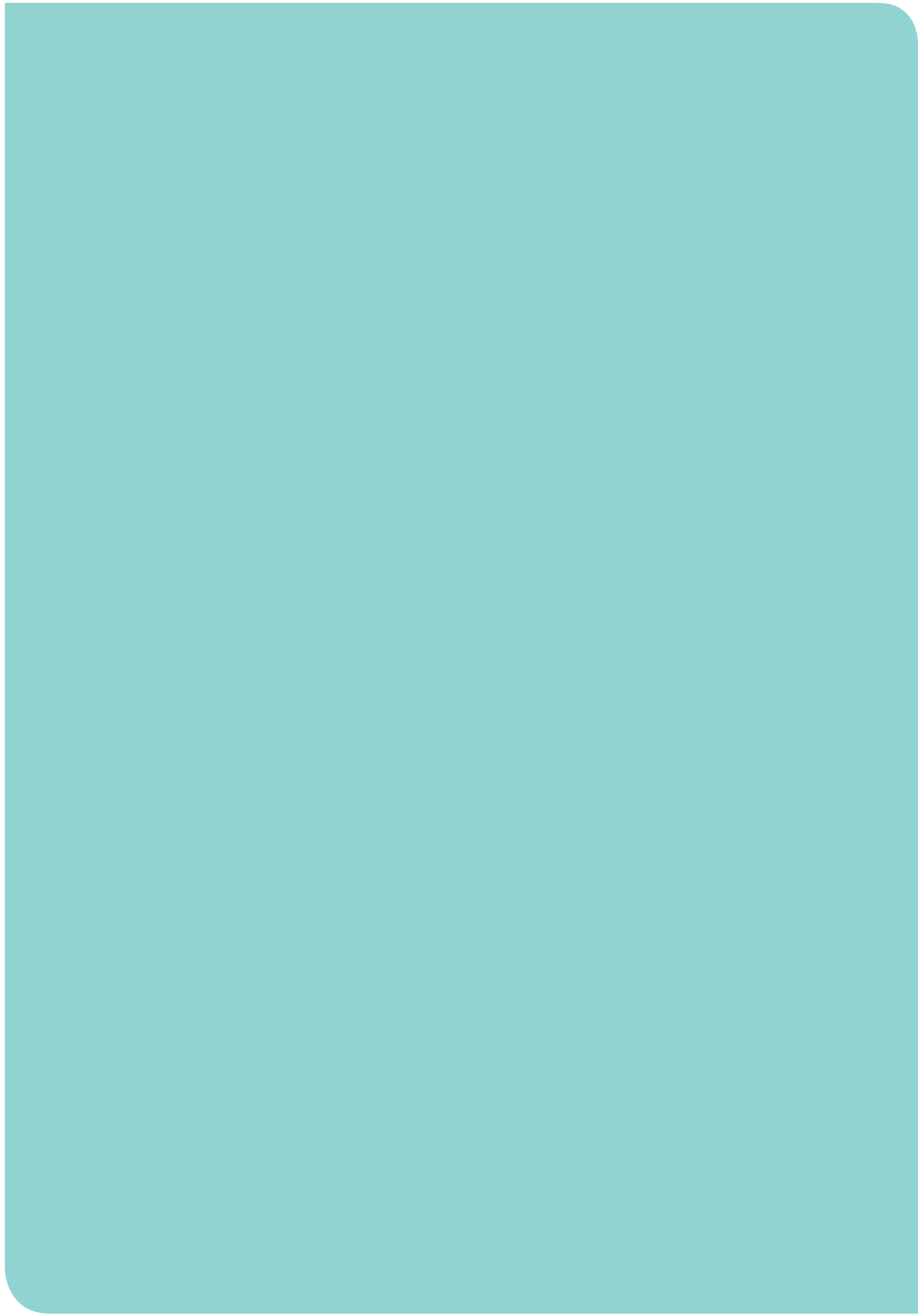


Celebrating **20 years**
of the Union Learning Fund

unionlearn
from the TUC





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Foreword

Over the past year union learning has continued to open up learning opportunities to a diverse population. As ever, we are reaching out to individuals who have little or no access to learning and training from their employer and lack the confidence or means to use the formal education and skills system. At the same time unions are supporting skills development by widening access and making the case for quality, whether in the case of apprenticeships for young people or continuing professional development for older employees.

While statistics cannot tell the whole story, the numbers are inspiring. Over the past year unionlearn and the Union Learning Fund (ULF) supported unions to help 156,000 people to access some form of learning or training facilitated through ULF projects. When you add in the number of learners and reps accessing learning and training direct from unionlearn and TUC Education, the total number benefitting from union learning was 205,000 in 2018-19. The consistently high performance of unionlearn and the ULF over the years was a major factor in the government's announcement last year to introduce a multi-year funding model for ULF, enabling unions to bid for up to three years funding.

But union learning is about so much more than the annualised total number of learners, impressive as that is. Independent evaluations in recent years have tracked the impact of union learning, including how it transforms lives and strengthens the economy. A new unionlearn pamphlet – *Union learning in facts and figures* – brings together some of the key findings. For example, did you know that 70 per cent of learners say that they would not have engaged in the learning or training on offer without the support of their union? Or that each annual round of the ULF is adding £1.65 billion to the economy from a boost to jobs, wages and productivity? There is also a very positive impact on union membership, with half of non-members engaging in the learning or training going on to join a union.

Trade union education continues to be of high importance to trade unions and their reps and this is especially so in a climate where access to paid release continues to be under great pressure. A range of innovative approaches have been utilised over the past year to boost participation through online and blended provision and new developments in digital learning are at the heart of this strategy. It is especially heartening to see that the latest statistics drawn from trade union education and the ULF are evidencing positive trends in the number of union learning reps that are now undertaking training.

Over the past year unionlearn has developed a range of initiatives to enhance the capacity of unions to do even more to support learning and development opportunities for working people of all ages. These include new and expanded online resources to support learners to undertake skills assessments and progress to further learning. Building the capacity of reps has been another priority, including equipping them with tools to expand the union learning offer, such as undertaking mid-life reviews and building a wider negotiating agenda on skills. Unionlearn is reaching out to young people by supporting high-quality apprenticeships accessible to all and providing some new services, such as the Careerzone website facility providing a 'one-stop-shop' for career information.

On the policy front it has been gratifying to see that the efforts of the TUC and unionlearn has had an impact in some key areas. For example, in the autumn the parliamentary Education Select Committee issued a number of recommendations on apprenticeships that reflected many of the policy proposals in the TUC's evidence aimed at driving up quality and improving equality and diversity. The TUC has continued to call on the government to give greater priority to adult skills and retraining and to highlight the potential impacts of Brexit, automation and other factors that are accelerating the demand for skills. The forthcoming National Retraining Scheme is a welcome initiative in this context and unionlearn has supported the detailed negotiations that the TUC, CBI

and government have been engaged in to develop and deliver a fully operational model.

The demands on unionlearn are set to intensify in the coming year as we face skills challenges on an increasing number of fronts. However, on the basis of the evidence in this report, I remain confident that unionlearn and the ULF will support our unions to deliver on this mission.



Mary Bousted

Chair, unionlearn Board

Delivery

The Union Learning Fund (ULF) was established in 1998 to promote activity by trade unions in support of creating a learning society. Its primary aim is to develop the capacity of trade unions and union learning representatives (ULRs) to work with employers, employees and learning providers to encourage greater take-up of learning in the workplace. It was transferred from BIS to DfE in 2016. In 2018-19 the Union Learning Fund supported 20 unions to deliver 23 projects at a total cost of £9.8 million.

Overall ULF projects once again performed ahead of expectations and the total number of ULF learners was over 156,000. The recruitment and training of over 1,900 new ULRs and the follow-on ULR training of over 6,700 reps is a particularly positive achievement in the current climate. ULF projects supported over 12,000 apprenticeships. Over 20,000 learners attended informal adult and community learning (IACL) both in workplace and community locations and a further 35,000 learners took part in work related continuous professional development (CPD).

Unions report that the uncertain economic climate has made employer engagement more difficult and learning agreements harder to negotiate. Nonetheless, 123 new agreements were signed. As we reported

in previous years the changes in funding for adult learning and higher education continue to make it difficult to attract learners into these areas and unions have reported difficulties in obtaining learning (especially for smaller groups or at the workplace) as the cost of provision grows and the willingness of providers or employers to subsidise learning diminishes.

All 23 projects have been managed by the ULF team, through direct support and a variety of events and assistance and advice on implementing learner tracking, meeting General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements and achieving the payment by results (PBR) framework targets. All projects this year achieved 100 per cent funding through PBR which is a measure of the effective management that has been developed both by the ULF team and within projects.

The team supported unions in understanding the significant changes to the Round 20 Prospectus – key to which was the introduction of multi-year funding enabling unions to bid for up to three years funding. Twenty-one bids were submitted and 20 of these were successful.

The team continues to assist ULF projects and to work with national and regional TUC staff to promote learning opportunities and improve the

ULF Performance Report 2018-2019: key headline figures

	Profile	Actual	Variance (%)
New ULRs completing stage 1	943	1,921	203
ULR follow-up training	6,376	6,799	106
English and maths learners	23,541	35,822	152
ICT learners	22,466	28,568	127
Learners on CPD	24,470	35,496	145
New employer learning agreements	256	123	48
Total ULF learners	133,104	156,377	117

responsiveness of the learning system to the needs of union learners. The team have held regular meetings with ULF project managers and provided training sessions on audit and equality and diversity. Discussion and lessons on tracking have resulted in an updating of the learner tracking software developed by unionlearn which will be used in ULF Round 20.

In early 2018 a major survey of learners from ULF Rounds 17 and 18 was conducted by the University of Exeter and the findings paint a very positive picture of the added value of union learning and the benefits accrued by employees and employers. Some of the key findings are as follows:

- 70% of respondents said they would not have taken part in the learning or training without the support of their union
- 73% reported being more confident in their abilities and 77% were keen to undertake further learning and training
- progression is an intrinsic feature of ULF provision, with two thirds of people taking part in more than one episode of learning and a third engaging four times or more
- 9 out of 10 participants gained at least one new skill, nearly two thirds gained a qualification, and 1 in 4 gained promotion or greater responsibility in their current job
- 36% said they were able to do their job better as a result and 37% were more confident in progressing their career
- ULF learning and training delivered an estimated net contribution to the economy of £3.3 billion over a 2-year period as a result of a boost to jobs, wages and productivity
- on an annual basis the boost to employers is estimated at £674 million through improved productivity and employees gain £974 million from a long-term boost to wages and job prospects
- participation in ULF boost union membership – 1 in 2 of non-union members engaging in union learning go on to join a union and 28% of all ULF participants go on to take up a role as a union rep.

In Round 19 Exeter University was commissioned to carry out impact studies on five of the ULF projects – NARS (National Association of Racing Staff), AEGIS, CWU, GMB Yorkshire and Derbyshire, and RMT. These studies have confirmed the findings of the major learner survey but also enabled some more

detailed understanding of the particular impact that the individual projects have had on learners in very different industries. The studies have also confirmed the very positive Return of Investment (ROI) that ULF makes both to the economy and the Exchequer.

Project	ROI on £1 to learners and employers	ROI on £1 to Exchequer
NARS	£11.67	£3.20
CWU	£9.87	£3.87
RMT	£14.42	£3.80
GMB (Y&D)	£11.48	£3.20
AEGIS	£7.97	£2.60

TUC Education

TUC Education provides high quality education and training for workplace reps. Unions representing major public and private sector employers send reps for training. Almost all unions take part in the programme, which is recognised for integrity, quality and innovation.

During 2018 there was a rise in the number of reps trained to 29,694, an increase of 27 per cent on the 2017 figure. With a further 8,934 reps using webinars and e-learning the total number of reps accessing training was 38,628. This indicates that our strategy to increase support and flexible training opportunities for reps is resulting in improved access to our programmes.

Funding

The TUC programme of training for union reps is delivered UK-wide and the same qualifications are accessed and delivered to union reps in London, Birmingham, Liverpool, or in Glasgow and Cardiff. In recognition of the wider benefits for the economy, the government has provided a 50 per cent co-funding contribution for TUC Education union training courses and this is managed nationally and administered directly by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to partner further education (FE) providers.

From August 2019, Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and the Greater London Authority (GLA) are taking on responsibility for the Adult Education Budget (AEB) for their areas. This will leave the TUC attempting to access each of the different MCAs/GLA as well as non-devolved areas to fund its trade union education training programmes. However, recruitment to college-based programmes is not geographically based. Union reps are often recruited through union networks or by workplace. As a result, our own internal enquiries show that between 50 to 60 per cent of reps attending a college-based course are from outside of the geographic catchment of those colleges, potentially

excluding them from area-based funded programmes in the future.

TUC is lobbying government to provide for union reps to equally access our national programme in England with an ESFA national funding stream alongside the devolved AEB. Otherwise there is a major risk that skills devolution will lead to a significant reduction in the training of union reps.

Our offer to reps

Our strategy for supporting and enabling union reps to access trade union education continues. Ensuring that as many reps as possible have access to flexible training opportunities continues to be a focus of TUC Education work. Developing materials to support face-to-face training opportunities for reps, and further developing our online, blended and e-learning offer, is a priority. The TUC are seeking to ensure as many reps as practicable are accessing trade union education and securing appropriate paid release to do so.

Several approaches have been developed to enable union reps to access informal opportunities for education and development, both online and face-to-face. TUC national and regional offices continue to organise various demand-led briefings, including health and safety training days, supporting learners events, tackling the far right briefings, and anti-austerity campaigns.

Flexible fully online programmes sit alongside classroom courses, providing up-to-date resources for reps. Programmes and resources can be accessed by reps as soon as they take office and can be used by experienced reps to refresh their skills and knowledge.

ENotes continue to be a great resource to help reps keep up to date on key workplace issues. These self-contained e-learning modules include a mixture of text, video and quizzes, and can be accessed from PCs, tablets or smart phones as many times as and when required.

eNotes include:

- Supporting mid-life development
- Mental health in the workplace
- Read now!
- Write now!
- Menopause support in the workplace

The use of webinars to reach union reps with interactive briefings remains popular. Over 30 are available from the TUC Education website www.tuceducation.org.uk including:

- Becoming a ULR
- Menopause – change the conversation
- Reaching young workers
- Running a learning at work event

Review of support to reps, officers and organising

A TUC priority for 2018-19 is reviewing support to reps and officers and organising. The TUC and unionlearn deliver a range of activities and actions that support reps and officers. This includes both our formal classroom-based training and more informal learning opportunities, including e-learning, events and briefings.

TUC Education are undertaking research to inform a more strategic approach to the wide range of services and support that the TUC and unionlearn offers to union reps, including union learning reps. The research will help us understand the behaviours of union reps in the modern workforce and get an up-to-date picture of the demographic of our rep base, their current challenges and experiences and how they are carrying out their role in today's workforce. This will help us develop a progressive and sustainable education solution that meets the needs of union reps in the future.

The research will include surveying reps that have engaged directly with trade union education as well as those reps that have not undertaken any union-led learning. This will ensure that the full landscape of training and support and its impact is determined. The research will evaluate the effectiveness of traditional formal training methods and assess the impact of informal learning approaches, including events, websites and fully online e-learning opportunities.

This work will map and research our current learning offer against TUC and union priorities and ensure that TUC and unionlearn resources and development capacity are deployed efficiently and strategically. The University of Exeter has been appointed to undertake this research.

The review also includes work to research and restructure the Organising Academy and Union Professionals offer. This work is being informed by a survey of union professionals and an organising survey of affiliates. New programmes will be available in early 2020.

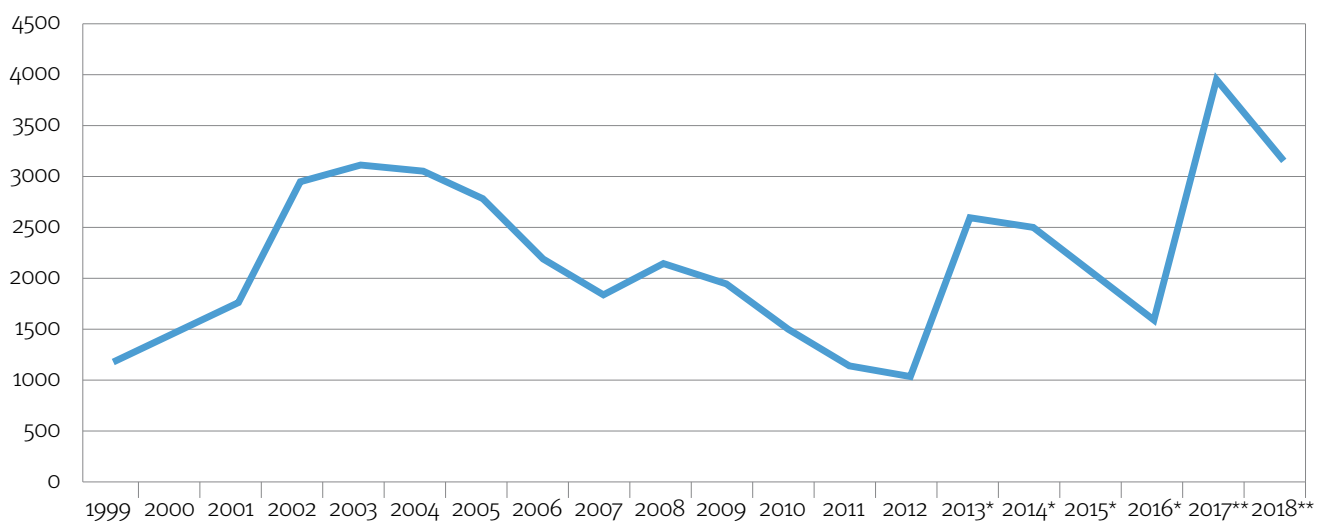
Union learning rep training

In 2018 the total number of ULRs receiving training was 3,332:

- 498 on the Union learning reps stage 1 classroom-based programme
- 1,551 on the Union reps stage 1 classroom-based programme
- 109 ULRs trained on the classroom-based stage 2 course
- 142 reps on the new online Union learning reps 1 course
- 952 reps on the new online Union reps 1 course
- 80 reps on the new online Union learning reps 2 course

Since 1999, including the new online courses, a total of 44,027 new ULRs have been trained.

New ULRs trained 1999 – 2018



* includes reps trained on Union reps stage 1 course containing mainstreamed learning agenda

** includes reps trained on Union reps stage 1 course containing mainstreamed learning agenda and reps trained on new online Union learning reps 1 and Union reps 1 courses

Strategy

Policy, research and guidance

In 2018 unionlearn published new findings from a comprehensive survey of learners who engaged with ULF provision in Rounds 17 and 18. This research was commissioned from the University of Exeter and it builds on findings from earlier surveys of learners and employers that were produced as part of an evaluation exercise undertaken by the University of Leeds in 2016. Drawing on these various survey findings, unionlearn has produced a new infographics pamphlet – *Union learning in facts and figures* – tracking the impact of union learning. The pamphlet summarises the key achievements for learners, their employers and the wider UK economy, thanks to the support of the Union Learning Fund (ULF) and unionlearn. See page 5 for some of the key findings from the latest learner survey undertaken by the University of Exeter.

In spring 2019 unionlearn published a new guide for union reps about negotiating with employers around the learning and skills agenda. The focus of the guide is on enhancing union intervention in vocational or work-related training provision, while recognising that

the union learning agenda encompasses a wide range of learning-related issues. Earlier in the year unionlearn convened a roundtable of officials from a range of unions to draw on their expertise in this area and to use their feedback to inform development of the new guide.

The devolution of adult skills funding to the Greater London Authority (GLA) and six Mayoral

Combined Authorities (MCAs)

from autumn of this year has raised a number of opportunities and challenges. Unionlearn has welcomed commitments by the GLA and some of the MCAs to use these devolved powers to boost skills entitlements and has campaigned for all these authorities to link their low-wage skills funding programmes to the independent Living Wage rather than the lower salary threshold being used in the national programme. Unionlearn has also provided guidance to unions about the national low-wage skills entitlement and its devolved variations.

Over the past 12 months unionlearn has submitted a number of responses on behalf of the TUC to consultations and calls for evidence by government departments, parliamentary select committees and other agencies. These consultations and reviews have included the following:

- Government consultations on the forthcoming digital skills entitlement
- DfE Select Committee inquiry into the Fourth Industrial Revolution
- Government review of the apprenticeship levy
- Consultations by the Greater London Authority on the devolution of adult skills funding.

In addition to producing written submissions, the unionlearn Strategy Manager gave oral evidence to the DfE Select Committee inquiry into the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Unionlearn staff also represent the TUC on various skills bodies, including: the Strategic Transport Apprenticeship Taskforce; the Institute for Apprenticeship's Stakeholder Panel; Movement to Work; the DfE's Apprenticeship Stakeholder Board; the DfE Apprenticeship Equality and Diversity Advisory Group; the Skills for Londoners Business Partnership; and CEDEFOP (EU skills research body).

The Strategy team produces a quarterly Learning & Skills Policy Update newsletter to keep unions and other stakeholders abreast of policy developments in learning and skills and also produces a range of other policy briefings for the unionlearn website.



Apprenticeships and other youth programmes

Unionlearn continues to support union engagement in high-quality apprenticeships and other youth skills initiatives, including pre-apprenticeship programmes such as traineeships and supported internships. During the last 12 months unionlearn has continued to prioritise providing support to unions to help them negotiate high-quality apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programmes with employers. An equally important priority has been to build the capacity of all union reps to provide direct support to apprentices and other youth trainees in the workplace. This work has involved the production of a range of guidance and briefings for unions in the context of the new funding and regulatory arrangements that have come into place since the introduction of the apprenticeship levy in 2017. In addition, there has been a strong focus on addressing equality and diversity issues so that unions can play a lead role in widening participation in apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeship programmes to specific groups facing significant barriers.

Pre-apprenticeship programmes

A number of unions have successfully negotiated high-quality traineeships and other pre-apprenticeship programmes. These include a union tailored traineeship model with a commitment to high quality work experience placements, financial support from the employer, and a route into an apprenticeship or further training. Unions also negotiate pre-employment training which does not draw down traineeship funding, but in essence serves the same purpose as a traineeship, as it combines college-based provision and work experience to help young people get into work. In its submission to the government's review of the levy, the TUC called for employers to be allowed to use a portion of their levy contributions to fund innovative pre-apprenticeship programmes leading to a full apprenticeship. The director of unionlearn is a board member of Movement to Work, which works with large employers to offer a

bespoke, high-quality work experience programme for young unemployed people.

Apprenticeships

Over the last year nearly 13,000 apprenticeships were supported by ULF projects and unionlearn. This work on apprenticeships has ranged across a number of ULF projects, adding value to apprenticeship programmes already in progress through strong union support for apprentices in the workplace and also negotiating with employers for the recruitment of more high-quality apprenticeships. The number of apprenticeship outcomes is down on last year with indications that this is partly due to employers deferring recruitment due to uncertainty around the future development of the levy. In order to address this, a new TUC unionlearn Apprenticeship Project Group has been established to boost regional activities to support more people to access high-quality apprenticeships.

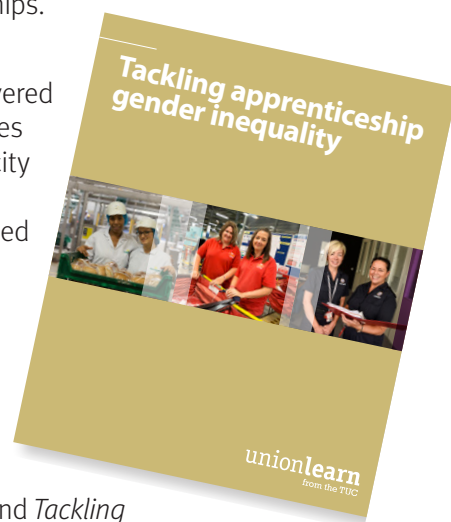
Over the past year unionlearn has delivered a number of initiatives to build union capacity on apprenticeships.

Two new guides aimed at boosting equality and diversity in the apprenticeship programmes were produced.

Supporting Black and minority

ethnic apprentices and *Tackling apprenticeship gender inequality*

are aimed at equipping union reps with a range of tools to enable them to boost the opportunities for BME groups and women to access high-quality apprenticeships leading to well-paid sustainable employment. In the previous year unionlearn published a guide – *Accessible Apprenticeships* – aimed at boosting the support that union reps can provide to help more disabled people access high-quality apprenticeships.



A new leaflet – *Apprenticeships for existing staff* – was produced to help union reps make sure that employers are offering high-quality apprenticeship opportunities when this training route is offered to existing employees, including older workers. A range of briefing resources for union reps about the apprenticeship training regulation were also made available – this entitlement was introduced alongside the levy and entitles all apprentices to off-the-job training for at least 20 per cent of their working time.

Unionlearn has continued campaigning for employers to sign up to the TUC apprenticeship charter and welcomed a public commitment by the Liverpool City Region Metro Mayor, Steve Rotheram, to sign up to the charter and to use a new online portal to signpost apprentices in the region to the unionlearn website for information about their rights.

A number of bespoke apprenticeship briefings were delivered for individual unions, employers and providers and these included a focus on promoting quality and equality and diversity. This workstream included unionlearn hosting a joint exhibition stand with affiliated unions at the annual World Skills and Big Bang events in order to promote apprenticeships as a high-quality option for young people considering their career options. A range of support has also been provided to ULF projects to develop their capacity to deliver more high-quality apprenticeships.

Unionlearn also contributed to the policy debate on apprenticeships by submitting evidence to the government's review of the levy, calling for a number of flexibilities to boost the numbers of high-quality apprenticeships accessible to all. At the beginning of 2019 the TUC and unionlearn organised a roundtable of senior employers and union officials, under the auspices of the Public Services Forum, to discuss the challenges and opportunities for public sector apprenticeships. The roundtable was chaired by the Skills Minister, Anne Milton MP, and a follow-up strategic event will take place this summer. Unionlearn also welcomed a number of the recommendations of the parliamentary Education Select Committee following its major inquiry into apprenticeships in 2018

– many of these recommendations chimed with the general thrust of the TUC's evidence calling for major reforms to drive up quality and to improve equality and diversity.

English, ESOL, maths and digital skills

Supporting English and maths in the workplace remains a bread-and-butter issue for union learning. Updating literacy, language and numeracy skills empowers learners to progress to further learning opportunities and builds their confidence to manage work, study and everyday life. Unionlearn's work on basic skills ranges across a number of areas, including policy updates, responses to government consultations, workplace and networking events, and promoting resources such as SkillCheck initial assessments.

Keeping the agenda thoroughly embedded in all aspects of union learning remains a priority. To maintain this approach, the following actions were taken forward: updating the English, maths and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) section of the ULR 2 online course; revising the digital skills resources in the Climbing Frame; and, running the English and maths campaign weeks. In recent years both the *Literacy Works Week* and the *Maths Workout Week* have been steadily promoting literacy, language and numeracy skills with digital content and workplace events organised by ULRs. We also supported the National Numeracy Day to raise awareness of everyday maths skills and *Learning at Work Week* has traditionally been a good opportunity to offer English and maths teasers.

Over the last two years unionlearn has been facilitating a network of union reps and officers who support the basic skills agenda on a day-to-day basis. The increasing importance of digital skills has resulted in the remit of the network being extended and as a result it's now called the *Unions' English, maths and digital skills network*. This year the network has been exceptionally well attended and the meeting agendas have included coverage of a wide range of topics,

including dyslexia, financial capability, and various presentations from stakeholder organisations. The network has also discussed potential challenges and opportunities for unions resulting from the forthcoming reformed functional skills qualifications and digital skills funding entitlement. Showcasing union initiatives through the network has proved a particularly helpful way to share good practice.

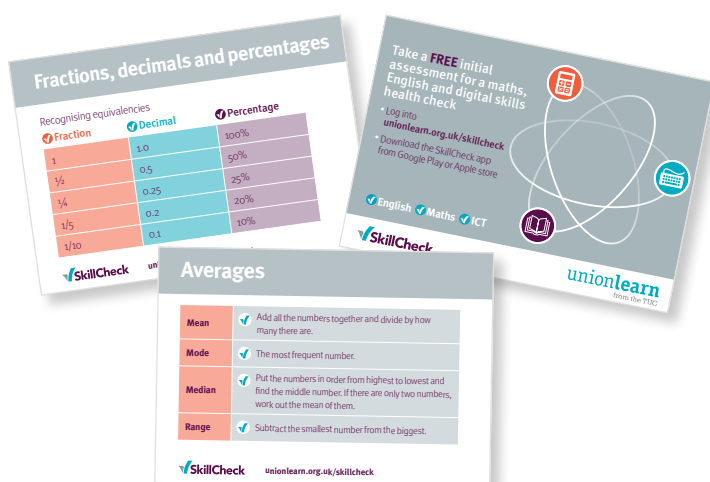
Unions and unionlearn have worked hard to engage learners in the workplace in 2018-19 and the data clearly show that these efforts have paid off. For example, unionlearn supported 8,107 English and maths learners compared to a target of 7,500, while the ULF supported 35,822 compared to a target of 23,541. In addition, the ULF supported 28,568 ICT learners compared to a target of 22,466 and 838 ESOL learners compared to a target of 567. In addition, the ULF delivers a large number of assessments for learners that are not counted in the above outputs, and these figures are as follows: English assessments (13,347); maths assessments (12,480); and, ICT assessments (11,852).

These outcomes are especially significant in light of the major decline in participation in English and maths learning highlighted in the Social Mobility Commission's *State of the Nation 2018-19* report. The report points out that "between 2010/11 and 2017/18, there was a 31 per cent decline in adults participating in up to a Level 2 English and maths and a 30 per cent decline in the number of those achieving up to Level 2 qualifications over the same period". OECD researchers have acknowledged the importance of union-led learning in the workplace, including giving high praise to their experience of the union learning offer being delivered at a BFAWU workplace learning centre. Unionlearn staff also provided further insights to the researchers about the role of union learning, and some of the ongoing policy challenges, in relation to English and maths learning (the OECD research programme was commissioned by the DfE).

Unionlearn has welcomed the government trial to fully fund a range of qualifications for learners on low wages. The initiative has had positive implications for

co-funded learning, such as ESOL for working people, which hasn't been fully funded since 2011. Likewise, we have welcomed the London Mayor's plans to fully fund ESOL up to entry level 3 as part of the strategy for the devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB) in Greater London. Achieving entry level 3 language skills is one of the benchmarks for learners looking to pass the British citizenship test. Unionlearn was also pleased to note that the government intends to develop a long-awaited national ESOL strategy for England as part of the Integrated Communities Strategy. Unions' experience of their support for workplace ESOL provision has been fed into the debate and unionlearn will continue to input into the ongoing development of the national strategy.

Unionlearn has responded to various government consultations regarding the upcoming entitlement to fully funded digital skills courses. Regrettably the entitlement will fund learning only up to level 1 when it's implemented in 2020. We would have preferred to see parity with English and maths funding up to and including level 2. Research for the UK Consumer Digital Index 2019 estimates that over the next 20 years 90 per cent of jobs will entail some element of digital skills while one in five adults currently lack these skills. We view the forthcoming funding entitlement as a key means of establishing a digital skills baseline, but employers and the government will need to develop strategies to address the rapidly accelerating rate of change in digital technologies in our workplaces.



Some unions, such as UNISON, have already taken ownership of this agenda and are tackling these challenges by recruiting digital champions in a wide range of workplaces.

Union engagement with skills bodies

Unionlearn has continued to support union engagement in a range of skills bodies, including those with a national remit and others with a role at a sector/industrial level or at a local/regional level. The TUC welcomed the establishment of the Institute for Apprenticeships in 2017 but has continued to express concerns that appointments to the Institute's board have not yet included anyone with a union background and that this was very different to the "social partnership" arrangements governing apprenticeship and technical education systems in most other European countries.

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

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

Unionlearn is also supporting union engagement in sector skills through other avenues, including major infrastructure initiatives being taken forward by the government. One key programme of this kind is the Strategic Transport Apprenticeship Taskforce which has been established to support the government's ambition to create 30,000 apprenticeships in the

transport sector by 2020 and to increase the diversity of the workforce. The director of unionlearn is a member of the taskforce and the transport unions have also been engaged various aspects of the work programme.

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

National Retraining Scheme

At the end of 2017 the government announced that it would be launching a National Retraining Scheme, with a particular focus on addressing the training needs of workers that are likely to be impacted by automation and digitalisation in the coming years. A high-level advisory group – the National Retraining Partnership (NRP) – was also established at this time to bring together government, the TUC and CBI in order to set the strategic direction and oversee implementation of the scheme. The government has committed to roll out the scheme fully across England by the end of the current parliament and during the intervening period there will be a range of trials to test out various aspects of the programme.

The first phase of trialling will begin this summer and in the 2018 Budget the Chancellor committed £100 million for this first phase of the National Retraining Scheme. This builds on earlier spending commitments focused on two priorities that will be taken forward before the full retraining scheme is rolled out nationally. These two priorities are a specific initiative to tackle skills shortages in the construction sector and the development of digital platforms by government to support flexible online access to education and training opportunities, especially for adults wishing to retrain.

In the 2018 Budget the Chancellor described the first phase of the scheme to be trialled, as follows: “This will include a new careers guidance service with expert advice to help people identify work opportunities in their area, and state-of-the-art courses combining online learning with traditional classroom teaching to develop key transferable skills.” He also said that the “National Retraining Partnership between the government, the CBI and the TUC will focus on job-specific retraining in phase two [trials].”

Membership of the National Retraining Partnership comprises: TUC General Secretary, Frances O’Grady; CBI Director-General, Carolyn Fairbairn; the Secretary of State for Education, Damian Hinds MP; the Exchequer Secretary, Robert Jenrick MP; the Skills Minister, Anne Milton MP; and, the Employment Minister, Alok Sharma MP. The NRP meets on a quarterly basis and consider the findings and recommendations coming out of regular meetings of senior officials from DfE, the TUC and CBI. These official-led meetings are currently focused on developing the operational model and trialling this in advance of the national roll-out. The director of unionlearn is leading these negotiations from the TUC side.

Service

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

Supporting learners

A key strand of work for unionlearn is about supporting learners in the workplace. A Supporting Learners Strategy for 2017-2020 has been developed which includes the successful 'network model' for supporting learners. The model places the work of union learning reps at the heart of the strategy. ULRs are ideally placed to support learners as they speak the same language as their members and have their trust. Learners then feel supported in accessing the right learning and courses or to consider their career options.

The Supporting Learners Strategy also outlines six key themes:

1. Promoting apprenticeships
2. Supporting the union approach to English, maths and digital skills
3. Helping disadvantaged learners
4. Supporting learning and progression for all ages by facilitating access to quality, impartial information and advice about learning and work
5. Supporting older workers
6. Working with key partners and stakeholders

In 2018-19 ULF projects supported 81,000 adults with information, advice and guidance and learner support referrals. This highlights the substantive amount of support provided by union reps in helping learners progress on their learner journey.

In 2019 unionlearn produced *Supporting Learners – a guide for union reps* which includes sections on getting started as a ULR, the skills of ULRs, providing information and advice and sources of information and support. The guide also provides information

about high-priority areas for learning and work, ULR professional development and useful websites for supporting learners.

Unionlearn produces a bi-monthly publication entitled *Supporting Learners News*. This electronic newsletter is produced to keep ULRs and others up to date with news, developments and resources from unionlearn and partners that will help support learners in the workplace.

Six unionlearn Supporting Learners events took place in October and November 2018. The events were primarily aimed at ULRs and other reps involved in learning, plus officers and Union Learning Fund project staff. The programme covered a wide range of learning and skills topics including supporting older workers, the National Retraining Scheme, digital skills, blogging and mental health.

www.unionlearn.org.uk/supporting-learners

The union learning Climbing Frame

The union learning Climbing Frame is the free website designed for union learning reps and others to help support learners and promote learning in the workplace. Unionlearn has developed a number of useful 'Learning Themes' on topics such as Personal Development and Career Planning, Supporting Mid-life Development and Health and Wellbeing in the workplace. The Learning Themes are regularly reviewed and updated to provide users with the latest information and advice.

Alongside the themes is a 'Learner Management' area which enables reps to record information from sessions with learners, helping them set goals and actions and record achievements.

Reps can also store notes, upload documents and record their own learning activities and progression. Useful links, a discussion forum and an events page also feature on the site. Along with the website there is also a Climbing Frame app which is free to download.

In 2018 the Climbing Frame was given a whole new modern look and improved features to help ensure

the website stays a unique and useful resource to help ULRs support learners.

The Climbing Frame has over 8,000 registered users and our latest survey gave a strong endorsement from users across unions and sectors.

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

Supporting mid-life development

There continues to be high demand for the support union learning reps offer older workers. The unionlearn model is a holistic approach. It doesn't just focus on supporting workers to remain active in work longer, it also aims to inspire older workers to live healthy and secure working lives through access to lifelong learning and in good working environments with decent pay. The notion of someone working for the same organisation throughout their career is no longer an option for most people. Many workers are now expected to change careers several times during their working lives.

In November 2017 unionlearn successfully secured funding for an Erasmus+ Mid-life Skills Review European project.

The project has developed a new practice model for the delivery of a mid-life skills review – with the emphasis on reviewing the skills and competencies of workers with low levels of basic skills. The new online version of the highly popular *Value My Skills* cards has been launched and is available in six languages. A national dissemination event is planned for London in November and an international dissemination event will be held early December in Turin.

Unions continue to train, support and encourage union reps to engage with the mid-life development agenda. To date this work has resulted in over 7,000 workers undertaking mid-life review activities and a wide range of materials and resources have been developed to help support this work. The infrastructure in place to support union reps has helped build union capacity and thus unions are now the largest deliverer of workplace mid-life development reviews.

www.unionlearn.org.uk/mid-life-skills-review-project

Supporting younger workers

Many young people in work have an unmet need for good quality impartial and independent careers advice as there is often no one to help them to get advice and plan for their future. The Career Kickstart project aims to help young people start to plan their future career, as well as assist them to progress and get on at work.

Career Kickstart reviews are designed to provide support to young people, start a conversation about career plans and give them the best possible start to their career.

Unionlearn has developed a practical guide which will give new and experienced union reps the confidence to deliver Career Kickstart reviews in the workplace or in learning centres, one-to-one or in groups, and to signpost workers to a range of specialists and experts. *Career kickstart reviews – A guide for union learning reps* provides knowledge, contextual information, a suggested structure for reviews, helpful activities and information on resources and signposting.

www.unionlearn.org.uk/youth-employment-and-skills

Digital skills

Supporting learners to gain digital skills continues to be a key area for unions. These skills help workers both at work and in their home lives. They enable and encourage career progression and help tackle digital exclusion.

Our unionlearn digital skills campaign week ran alongside Get Online Week in October. The campaign featured workplace case studies, showcasing union support and activity. Trade unionists, and others, wrote blogs on topics such as cyber security, social media skills for work and making the most of the internet. We promoted useful learning resources and links to organisations that unionlearn works with. And we shared examples of union success throughout our networks.

The digital skills section of the climbing frame received a comprehensive update. This gives ULRs easy access to lots of information, resources and tips around promoting and learning digital skills.

SkillCheck is unionlearn's tool for learners to check their levels of digital knowledge. The unionlearn annual conference 2018 included a personal cyber security workshop which proved a popular choice for delegates. Digital skills featured in activities at all of the unionlearn Supporting Learners events in autumn 2018. Reps at these events looked at the issues in their workplaces and the support available. Feeding back from the events ULRs highlighted the barriers people faced in improving their digital skills.

Unionlearn has produced a booklet entitled *Working to close the digital divide - A guide for ULRs supporting digital skills*. This guide includes information and checklists, examples of union successes, and signposts to a number of resources to help people develop digital skills.

www.unionlearn.org.uk/digital-skills

Mental health

Well-being and mental health is a key priority in the unionlearn Supporting Learner's strategy. Health and well-being has always been a core trade union policy and unions have helped workers learn how to stay healthy through a range of union learning initiatives, workshops and courses.

Stress in workplaces has led to an increasing prevalence of mental health problems. The TUC Education workbook and e-learning module aim to help reps prevent stress-related mental illness, develop their understanding of mental health and be aware of diversity issues impacting on members with mental health problems.

Unionlearn has been working with TUC Education to develop a new mental health offer for unions. Part of the offer includes the MHFA England two-day Mental Health First Aid course. This course has proved very popular and a number of courses have taken place across the country.

www.unionlearn.org.uk/MHFA-training

Higher learning

Unionlearn is committed to supporting and developing pathways to higher learning for union learners and has secured agreements with some higher education institutions to support this agenda. Birkbeck University offer a 10 per cent discount on courses to union members and this continues to prove popular. In 2018-19, 710 students took up the discount across 28 unions. 513 were postgraduate students and 197 were undergraduate students.

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

www.unionlearn.org.uk/higher-learning-work

Communications

Unionlearn's communications activity is focused on working with affiliates, employers, partners and others to promote the impact and value of union-led learning.

During the year over 100 case studies and over 40 blogs were produced and posted to the unionlearn website and the unionlearn social media platforms. These highlighted the range of support that unions have been giving members in workplaces and focused on a number of the year's priority campaigns such as English, maths, apprenticeships, mental health at work, supporting younger workers and digital skills. They also gave a platform to provide

examples of learning around health and wellbeing, community engagement and more. There were also a large number of news stories produced to highlight activities, new resources and promote union learning events throughout the year.

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

The website is the first place to go for news, case studies, blogs and resources and this year has seen a huge rise in the amount of content being regularly posted up. The constant flow of new material keeps the site fresh and interesting and has resulted in registrations continuing to rise plus an increase in visitors to the unionlearn website with over 219,000 for the year.

Unionlearn's social media presence continues to grow, with the Facebook page (www.facebook.com/tucunionlearn) and Twitter account @unionlearn gaining an increase in followers over the year and the introduction of an Instagram page has helped to get our message out to a wider and diverse audience.

Unionlearn ran campaign weeks around priority areas of work. Some of these tied in with national campaigns such as National Numeracy Day, Get Online Week, Mental Health Awareness Week and Younger Workers Month whilst others were unionlearn's own campaigns, for example Maths Workout Week and Literacy Works Week.

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

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

Unionlearn's 12th Annual Conference took place on Thursday 12th July 2018 with over 300 delegates attending. The event was entitled 'The future for skills' and was a celebration of the significant contribution unions and ULRs have made to help workers get on at work, and focused on skills development through learning of individuals and communities, meeting the needs of a modern workforce, and supporting high-quality apprenticeships to boost social justice, productivity and the UK skills base.

Speakers included:

- Frances O'Grady, TUC General Secretary
- Rt Hon Anne Milton MP, Minister of State for Skills and Apprenticeships
- Lord Blunkett, Chair of the Heathrow Taskforce
- Vaseem Khan, Author
- Ava Vidal, Comedian

In 2019 unionlearn introduced a new Careerzone section to the unionlearn website (www.unionlearn.org.uk/careerzone). Careerzone includes a careers directory, careers videos, and a careerometer where you can easily select and compare a variety of careers.

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

Quality improvement

The unionlearn Quality Improvement Framework (QIF) has been in place for over eight years as a tool to meet strategic priorities to support unions and learners in all aspects of learning, maintain and drive up our professional standards, and provide for reflection on work practice through self-assessment leading to continuous quality improvement. The framework was reviewed and extensive changes made during 2017 to reflect the changing face of unionlearn:



The context and main drivers for quality across unionlearn are various and complex. However, for the sake of simplicity the QIF has been streamlined to 6 elements which capture the key components of the quality improvement process. These elements are not linear in progression; they form a holistic continuous improvement cycle which can be entered and exited at any point. In some cases, each element can be considered as stand-alone if necessary.

Each stage has processes and mechanisms in place that evidence quality assurance and quality delivery. Unionlearn has embedded the following processes:

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

Unionlearn continues to hold an annual self-assessment review (SAR) that all staff contribute to. The key identified areas for improvement in 2019/20 are:

- Improve and use learning tracking and ULF data more to showcase unionlearn impact.

- Improve analysis of apprenticeships data with findings shared with partners.
- Collect stakeholder feedback in an integrated way.
- Improve collaboration with TUC regions to drive new initiatives.
- Build on strategic cross-team working and collaboration within unionlearn and with other TUC departments.
- Continue unionlearn's website rationalisation.

Finance

Total funding to unionlearn in 2018-19 was £12,983,000.

This funding is comprised of £900,000 from the TUC; £12m from the Department for Education (DfE); and £83,000 from the National Agency for Erasmus+.

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

Budget Heading 2018/19	Budget £	Actual Outturn £
ULF – Grants to Unions	8,894,127	9,465,724
Delivery and support of the national ULF Programme	1,450,003	1,689,226
Service, Quality and Standards	340,555	391,281
Strategy and Research	206,557	216,884
Trade Union Education	231,248	235,384
Unallocated at start of year**	877,510	0
TOTAL 2018-19	12,000,000	11,998,499

**reallocated to new ULF Innovation projects and some central delivery work

Appendix 1 Publications

You can find unionlearn publications in
www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications

Apprenticeships for existing staff

Learning makes us strong: Celebrating 150 years

Mental health and the workplace

Skills at work – A guide for negotiators

Supporting Black and minority ethnic apprentices
(updated)

Supporting Learners – a guide for union reps

Tackling apprenticeship gender inequality

Training trends in Britain –
unionlearn research paper 22

Union Learning Fund 2018 Learning Survey

Union learning in facts and figures –
Why what we're doing is working

Working to close the digital divide –
A guide for ULRs supporting digital skills

Newsletters and magazines:

Learning and Skills Policy Update newsletter
www.unionlearn.org.uk/policy-briefings

Learning Rep magazine
www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications

Supporting Learners News
www.unionlearn.org.uk/supporting-learners-news

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

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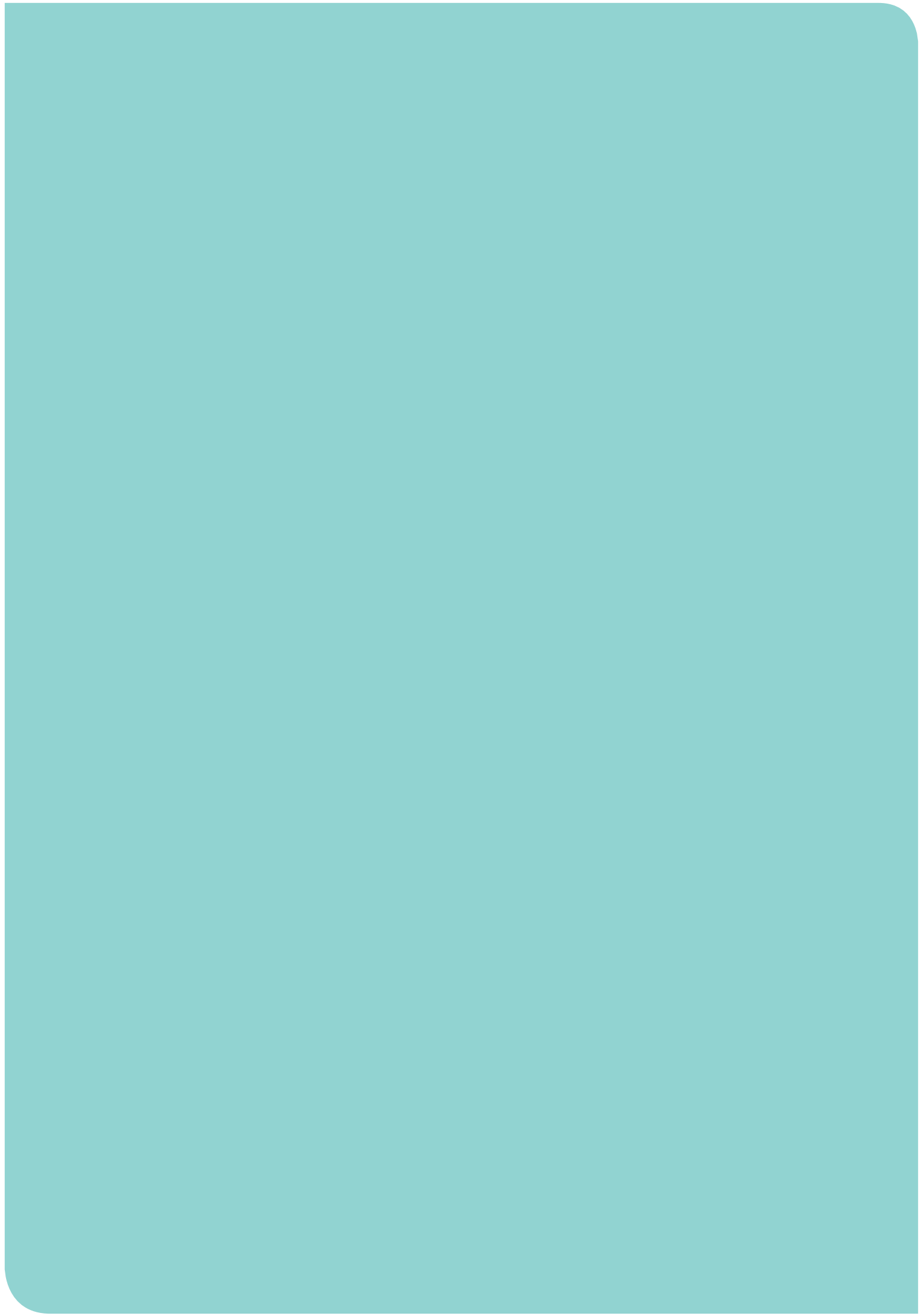
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Appendix 3 Glossary

BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
CPD	Continuing professional development
DfE	Department for Education
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Fund (previously the ESF)
ESOL	English for speakers of other languages
FE	Further education (typically in local colleges)
HE	Higher education (typically in university)
IACL	Informal Adult and Community Learning
IAG	Information, Advice and Guidance
ICT	Information and communication technology
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
Level 1	Also known as ‘foundation level’ or ‘basic skills’; equal to standard of a primary school leaver; subdivided into Entry Level 1, 2 or 3
Level 2	Broadly equivalent to grades 4-9 (formerly A-C) at GCSE, i.e. expected achievement at age 16
Level 3	Broadly equivalent to A Level, i.e. expected achievement at age 18
MCA	Mayoral combined authority
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
QIF	Quality Improvement Framework
SAR	Self-Assessment Review
ULF	Union Learning Fund
ULR	Union learning representative



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

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June 2019

Design by Rumba
Printed by Severnprint Ltd