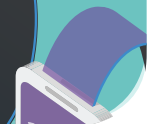
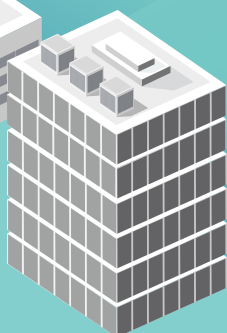


PROMOTING UNION LEARNING

the reps who **spread the word**

77%

73%





Unions are successfully encouraging more women, young people and members of BME groups to promote learning at work.

INTRODUCTION

We have produced this booklet to summarise some of the most important ways in which an increasing range of union reps, including union learning reps (ULRs), are helping their co-workers to acquire and develop the skills that enable them to improve their job prospects and their home lives.



The numbers are derived from unionlearn's 2017 survey of ULRs and union reps supporting learning and skills, which gathered close to 1,000 responses from reps of all kinds.

While ULRs work specifically to encourage and support their colleagues into a wide range of learning opportunities, many of their other union colleagues (stewards, health and safety reps, equality reps and others) also promote union-led learning in the workplace as a result of the continuing mainstreaming of union learning.

Since 2014, we have reflected this development by opening up the survey to all union reps who support learning at work (prior to that, it was circulated only to ULRs).

This means that when we look back further than 2014 in order to identify longer-term trends in workplace learning, we are drawing on the results from different data sets. The survey report on the unionlearn website gives more information on the methodology:

www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/survey-ulrs-and-union-reps-supporting-learning-and-skills.

1

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

83% of ULRs and other reps have increased access to training.

ULRs and other reps continue to have a significant impact on learning in the workplace.

92 per cent have raised awareness of learning among colleagues.

92%

83 per cent have increased access to training.

83%

83 per cent have increased interest in union membership.

83%

77 per cent have helped colleagues with little previous experience of learning or training.

77%

73 per cent have promoted dialogue on training with management.

73%

73 per cent have improved wider employment relations in the workplace.

73%



Union reps are increasing access to a wide variety of different types of learning and training.

Union reps report increasing a range of different training opportunities as a result of their activities.

2

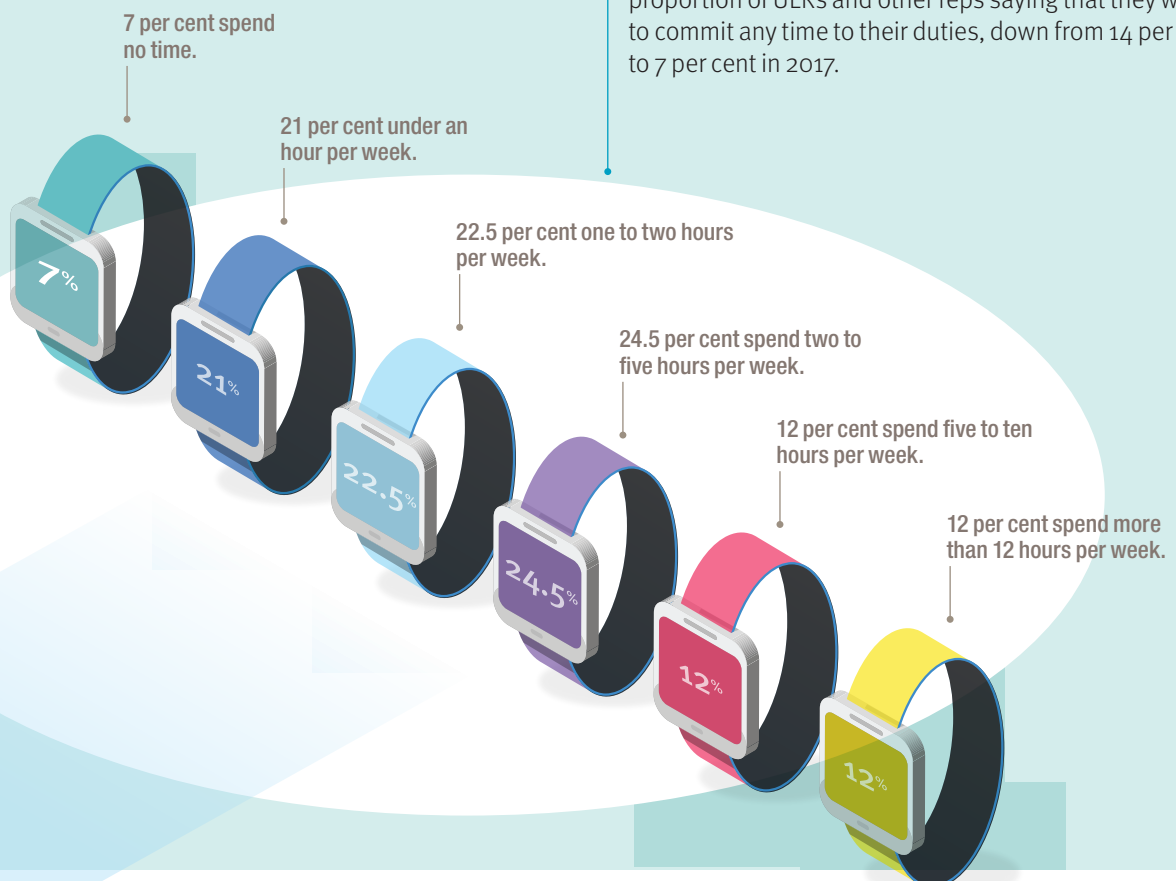
SUPPORTING CO-WORKERS

of union reps supporting learning have recruited new members into the union



Nearly half of all union reps supporting learning commit between one and five hours a week to their role.

Nearly half are able to spend between one and five hours a week on their work promoting workplace learning, while one quarter in all spend more than five hours a week on their role. The main difference from the 2014 survey is a significant reduction in the proportion of ULRs and other reps saying that they were unable to commit any time to their duties, down from 14 per cent in 2014 to 7 per cent in 2017.



85 per cent provided information and advice to colleagues.

85%

73 per cent recruited new members into the union.

73%

54 per cent networked with ULRs from other workplaces.

54%

56 per cent arranged courses for colleagues.

56%

26 per cent helped colleagues to get funding for learning.

26%

25 per cent conducted a learning needs assessment.

25%

28 per cent of reps estimate that they helped more than 25 colleagues with learning in the last 12 months.

11 per cent estimate that they helped 15–24 colleagues.

23 per cent estimate that they helped 6–14 colleagues.

38 per cent estimate that they helped 1–5 colleagues.

Many union reps who support learning are helping 25-plus workers every year.

A significant proportion (more than one quarter) of ULRs and union reps are helping more than two dozen co-workers a year.

Union reps supporting learning help their colleagues in a range of different ways.

The most common activities ULRs and union reps undertake to support learning and skills are providing information and advice and recruiting or helping to recruit new union members.

3

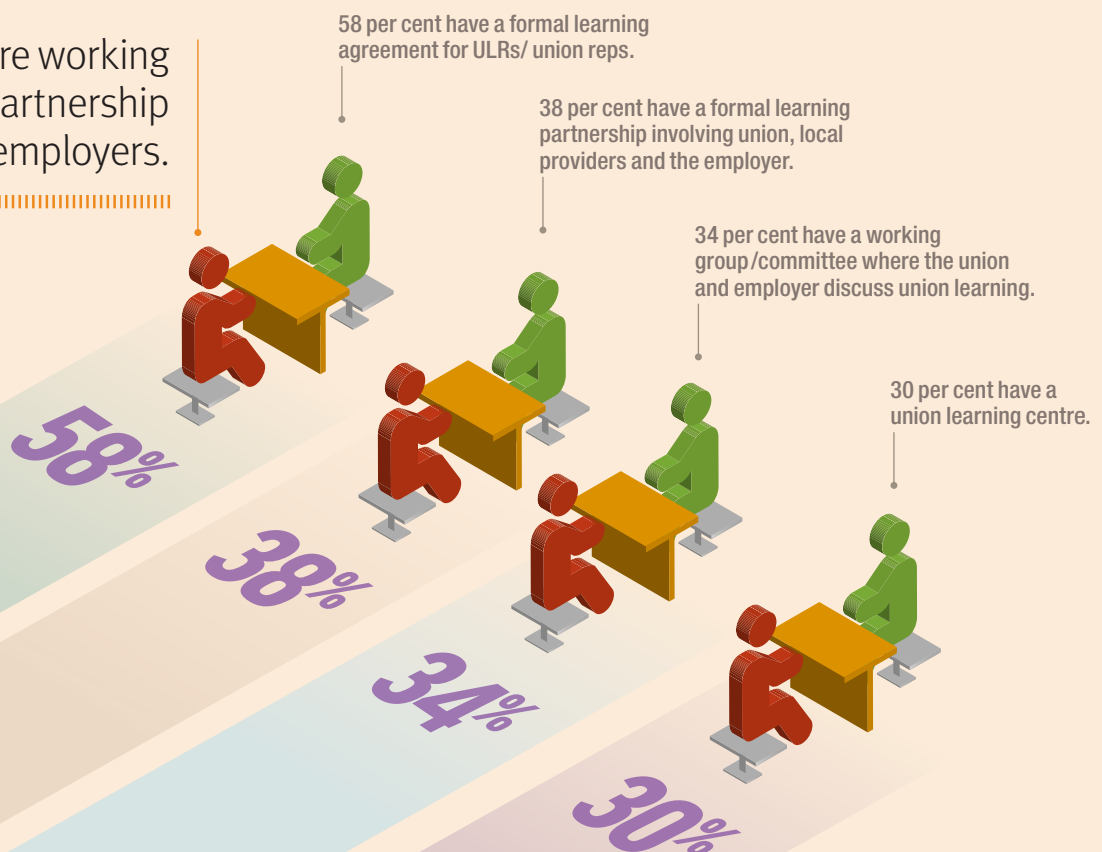
WORKING WITH EMPLOYERS

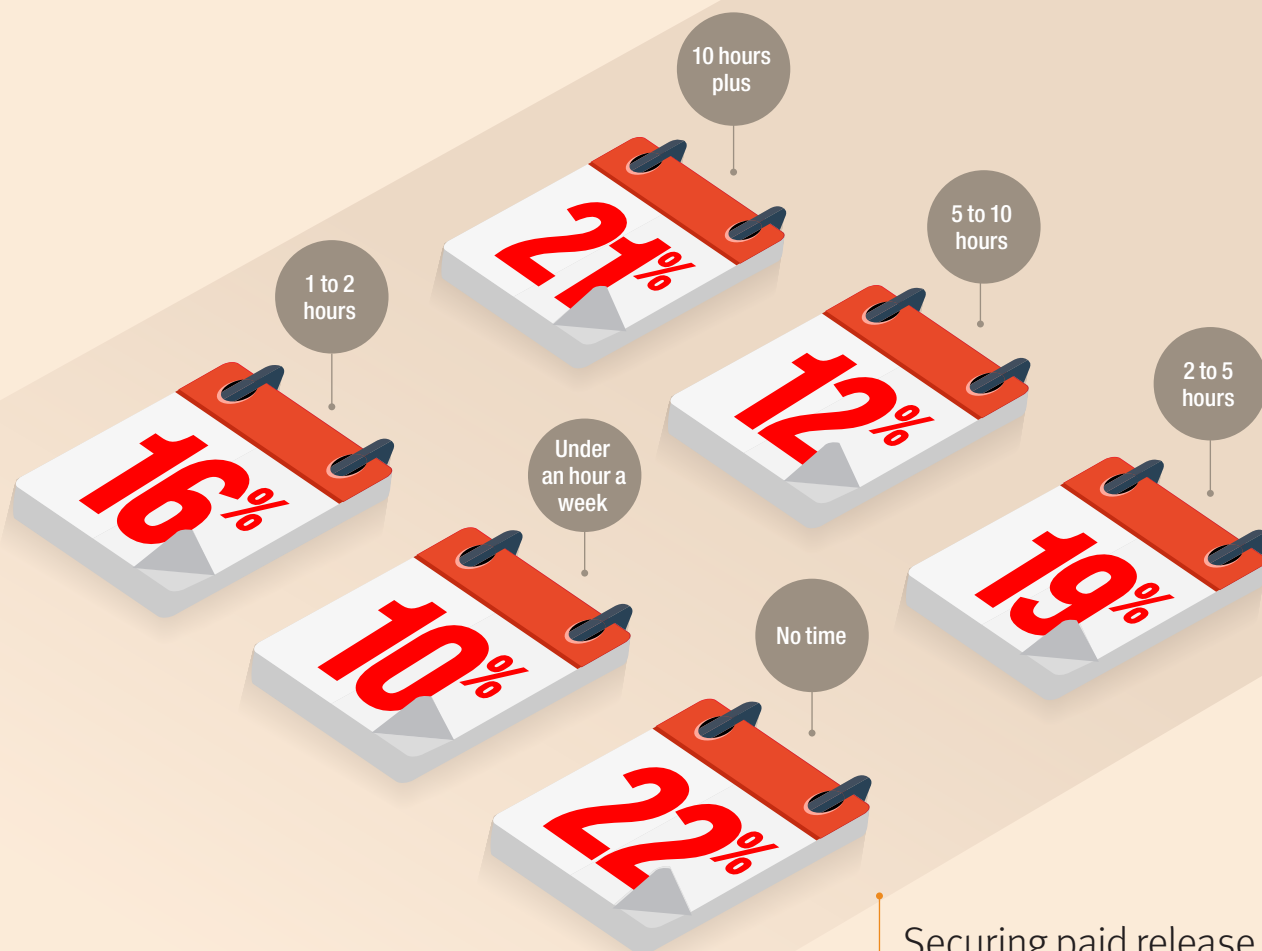
of union reps supporting learning have secured 10 hours or more every week to carry out their role

Unions are beginning to work with employers to get the best out of the apprenticeship levy.

23 per cent of reps have conducted discussions with management and/or their HR department about the impact of the levy. However, another 40 per cent of reps were unaware of the levy at the time of the survey, which was conducted around the time the levy was launched.

Union reps are working effectively in partnership with their employers.





Securing paid release for union learning work remains difficult in many organisations.

Accessing paid release in support of learning and skills remains a major barrier faced by a significant number of ULRs and union reps, with one-third reporting that their employer allows them less than an hour a week or no time at all to promote learning in the workplace.

23%

of reps have conducted discussions with management and/or their HR department about the impact of the apprenticeship levy.

4

GROWING OUR WORK



33 per cent of survey respondents in 2014 were stewards and other non-ULR union roles.

38 per cent of survey respondents in 2017 were stewards and other non-ULR union roles.

More union reps are actively promoting learning than ever before.

All the evidence shows that unions are successfully mainstreaming learning, integrating ULRs in their wider activist structures and ensuring that more reps take part in the work to promote workplace learning. For example, in recent years unionlearn has embedded the union learning agenda into training courses for all union reps. Our surveys reveal that there is a growing trend to mainstream union activity in support of learning and skills across a wider cohort of union reps.

27 per cent of union reps who support learning are under 45



10 per cent of all union reps are under 40



27%

10%

46 per cent of union reps who support learning are women



43 per cent of all union reps are women



46%

43%

21%
of union reps
supporting
learning
are aged
under 45

Unions are successfully encouraging more women, young people and members of BME groups to promote learning at work.

- The proportion of union reps (including ULRs) supporting learning who are women has been increasing ever since the introduction of statutory rights for ULRs. In 2003, 38 per cent of ULRs were women compared to 46 per cent of all union reps supporting learning in 2017.
- Promoting learning attracts a higher proportion of younger union reps.

While surveys of union reps in general and union reps supporting learning use slightly different age categories, the data nevertheless suggest that promoting learning attracts a higher proportion of younger union reps.

- Unions encourage BME members to take on union rep roles that support learning

38%
of union reps
supporting
learning also
undertake other
union roles



9 per cent of employees in unionised workplaces are from BME groups.



10 per cent of union reps supporting learning are from BME groups.



5

LEARNING ACROSS THE ECONOMY

of union reps supporting union learning are in the health and social care sectors

Around two-thirds of union reps supporting learning are in the public sector.

This proportion has remained fairly steady for more than a decade. In 2005, 62 per cent of union reps supporting learning were in the public sector; by 2014 that figure had risen to 66 per cent; by 2017, there was virtually no change at 65 per cent.

But the breakdown has changed in more recent years, with the proportion involved in national and local government dropping from 28 per cent in 2014 to 22 per cent in 2017; while the proportion in health and social care has increased from 10 per cent in 2014 to 18 per cent in 2017. However, it is too early to conclude whether this is a long-term trend.

Not-for-profit / voluntary / mixed sector

Private sector

Public sector

12%

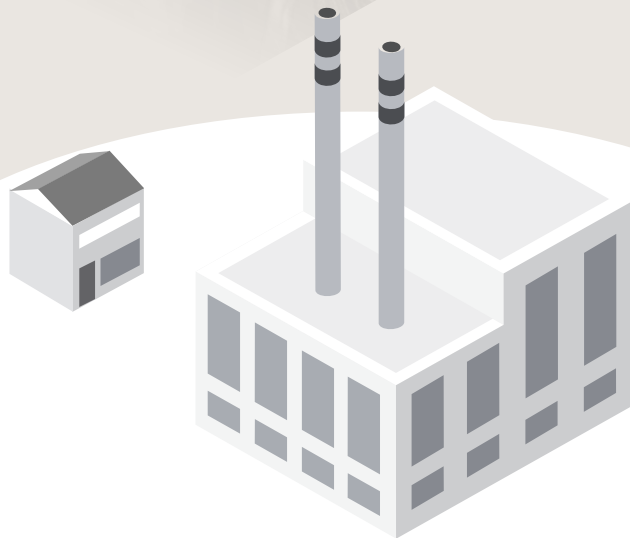
23%

65%



Union reps who support learning tend to be active in larger organisations.

Union reps supporting learning are much more likely to be active in larger organisations, where union recognition and collective bargaining are more likely to be in place.

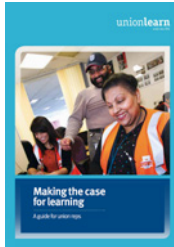


73 per cent of union reps who support learning are in organisations with 250 or more employees.

73%

of union reps who support learning are in organisations with 250 or more employees.

RESOURCES



Making the case for learning

This guide is aimed at union reps who are interested in learning. It provides a range of advice and information to help reps set up – or build on – a union-led learning

initiative in the workplace. By this, we mean any activity which aims to make learning for personal pleasure, vocational and professional qualifications or career development more accessible and affordable.

www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/making-case-learning-guide-union-reps

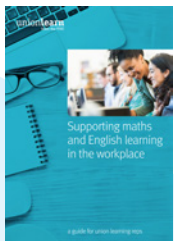


Opening doors to all: How union learning tackles disadvantage

Case study booklet that showcases many of the ways in which unions dismantle the barriers faced by

disadvantaged learners in order to help them – and the organisations they work for – to grow and thrive. Download from:

www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/opening-doors-all-how-union-learning-tackles-disadvantage



Supporting maths and English learning in the workplace – a guide for union learning reps

Short guide providing ideas for developing English and maths

learning in the workplace, which gathers together useful resources all reps can use to engage and support adult learners in English and maths.

Download from:

www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/supporting-maths-and-english-learning-workplace-guide-union-learning-reps



Apprenticeships Toolkit

The Apprenticeships Toolkit is a resource for union officers, union representatives and union learning reps who are negotiating

with employers on apprenticeships or who are approaching an employer to discuss the possibility of taking on apprentices. The factsheets provide concise information on a range of topics related to apprenticeships. They also highlight the key elements of a good quality apprenticeship. **www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/**



This title may also be made
available, on request,
in accessible electronic
formats or in Braille,
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