

Changing Lives Through Learning

Unionlearn Annual Report **2015**



unionlearn
with the TUC

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Section 1

Foreword

Despite all the challenges unionlearn continues to flourish. This year's report has some stunning headline figures:

- Over 230,000 learners supported – including many of the most disadvantaged who would never get the chance to learn without union help.
- Independent research from Leeds University showing that unionised workplaces receive twice as much training as non-unionised workplaces
- Over 3,000 reps were trained to support learning in the workplace, substantially up from last year.

Those are remarkable achievements for a year in which funding from BIS (the relevant government dept) was cut from £15.3M to £14M and both unions and unionlearn lost staff. As unions know all too well, the workplace climate remains very difficult: many employers are reluctant to agree much beyond the legal minimum of paid time off for training; jobs continue to be lost and far too many working people remain on vulnerable and precarious contracts.

But the union movement is nothing if not resilient. Unionlearn has reorganised to focus more resources on support to unions, to make more use of new technology and to simplify and streamline learning support wherever possible. Unions and BIS have welcomed the new structure which provides more support and more transparency, clarity and consistency.

The future of TUC Education is crucially important. Current government plans to remove funding pose a major threat which will undermine the capacity of unions to deliver the successful learning programme described in this Report which is doing so much to help union reps, employers and the wider economy. It is to be hoped that discussions with BIS are successful in achieving a change of course.

Of course much of the year was dominated by the General Election. It was striking how much of the campaigning focussed on skills, particularly apprenticeships. This recognition of the importance of skills, both for working people and the economy, is long overdue. The new government is committed to seeking 3M Apprentices. Unionlearn is equally keen to see more apprentices, particularly at level 3 or higher and for young people but quality must never be sacrificed to quantity. Unionlearn will also continue to support Traineeships. It was valuable that unionlearn was able to secure a commitment that these would be genuinely voluntary with no sanctions for those young

people who either did not want a Traineeship or for whom they turned out to be not right.

Within the workplace, unions are changing. The bi-annual survey of learning reps shows that one third are specialist ULRs but two thirds are general reps (e.g. Shop Stewards). This continues a trend towards more activity on learning within the general rep role. TUC Education training reflects this change; supporting learning has become an integral part of the training for all reps, though of course the specialist ULR course continues. Unions themselves are increasingly mainstreaming learning; it is a major and growing attraction to members and activists. The best way to a pay rise is through a skills rise.

Unionlearn reaches the learners that other parts of the skills system do not reach: over 17,000 learners on Basic English and Maths courses, achieving their first ever qualifications; another 35,000 on informal courses to build confidence after years away from learning.

But unionlearn supports all learners, not just the most disadvantaged. Over 35,000 learners were on Continual Professional Development courses; many of them graduates or professionals seeking to keep their skills up to date.

Another highlight of the year has been unionlearn's project to support those in mid career. Working people in their 40's and 50's are often overlooked. Yet they urgently need support in an age of lifelong learning and rapidly changing work. Unionlearn is pioneering a programme which has helped over 3,000 such learners to assess their skills and gain new skills. This kind of innovation is a constant theme. The year has also seen new projects on health and well-being, digital skills, apprenticeships, equality and registration of Technicians.

Looking back, it has been a challenging year but a story of continued success. Despite all the challenges ahead I am sure that unionlearn will continue to flourish.

Mary Bousted

Chair, unionlearn Board

Section 2

Delivery

2.1 The Union Learning Fund

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 is funded by BIS.

In 2014–2015 the Union Learning Fund supported 30 unions to deliver 34 projects at a total cost of just over £12m.

ULF performance report 2014–2015

Key headline figures:

ULF projects once again performed ahead of expectations and the total ULF learners via the union route was 161,982 which is 138.6 per cent of the annual profile. In addition 70 new learning centres were opened and 144 new learning agreements were signed with employers. Over 32,000 learners attended informal adult and community learning (IACL) both in workplace and

	profile	actual	variance
New ULRs completing stage 1, via ULF	1703	876	51.4
Total number of reps trained to support workplace learning	3,000	3,351	111.7
English and maths learners, via ULF	16,309	16,896	103.6
IACL learners, via ULF	24,950	35,245	141.3
Learners on CPD, via ULF	24,685	35,546	144.0
New Employer Learning Agreements, via ULF	188	144	76.6
Total ULF learners	116,862	161,982	138.6

community locations and over 35,000 learners took part in work related CPD. The economic climate and changes to the funding of HE and Level 3 learning have made it difficult for ULRs to obtain time off for learning hence only a 51 per cent achievement of the target profile and has continued to make it hard for unions to achieve the number of higher level learners compared to previous years (46 per cent of profile).

All 34 projects have been managed by the ULF team, through direct support and a variety of support events. The whole process of both bid assessment and project monitoring was thoroughly reviewed this year and a number of major changes made. The reporting process has been moved to a monthly cycle enabling much tighter support and management of projects. The bid development and assessment process is now much more rigorous with a transparent scoring system agreed with BIS and an enhanced programme of bid writing support. In addition much work has been done on assisting projects to demonstrate their value for money and impact. A survey was undertaken to review the support provided to unions by the unionlearn team and although overwhelmingly positive (80 per cent of respondents saying overall support was excellent or good) a number of areas for development were identified and are being actioned. 97 per cent of those responding were very happy or happy with the support provided to the ULF bidding process and 75 per cent thought the support on reporting and management information was excellent or good.

This year a Learner Survey was undertaken by projects representing 59 per cent of the ULF outcomes. The results demonstrate the impact and efficiency of ULF with over half of respondents (56 per cent) gaining qualifications, 82 per cent becoming more confident in their abilities and 40 per cent able to do their jobs better. 72 per cent of respondents said that their union was extremely/very important in supporting their learning. The survey also illustrated the importance of ESOL courses in enabling disadvantaged learners to gain skills that improve their employability and opportunity to progress with 21 per cent of ESOL learners reporting that their learning had helped them get a new job (compared to 6 per cent of all learners).

The survey also enabled the economic impact of ULF to be calculated and ULF generates £10.25 for every £1 invested with the benefits almost equally dispersed between employer and individual.

As described above there were significant changes to the ULF process this year with the introduction of a new bidding and scoring system and the team has worked hard to support unions in making their applications and 45 unions submitted bids and 32 of these were successful.

2.2 Regional performance in 2014

The six unionlearn regional teams were completely restructured in 2014 and the delivery team has worked hard to ensure that regions were supported and that common approaches and reporting systems were developed to ensure consistent and comparable data while recognising the diverse nature of the different regions. The regional teams continued to assist ULF projects and to link with regional providers and LEPs and other partnerships to promote learning opportunities and improve the responsiveness of the learning system to union learners needs.

Regional Report 2014/2015 Overview

	Annual Target	Supporting Targets	Events & Activities	Progress against Annual Target	Variation against Annual Target
Developing Union Capacity					
Reps supported into ongoing training	1500			2033	533
Other events aimed at providing follow on training (Number of events)			10	63	53
New Learning Centres Supported (Numbers of centres)	0			6	6
Supporting the most disadvantaged and at risk learners					
Functional Skills or ESOL	8000			2683	-5317
Maths/English initial assessments (Number of learners)		5000		2664	-2336
Digital Inclusion (Number of learners)	0			3978	3978
Mainstream Learning					
IACL (Number of learners)	5000			10355	5355
Level 2 and 3 (Number of learners)	2000			509	-1491
Level 4/HE (Number of learners)	1000			106	-894
New MOUs with universities including financial help			10	2	-8
New Service Level Agreements with colleges and others			10	4	-6
Apprentices (and Traineeships)					
Apprentices briefings (Number of events)			5	11	6

Apprentices: New employers engaged (Number of new employers engaged)			20	116	96
Innovation					
Well-being (Number of learners engaged)	0			102052	102052
Older learners (Number of learners engaged)	0			120	120
Climbing Frame Registrations (Number of registrations)		500		663	163
Engaging Employers					
Non-union organisations (Number of organisations)	0			108	108
Bargaining for learning. Learning Agreements and Collective Learning Funds (Number of new agreements)			10	7	-3
New Employers engaged			1030	680	-350
Media, Communications & Promotion					
Case studies (non apprenticeships) (Number of case studies written/produced)			20	56	36
Quality Awards (Number of new awards)	0			8	8
Learner Total	17500			22321	4821
IAG/use-it assessments		5500		3327	-2173

2.3 Highlights in 2014/15 include

Regional teams supported all 34 Union Learning Fund projects throughout the year and over 22,000 learners were supported by the regional teams, of which over 6500 were supported with Functional Skills and Digital Skills. The Use-IT platform developed by unionlearn to assist unions in engaging learners helped over 2500 initial assessments to be undertaken by regional teams.

Regions continue to support Adult Learning week, Learning at Work Day and the Celebration of Learning. Informal Adult and Community Learning is an important way of engaging new and hard to reach learners and over 10,000 adults in the regions were supported into making those first steps into learning. In addition more than 1000 learners were supported in achieving qualifications at levels 1, 2 or 3 and over 2000 adults were supported with Information Advice and Guidance.

680 new employers were engaged with and the regional teams worked with 100 employers to promote high quality apprenticeships. The economic climate has made employer engagement more difficult and Learning Agreements harder to negotiate. As previously reported the changes in funding for adult learning and HE have made it much more difficult to attract learners into these areas. Regions have, however, started to work in new areas (e.g. well-being at work – Learning being one of the NHS “5 Ways to Well-Being”) and in new ways (eg using handheld tablets to enable initial assessments at the workplace) which we hope will enable teams to engage and attract more people into learning. The Wellbeing programme (mainly in the Northern Region) has enabled over 100,000 short interventions at the workplace.

Section 3

TUC Education

3.1 Since the 1970s, it has been widely recognised by successive governments that it is in the interests of the economy, employers, workers and their unions that union representatives are properly trained to enable them to carry out their increasingly complex and sophisticated role in UK workplaces. TUC Education occupies a unique position within adult skills provision in that its core purpose concerns good industrial relations, equipping reps to represent workers and negotiate agreements that help ensure UK workplaces are safer, more stable and fair which in turn contributes to business success in reduced staff turnover and sickness and improved workplace performance and access to training. It has an unrivalled reach into Britain's workplaces to provide education and training in partnership with around 50 further education providers across the UK. And it makes an important contribution to building and maintaining strong unions.

Unions representing major public and private sector employers from across the economy send reps for training locally through the partnership, including from 2,800 private sector organisations which, taken together, represent a huge segment of the UK economy. Almost all unions participate in the programme and it is recognised for integrity, quality and innovation (the last fourteen consecutive Ofsted inspections of TUC Education departments in colleges across the UK were awarded Grade 1 "outstanding", unmatched in any other curriculum area in adult education).

Each year, thousands of union reps receive training from TUC Education. 2014 saw a further dip in numbers to 34,731, down 9,025 on the 2013 figure of 43,756. This remains a considerable programme of training, especially in the context of the extreme pressure unions and their members are under in many sectors, and it is a real tribute to the hard work of union education officers and TUC tutors.

The training of **trade union professional officers** has also been managed through TUC Education since the closure of the NEC in 2005, and numbers of officers trained each year since then average out at around 550, a considerable segment of the total complement. This year there has been a significant

increase, from 538 in 2013 to 844 in 2014. This is a reflection of the detailed work that continues to take place to keep the programme contemporary and relevant in a fast changing workplace environment. Courses with particularly good participation levels include employment law, negotiating skills and leadership and management.

3.2 Funding the programme

There is a long history of successive governments supporting the TUC delivery of training for workplace reps. Since 2001, fees have been remitted direct to colleges, providing for a cost effective formula which enables course fees to be met without the administrative burden of a grant. It is managed centrally and administered direct between the Skills Funding Agency and partner providers. This has been a real success, ensuring that tens of thousands of workplace reps could access quality training close to their workplaces without additional costs to unions or employers outside of the costs of paid release. During the period 2001–14 when fee remission was applied, a total of 647,824 union reps completed TUC courses through partner colleges, an outstanding contribution to UK employment relations and to building stronger unions.

Employers already support the programme through paid release arrangements, which was estimated in 2010 (using the average daily wage for that year) as a contribution of £18,596,909. Unions and the TUC make a significant contribution to TUC Education – TUC, for example, spends approximately £1,000,000 each year in managing the programme, designing and developing the curriculum, maintaining the accreditation arrangements, developing and supporting the college networks and the tutor teams. Unions invest heavily in their own education services and drive up demand, helping to maintain the contemporary nature of the programme and the issues and skills addressed within it. Strategic partnerships such as that with Macmillan Cancer Support and the Institute of Leadership and Management add further value to the workplace relationship.

A major concern is the funding crisis that has been imposed on the FE and skills sector with a 24 per cent cut taking effect during the current financial year. This follows five years of cumulative cuts to funding during the last Parliament that saw funding of the adult skills budget fall by 40 per cent, from £4.5Bn to £2.7Bn. Further cuts to adult FE and skills are anticipated, cuts which could destroy the fabric of FE upon which the current model of TUC Education

delivery depends. Several college partners, including long-term collaborators such as Stoke on Trent, Bradford and Solihull Colleges, have indicated that they no longer have the flexibility to continue to offer TUC Education courses, and considerable effort has been expended by TUC Regional Education Officers to secure alternative provision in those areas. We remain determined to offer training for workplace reps wherever they are and whatever their release arrangements.

Following extensive lobbying in 2014, the implementation of the decision to end the fee remission arrangements was postponed to August 2016. TUC is encouraging government to revisit this decision and work is taking place with all political parties to embed the arguments for public funding support for the training of workplace reps.

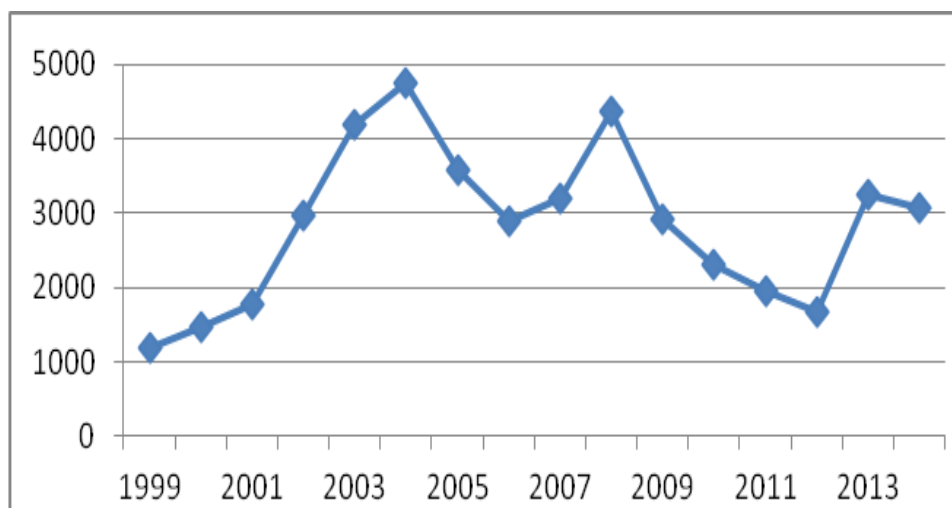
3.3 Union learning rep training

Numbers of ULRs trained over the past few years reflect the continuing difficulties particular to the ULR role, which have been exacerbated by the economic and employment relations climate and the need for unions to prioritise pressing industrial problems at the expense of this agenda. Release for training is difficult to obtain, despite the underpinning rights, and courses fail to recruit despite strong tutor input in drumming up support.

The union rep, or shop steward, holds the key role in the workplace in terms of the relationship with the employer, now more so than ever, as union workplace activity is directed towards workplace essentials. Union reps are bargaining in a much harsher economic climate than ever before and the learning and skills agenda will be most useful at the heart of union activity at a time when pay bargaining is yielding scant returns. The unionlearn Board decided in 2013 to take the learning agenda to the heart of union and employer workplace activity by mainstreaming it within the **Stage 1 Union Representatives' Course**, (the Shop Stewards programme) to avoid a marginalisation of this work during times very different to those in which the role was conceived and developed.

TUC Education launched the new programme in 2013 with a particular focus on embedding the key elements of the ULR role so as to make the most of union strengths at a time when union resources are at a premium. This meant that an additional 1,565 ULRs were trained in 2013, and 2014 produced a slightly higher number of 1,741. 749 ULRs were trained on the five day dedicated programme, (making 2,490 new ULRs trained) and 571 progressed to the Stage

2 programme making a total of 3,061 ULRs accessing training in 2014. This represents a strong showing and a considerable boost to the ULR levels of engagement.



3.4 TUC Education Online

The demand for online courses has continued to increase with 1,340 reps obtaining full qualifications online in 2014. The online offer allows reps in hard to reach geographical locations to access reps training as well s for those whom release arrangements continue to be problematic. In addition to this, over 6,500 reps have signed up for eNotes, a web-based education programme that keeps reps up to date with the key issues. New eNotes in 2014–15 include Migration: the Fight against Exploitation; Fit for Work; Bargaining for Skills, Domestic Violence; Supporting Mid Life Development; and Understanding Universal Credit. eNotes in development include Higher Learning; and ULRs Changing Lives through Learning.

Work is being undertaken to develop a MOOC version of Stage 1 Union Representatives course, an offer which can be made to all reps everywhere. This will be available by the end of 2015. www.tuceducation.org.uk

3.5 Getting on at work

TUC Education has redesigned and re-launched the Getting on at Work qualifications and materials and is responsible for the maintenance of them. These work-based qualifications are for adults who wish to progress in the workplace or are seeking new employment. The Getting on at Work qualifications can support the needs of a range of learners including:

- workers accessing union learning
- workers who want to develop skills for progressing at work
- workers facing change at work including redeployment
- as well as learners looking to enter or re-enter employment.

Getting on at Work is able to support learners who are working to progress towards a range of qualifications. The programme has two levels of qualification, Entry Level 3 and Level 1. There are a number of pathways with credits attached that are flexible to learners' needs.

There are 4 mandatory units totalling 6 credits:

- Approaches to learning
- Managing study
- Getting the most out of training
- Planning for progression.

Followed by 7 credits from units in one of the following pathways:

- Adapting to change
- Equality and diversity
- Financial capability at work
- Working with others
- Writing at work
- Progressing at work.

To end of 2014 Ofqual has recorded a total of 10,230 learners achieving a qualification in Getting on at Work: 3,547 at Entry Level and 6,683 at Level 1.

Current funding for providers for the two qualifications is through the adult skills budget. Materials for the qualifications are available from www.unionlearn.org.uk

3.6 New developments

The second edition of **Out at Work**, the TUC Education workbook designed to be used across the curriculum to support work on LGBT issues, was launched and joins the suite of equality workbooks including **Working Women, Tackling Racism** and **Disability at Work**.

A new workbook, **Mental Health at Work**, which will cover everything a rep needs to represent and support members at work will be launched in September 2015.

Section 4

Strategy

4.1 Policy and research

Unionlearn produced a range of policy and research papers over the last year, including a major new research report highlighting the advantages enjoyed by union members as regards access to learning and training in the workplace. Drawing on data from the Labour Force Survey since 2001, the report – *Skills and training: the union advantage* – found that the “union premium” strengthened in the years following the recession and that by 2013 nearly four in ten union members received job-related training compared to just over two in ten non-union members.

In addition the report shows that, once you strip out other factors (occupational status etc.), union members are a third more likely to receive regular training at work compared with non-unionised employees. The research also analysed the 2011 Workplace Employment Relations Survey and found the added benefit of a boost to wage levels and job security in those workplaces where a union advantage on training could be identified. Employers also reported an overall improvement in employee performance in such workplaces.

At the end of 2014 unionlearn undertook a survey of ULRs and other union reps involved in supporting learning and skills and published a research paper outlining the key findings. The findings included that union activity in the workplace in support of learning and skills is being mainstreamed across a wider cohort of union reps. Secondly, it is positive that this survey shows that the combined efforts of ULRs and other union reps are by and large sustaining strong levels of activity and impact on learning and skills in the workplace despite the increasing challenges faced by reps in recent years.

4.2 UKCES and sector bodies

There are four trade union Commissioners on the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES): Frances O’Grady, General Secretary of the TUC; Grahame Smith, General Secretary of the STUC; Gail Cartmail, Assistant General Secretary of Unite; and Dave Prentis, General Secretary of UNISON. Unionlearn coordinates regular briefings for the trade union Commissioners and also works closely with UKCES on a range of learning and skills initiatives.

Over the past year collaborative working with UKCES has focused on the ongoing reform of apprenticeships, the establishment of the new industrial partnerships, and unionlearn's contribution to the development of UKCES's key strategy document, *Growth through People*. The TUC and CBI both gave their support to *Growth through People*, which set out a strategy for action to improve skill levels and how they are developed in order to boost productivity, wages and social mobility. The report called "for employers to lead the way, working with unions and the government, to ensure the UK has the skilled workforce needed to create better jobs and fight off international competition".

As part of the second phase of the Employer Ownership Pilot, the UKCES has supported the development of new sector bodies called industrial partnerships. In 2014 eight industrial partnerships were launched covering the following sectors: aerospace, automotive, creative industries, energy, information economy, nuclear, science, and tunnelling. In November unionlearn produced a new e-note about the industrial partnerships and the Employer Ownership Pilot which set out key union priorities, including empowering employee voice through a social partnership approach.

Unionlearn has broadly welcomed the development of the new industrial partnerships and has actively supported union engagement, whilst pressing for the adoption of the social partnership arrangements found in other European countries. In April of this year the Director of unionlearn and other union officials attended a visit to Germany organised by UKCES to enable the Chairs of the industrial partnerships to learn about the role played by employers and unions in the German skills system.

Unionlearn and affiliated unions continue to be involved in joint projects with Sector Skills Councils and the new industrial partnerships, including through union representation on their Boards and engagement at other levels. Unionlearn provides a range of support services for union representatives, including briefings and regular network meetings, and also coordinates the nomination of officials from affiliated unions to sit on these sector bodies.

4.3 Bargaining for Skills and Learning Agreements

Negotiating with employers on learning and skills is at the heart of what unions do. Often employers and unions work together to agree a new training strategy, bringing learning into the workplace, with new approaches and sometimes new providers, and in particular involving employees who may never have had opportunities to learn before. This process is often greatly facilitated through the development of collective agreements (e.g. sections

covering apprenticeships) and the use of innovative Learning Agreements covering all aspects of union learning, including specifying time off for union learning reps and employees engaged in learning via this route. Many unions use their ULF projects to develop new negotiating mechanisms through such agreements and over the last year the projects have signed nearly 150 new learning agreements.

Over the past year unionlearn has worked closely with affiliated and non-affiliated unions in specific sectors (e.g. the health sector and finance sector) to support a greater degree of collaborative work with the aim of building the strategic union role on supporting workforce skills across these two particular sectors. A focus of these meetings has included how unionlearn can help unions in these sectors to maximise the impact of their ULF projects, including the important role of Learning Agreements.

4.4 Supporting the technician workforce

Unionlearn is currently leading a “Technician Pathways” project which is supporting progression for the technician workforce, recognising the valuable contribution they make both to the economy and to our lives more broadly. The primary aim of the project is to develop positive and sustainable relationships between professional bodies, trade unions, employers and others with a view to encouraging and supporting more workers to take up technician registration. Registration provides benefits in the form of access to continuous professional development (CPD), opportunities for progression, further training and recognition.

In support of this strategy unionlearn signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Science Council in 2014.

The unionlearn project entered a second phase in 2014 with an even greater focus on engaging more affiliated unions to undertake negotiating strategies at the workplace level to support technician registration and wider professional development. As part of the second phase unionlearn also supported Prospect to take forward a separate project of their own, also funded by the Gatsby Foundation, to engage employers to improve access to registration and CPD.

Over the past 12 months the unionlearn project has also worked closely with UNISON and Unite in support of technicians in the FE and HE sectors. Unionlearn also contributed to the EngTechNow campaign report highlighting the looming skills gap in engineering – *The Experience Gap* – which was

launched in the Houses of Parliament in March 2015. This event included formal signings of the EngTechNow charter, including by Prospect and TSSA.

4.5 Apprenticeships and other youth programmes

In recent years unionlearn has expanded its support for union engagement in Apprenticeships and a range of other youth skills initiatives, including where access to an apprenticeship is either not readily available or not appropriate to the individual's immediate circumstances. For example, the government launched Traineeships in 2012 for young people requiring further support before progressing to an Apprenticeship or other outcome. Unionlearn and affiliated unions are focused on ensuring a clear commitment by employers to high quality training and decent terms and conditions of employment in all youth skills programmes.

Over the year 6,561 Apprenticeships were supported by ULF funded projects, well up on the 5,971 reported in the previous year. This work has ranged across a number of employers and ULF projects continue to do well in this area, adding value to Apprenticeship programmes already in progress through strong union support for apprentices and promoting or campaigning for the recruitment of more (and higher quality) Apprenticeships with employers.

Unionlearn's "Apprenticeships are Union Business" project continues to play a key role in supporting union involvement in apprenticeships and other skills programmes that offer progression pathways to an Apprenticeship. The aims of the project are to help unions negotiate with employers to recruit more high quality apprentices, give training and resources to union reps about Apprenticeships, and help unions to recruit and support apprentices in the workplace. These principles are equally applied to all other youth skills programmes, especially Traineeships.

Over the past year the project has delivered a number of significant outcomes on Apprenticeships and other youth skills programmes, especially Traineeships. A comprehensive report – *Helping Young People into Work* – has been produced setting out the wide range of innovative union engagement strategies around Apprenticeships and Traineeships supported by unionlearn. Other major outcomes over the past year include the following:

- Unionlearn has continued to develop and promote TUC Charters on Apprenticeships and Traineeships. These charters contain best practice principles and help unions who are negotiating good quality training for

young people. Both providers and employers have used the charters to ensure that their schemes are in line with best practice.

- Promoting high quality traineeships and work experience placements through the impact of a highly publicised joint TUC/CBI Statement on Traineeships and joint work with the Prince's Trust and the Movement to Work initiative backed by the Cabinet Office.
- Hosting the annual Voice of Apprentices event during national apprenticeship week. Unionlearn's unique event offers apprentices the opportunity to give their thoughts on the Apprenticeship system. It is a useful way of determining unionlearn's future priorities and helps in campaigning for improvements to raise the quality of Apprenticeships.
- Participating in the Apprenticeship Trailblazers stakeholder workshops organised by the government and also supporting engagement of individual unions in a number of specific trailblazers.
- Facilitating discussions on Apprenticeships and Traineeships with a wide range of unions via unionlearn's working groups for the Finance Sector and the Health Sector.
- Supporting trade unions involved in negotiating Traineeship programmes with employers such as Babcock, Nissan and Zurich. Most major unions are now supporting high quality Traineeships.
- Participating in the steering group of an upcoming NHS e-mentoring programme, which includes work experience programmes for young people. Unionlearn is helping the health unions to promote the project and the opportunities available for young people.
- Responding to a number of major government consultations including: the BIS/DfE Traineeships funding consultation and a BIS/DfE workshop; and, the House of Commons Education Select Committee inquiry into Apprenticeships and Traineeship provision.
- Coordinating the hosting of a joint exhibition stand with several affiliated unions at the annual Skills Show in order to promote Apprenticeships as a high quality option for young people considering their career options.
- Unionlearn was invited to join a BIS Apprenticeships Advisory Group focusing on improving equality and diversity and has put forward a number of practical proposals to take this agenda forward.

The project has also continued to promote the unionlearn campaign – I’m an Apprentice, Value Me – which highlights the continuing exploitation of young people who are being paid below the national minimum wage rate for Apprenticeships. This campaign is aimed at ensuring that apprentices know what they are entitled to, that employers are aware of what they should be paying, and that the government is properly enforcing the apprentice minimum wage. The last apprentice pay survey undertaken by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills showed that around 1 in 7 apprentices were being paid below the legal minimum.

4.6 English, maths and ESOL

Through their ULF projects trade unions have continued to deliver the Government’s Functional Skills agenda by supporting learners working towards qualifications at entry level 1, 2, and 3, and achieving level 1 and 2 in English and maths. Over the past year ULF projects supported 16,896 English and maths learners, which was in excess of the annual target for the year. Unionlearn held a number of events and brought in key speakers to support ULF projects around this area of work, including highlighting how unions could draw on a number of national initiatives (e.g. National Numeracy Challenge and Citizen Maths).

In September 2014 the House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills Select Committee published the report of its inquiry on adult literacy and numeracy and this highlighted the positive role that unionlearn plays in this area. A key finding of the Select Committee report is that unionlearn has “achieved outstanding results at a fraction of the cost of full-time formal education” and that it is therefore imperative that the government continues to fund this provision.

Unionlearn contributed towards the *Making Maths and English Work for All* review undertaken by the Education and Training Foundation on behalf of the government. This reflected the views of 1,400 employers, learners and training organisations and other key stakeholders, including unions. The review was commissioned by BIS to explore how employers and learners view non-GCSE English and maths qualifications. Unionlearn organised a specific workshop for unions to feed back to the review to emphasise that the GCSE route is not always the most useful and motivating option for employers and adult learners.

Another major consultation was carried by NIACE on behalf of the government on implementation of the new English and maths GCSEs into post-16 education. Unionlearn’s submission was based on two workshops that were

run for unions and it highlighted the need for more flexible qualification options for adult learners. Unionlearn also produced a written response to a consultation by Ofqual on functional skills.

The Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) and BIS jointly set up the Behavioural Insights Centre for Adult Skills and Knowledge (ASK). Unionlearn has been working with the centre to explore ideas that embed the latest research in behavioural science within adult learning settings especially with regard to literacy and numeracy learning. The results will be used to make recommendations for policy that are scalable and sustainable.

Learning English in order to cope at work and in everyday life in the UK is important to those whose first language is not English. It is important that people in the workplace can communicate in spoken and written English and the provision of courses and learning in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is therefore paramount to ensure both workers and employers fully understand their roles and responsibilities and contribute to running a successful business.

During the past year unionlearn and the British Council, with the support of UNISON, USDAW and BFAWU, jointly produced an interactive module for union reps on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in the workplace. This self-study module contains information, activities and links to videos embedded in a downloadable PDF document and aims to help union reps think of how to build ESOL awareness and develop learning opportunities. Workshops have been delivered for union reps to support the publication of the module.

Section 5

Service

The service team includes core unionlearn support work such as financial management, collecting information on learning activity, supporting learners and communications including the unionlearn website. This section outlines the main work of the team.

5.1 Supporting Learners

The term Supporting Learners is used by unionlearn to describe the activities of union learning representatives (ULRs) and union reps when they are working with members to help them make choices about learning, to take up learning opportunities that are right for them and help them to progress in their jobs and careers. Whilst these activities involve some elements of information and advice they also include mentoring, coaching and signposting.

Unionlearn have produced a three year Strategy for Supporting Learners which includes information on the background to this area of work, a description of the unionlearn Supporting Learners Model and key achievements to date. The strategy outlines the main Supporting Learners themes and priorities for unionlearn for the next few years. The work of union learning representatives is vital to the success of this strategy. The ULRs are ideally placed to play a key role in supporting learners because they speak the same language as their members and have their trust. This in turn results in learners feeling fully supported in accessing the right courses for them or thinking about their career.

ULF project figures for the period from April 2014 to March 2015 for learner support referrals to other organisations was 24,228 just below the profiled figure of 24,264. The figure for Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) interventions (i.e. sessions where ULRs are advised and helped their members) was 102,936 well above the profiled figure of 60,085.

Unionlearn produce a bi-monthly e-newsletter entitled Supporting Learners News, designed to keep ULRs and reps up to date with news, developments and resources that will help support learners in the workplace.

Unionlearn with TUC Education have developed a number of eNotes (electronic briefings for reps) to help keep reps update to date on key workplace issues. Each eNote is a self-contained module that contains a mixture of text, video

and quizzes. The suite of Supporting Learners eNotes include; Supporting Learners, Supporting Mid-Life Development, the union learning Climbing Frame, Apprenticeships and Supporting Learners into Higher Learning.

<https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/supporting-learners>

5.2 The union learning Climbing Frame

The union learning Climbing Frame is a free website developed for Union Learning Reps to help support learners and promote learning in the workplace.

There are now over 6,000 registered users. Unionlearn has developed 20 learning themes with information on topics including personal development and career planning, supporting mid-life development, ICT and functional skills. The learning themes provide up-to-date information, downloadable resources and links to a variety of external websites.

ULRs are also able to record information from the sessions that they have with learners, helping them to set goals and actions and record achievements. The Climbing Frame website also includes a discussion forum, links to videos, a ULR Events section and case studies. ULRs are able to store their own notes on the Climbing Frame, upload documents and record their own learning activities and progression. There is also a free Climbing Frame app making the information accessible to reps wherever they are.

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

5.3 Supporting mid-life development

Unionlearn supports working people at all stages of their lives and supporting older workers and delivering mid-life development reviews has been steadily building momentum. The flexibility of the union support offer has helped people plan for their future life and career. During 2014/15 unionlearn continued to play a pivotal role by engaging 20 unions, with 295 ULRs and more than 2000 workers in mid-life review activities.

A number of high-quality resources have been developed to help support reps with their supporting mid-life development activities. These include the Climbing Frame learning theme, eNote and Value My Skills cards. The request for dissemination events has been extremely high evidencing the desire for this kind of support and how the involvement of the trade union can meet the demand of older working people in a way that many other organisations have not yet managed to do.

5.4 Higher learning

Unionlearn has a strategy for developing pathways to higher learning (higher education, whether at university or elsewhere and whether or not leading to a degree) for union learners, and has strategic agreements to take this forward. Some of these agreements include discount offers for union members. One of the most successful agreements is with Birkbeck University, this year 693 learners took up the union discount, a 24 per cent increase on the previous year.

For the period April 2014 to March 2015, ULF projects reported that the total number of higher education (HE) learners via the union route had fallen to 799, only 46.6 per cent of the profiled 1715. This is in line with the HE sector which has seen an overall downturn in students enrolling for part-time undergraduate courses.

Unionlearn and TUC Education have developed a new eNote on Supporting Learners into Higher Learning. It provides a range of information and resources about higher learning in the workplace to help reps work with learners, providers and employers. It includes some short videos, a funding quiz and a variety of interactive activities. To register for the eNote go to:

www.tuceducation.org.uk/eNotes

Unionlearn is a partner in The Open University's National Networks for Collaborative Outreach Project, which aims to extend outreach to adult learners through the production of free online information, advice and guidance and learning materials. The scope of the project includes the delivery of a new website, six tailored learning guides and a tracking, monitoring and evaluation framework that aims to measure the impact on learners.

The unionlearn website has a specific section entitled Higher Learning at Work which is useful for union members, representatives and working adults interested in progression to higher learning, including apprenticeships. It includes information about types of qualifications available, providers and workplace support. It also contains a number of case studies and links to other useful websites and resources. Further details can be found at:

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

5.5 Quality improvement

The unionlearn Quality Improvement Framework (QIF) has been in place for over four years and provides a tool to meet strategic priorities of supporting unions and learners in all aspects of learning, maintain and drive up our

professional standards, and provide for reflection on our work practice through self-assessment leading to a culture of continuous quality improvement. The framework has been designed as a flexible enabler to innovation by ensuring clear lines of accountability with consistency of approach at critical points in the rolling quality process calendar across all of our teams and services.

In recent months unionlearn has streamlined its financial and performance reporting processes, embedded a ULF project monthly reporting schedule and annual project self assessment, ensured a cohesive, independent auditing schedule of both ULF projects and internal business processes and management, and acted upon recommendations, established a uniform and consistent risk register, rolled out an internal communications strategy, as well as effectively adapted to the changing learning and skills landscape.

Unionlearn teams have completed the fifth annual self-assessment review (SAR). Year on year, the SAR results have shown a steady improvement despite considerable restructuring and continuing reductions in funding. The key identified areas for improvement in 2015/2016 are:

- develop closer integration between central support and regional teams
- continue to build our evidence base on impact and added value, learner progression and completions
- more staff support and training to meet changing needs and to develop and enhance the services offered to unions
- ensure the risk register and plans are reviewed and acted upon on a regular and systematic basis.

The six-stage model essentially allows for monitoring and review of the QIF. As part of unionlearn's commitment to continuous improvement, the Framework will be fully reviewed during the first half of 2015/2016, and the model and handbook amended to ensure it remains current and effective.

5.6 Quality Awards

The unionlearn Quality Award has been available to learning providers and careers information and advice support services since 2007. A third award was developed in 2011 for Apprenticeship programmes. The Award is given for courses, programmes and advice services that meet our good practice criteria and that help signpost union learning reps (ULRs) and learners to providers that are working successfully and flexibly with unions. The Award also celebrates the commitment and diligence of ULRs across the country who

promote training and learning in the workplace on behalf of union members. Over 100 providers have achieved the Award in England, Wales and Scotland.

Unionlearn reviewed the three Awards in 2014, and now one of the Awards is focused towards Employers for their Apprenticeship programmes. The awards for courses and programmes, and information and advice continue.

The assessment process has been streamlined to develop a smoother and time-efficient procedure for recipients and assessors, and to bring the Awards into line with current workplace learning agendas. The Award remains a standard by which the quality of provision for union learners can be judged and continues to be a valued and sought after accolade. For more information go to: <https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/quality-award>

5.7 Communications

Getting out a strong message about union work on learning and skills is a core task for unionlearn. All unionlearn teams are encouraged to look for stories about union success in the workplace on behalf of members so these can be shared and disseminated to our key audiences via the web and other channels. The communication strategy developed for 2014–15 has been key in identifying the messages and channels that would help engage with learners, unions, employers and enablers, encourage two-way dialogue and understanding, build profile, and build continued support for the union learning agenda.

The unionlearn website www.unionlearn.org.uk is 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 improvements to the website have been ongoing through the course of the year. These include a full redesign and rebranding of the website which have made a significant improvement to the look and layout of the site, improvements to the navigation making it a smoother user journey, speed, security, better menus and search functions. Monthly website hits are running at over 10,000 and traffic is steadily rising.

A new unionlearn blog gives our partners and unions, as well as staff members, a more personal and accessible insight into their work and activities.

A rise in accessibility to the internet through smart phones, tablets, computers, and other mobile devices has made engaging with social media even more invaluable for promoting and improving unionlearn's work and events.

Unionlearn has an ever growing presence on social media, with a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/tucunionlearn), a Twitter account [@unionlearn](https://twitter.com/unionlearn) and page on [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/unionlearn), all gaining an increase in followers over the year.

The Learning Rep magazine is continuing to be popular with our thousands of subscribers and is produced as an e-magazine, published three times a year. Producing the magazine in an online format allows us to use more of the latest technology (e.g. embedded links) to improve communication with ULRs. The e-magazine consists of inspirational stories, features on specific unions, events, partner information for ULRs and discussion on adult skills.

Through our email alerts service, we create and send email alerts that highlight and promote the work that unionlearn and our partners are conducting. This service has over 7000 registered subscribers. Users register through the unionlearn website, selecting individual subject areas of interest. We have made improvements to the groupings and data has been cleaned to reduce the number of bouncebacks.

The unionlearn annual conference took place on 28 October with over 400 delegates registered.

The theme of the 2014 conference was "Britain needs a skills rise", focusing on skills development through the learning of individuals and communities, meeting the needs of a modern workforce.

5.8 Finance

Total funding to unionlearn in 2014–15 was £16,746,000.

This funding is comprised of £1,000,000 from TUC; £15,367,000 from the Dept for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS); and £379,000 from other sources including the Skills Funding Agency, the Gatsby Foundation and the European Commission.

Funding from BIS is the largest component and is detailed below.

Budget Heading 2014/15	Budget £	Actual Outturn £
ULF – Grants to Unions	12,207,000	12,212,630
Delivery and Support of the National ULF Programme	2,028,857	2,083,504
Service, Quality and Standards	665,840	623,876
Strategy and Research	198,854	194,292
Trade Union Education	206,450	204,392
Agreed Additional Funds for April '14 Costs	60,000	57,802
TOTAL 2014/15	15,367,000	15,376,496

Appendix 1 Publications

TUC Education Courses for All Union Reps; TUC Education (various regions' booklets) – see more at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications
Equalities for Trade Union Representatives; TUC Diploma – see more at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/equalities-trade-union-representatives-per-centE2-per-cent80-per-cent93-tuc-diploma
Learning Rep magazine (various issues) – see more at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications
Climbing Frame Newsletter Issue 15 – see more at: https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/climbing-frame-newsletter-issue-15
Mid-Life Career Reviews: helping older workers plan their future; evaluation report – see more at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/midlife-career-reviews-helping-older-workers-plan-their-future-evaluation-report
Union Learning Fund Prospectus – see more at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/union-learning-fund-prospectus-20152016
Unionlearn annual report 2013-14 – see more at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/unionlearn-annual-report-2013-14
Learning & Skills Policy Update newsletter – see more at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/learning-skills-policy-update-newsletter-july-2014
Out at Work: a TUC Education workbook – see more at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/out-work
Work Experience Placements: guidance for reps – see more at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/work-experience-placements-guidance-reps
Falling off the Radar: the impact of living offline; conference report – see more at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/falling-radar-impact-living-line
The Role of Mentoring in Supporting Apprenticeships: unionlearn Research Paper 20 – see more at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/research-paper-20-role-mentoring-supporting-apprenticeships
Unionlearn briefing on BIS Adult Literacy and Numeracy report – see more at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/unionlearn-briefing-bis-adult-literacy-and-numeracy-report
Unionlearn Strategy for Supporting Learners (2014) – see more at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/unionlearn-strategy-supporting-learners-2014

TUC Education Annual Report 2014 – see more at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/tuc-education-annual-report-2014
Learning & Skills Policy Updates (various) – see more at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/
TUC Education Update – see more at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/tuc-education-update-november-2014
Technician Pathways – end of phase one project report – see more at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/technician-pathways-end-phase-one-project-report
Industrial Partnerships Briefing paper – see more at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/industrial-partnerships-briefing-paper-november-2014
Supporting Working Women Through the Menopause: guidance for union representatives – see more at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/supporting-working-women-through-menopause-guidance-union-representatives
ESOL: Language for Life and Work: interactive module for reps – see more at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/esol-english-life-and-work-module-reps
Technician Pathways trade union survey – see more at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/technician-pathways-trade-union-survey
Helping Young People into Work: raising the quality and quantity of Apprenticeships – see more at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/helping-young-people-work

Appendix 2 Contacts

Regional offices				
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Wales and Scotland have arrangements external to unionlearn. Contact details are:				
Wales			Scotland	
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W: www.unionlearn.org.uk F: https://www.facebook.com/tucunionlearn T: @unionlearn				

Appendix 3 Glossary

ESOL	English for speakers of other languages
UKCES	United Kingdom Commission on Employment and Skills
SERTUC	Southern and Eastern Region of the Trades Union Congress
IACL	Informal Adult and Community Learning
CPD	Continuing professional development
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 A–C at GCSE, i.e. expected achievement at age 16
Level 3	Broadly equivalent to A Level, ie, expected to achieve at age 18
ULR	Union learning representative
ULF	Union Learning Fund
ICT	Information and communication technology
FE	Further education (typically in local colleges)
HE	Higher education (typically in university)
IAG	Information, Advice and Guidance
BIS	Department for Business Innovation and Skills
QIF	Quality Improvement Framework
SAR	Self-Assessment Review
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Fund (previously the ESF)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding

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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