

# LEARN

EDITION 3

## WITH UNITE

[www.learnwithunite.org](http://www.learnwithunite.org)



# LEARNING GROWING WINNING

Union  
Learning  
Fund

with unionlearn





## OUR LIFELONG LEARNING VISION

### Unite's lifelong learning vision and our strategy for growth

- increase the life chances of its members in the workplace and the community using lifelong learning
- guarantee the high standard and quality of all its flexible learning opportunities
- use lifelong learning to develop its members so that they will be able to reach their full potential within the Unite organisation
- bring flexible learning opportunities into the heart of communities
- be the most progressive trade union organisation that will be able to create sustainable and innovative alternative education models
- use lifelong learning to enhance ongoing employment opportunities to its members through the member retention strategy
- measure the success of lifelong learning through its activities delivered within its strategy for growth.



Unite would like to take this opportunity to make the unionlearn team aware of our appreciation for the continued support of the Union Learning Fund, without which we could not have undertaken the projects presented in this publication.

Once again special thanks to our brothers in London & Eastern Region stores for their work producing drafts for proofreading.

The picture shows the London & Eastern Region banner on display at Ron Todd House.

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**Front cover photographs:** Unite learners Beata Babska (main picture), Mateusz Chojnicki (inset, middle) and Justyna Wisniewska (inset, right) at Argos Warehouse in Barton, Staffordshire, by Roy Peters; and Jariya Sarathana at DHL Iceland by Brian Davis

## HELLO...

**W**ith this third edition of Learn with Unite, you can see how what began as a one-off two years ago has now grown into a regular publication that captures our successes across the regions including Scotland and Wales and our lifelong learning project in Northern Ireland. And we can detect some patterns developing in this crucial area of our work.

One, there is a realisation that Unite membership is not just for when you face difficulties at work (although we can also help in those circumstances, of course – see below). Lifelong learning opportunities are an integral membership benefit and in turn encourage new members and aid retention.

Two, employers are increasingly acknowledging the efforts of our learning reps, such as the South-West employer in this edition pointing to a reduction of sickness absence since the introduction of ULR-led workplace learning. The 24 new learning agreements within the English regions since April 2014 have not only cemented the partnerships with those employers but also ensured that ULRs and branches are central to the decision-making processes.

Three, in many workplaces, our ULRs are working with common purpose alongside their counterparts from other recognised unions. Considering the struggles faced during the last five years, the learning steering groups and committees within large multi-union employers provide a suitable template from which the industrial structures might draw some inspiration!

Four, migrant workers are increasingly engaging with our learning offer and joining Unite as a result. This is, without doubt, being encouraged by our unique ESOL opportunity and is also opening a door to the recruitment of young members, which is essential to the vitality and future prosperity of our union.



Director of Education Jim Mowatt (left) with Head of Lifelong Learning Kenny Barron

Five, we are very successful in supporting members whose jobs are under threat. When we started to collect that data in retrospect recently, we discovered that Learn with Unite and our ULRs had supported 9,000 workers at risk of redundancy within the English regions alone since April 2012 – and we are still counting! Many of those workers were provided with new CVs, job-hunting skills and additional vocational qualifications that often helped them secure new jobs.

Six, although we remain strong through collectivist organising, having 1.4 million members does not mean that we have to lose sight of the needs of our individual members! Our ULRs are very well placed to provide one-to-one support where required, as the Northern Ireland piece proves.

I hope you enjoy Edition 3 and trust it will prove a useful tool within your workplace or community. ■

**Jim Mowatt**  
Director of Education





## BOOSTING SKILLS FOR COUNCIL WORKERS

The Unite branch at Kirklees Council is leading a multi-union learning programme to improve workers' Functional Skills with the full support of senior management at the West Yorkshire authority.

Unions and managers at Kirklees Council signed their first learning agreement during Adult Learners' Week in May 2013, and launched a revised and enhanced agreement that included facility time for learning reps in December 2014.

Since the original agreement, Unite (in partnership with GMB and UNISON) has been working with local provider Kirklees College, which has delivered courses in college and onsite at times to suit union members.

"Because of the shift patterns many of our learners work, the college has made a commitment to come in and work around our timetables when we get the numbers for a course," explains lead Unite learning rep (ULR) Richard Gilbert.

After using a mix of college and council venues for its four English courses in 2014, the project started two maths courses and another English course in the



Kirklees Council Works Convenor Lyall Singleton (far left) celebrates the new learning agreement with ULRs (back row, from left) Richard Gilbert, David Marlow and Sue Faulkner, alongside Director of Transformation Sue Redfern (front row, centre), flanked by Unite Learning Organiser Gill Campbell and Regional Learning Manager Gill Pearson



**Promoting learning to working people has been at the heart of the trade union movement from its early pioneering days"**

**Mohammad Taj, TUC President**

autumn using a training room in the building services department, where Richard works.

And since the council offered its own in-house training system to ULRs, the reps have been instrumental in keeping courses full, with two basic ICT courses booked to date and full access to a further two before the end of the 2013/14 financial year.

The success of the programme has attracted high-profile support from senior trade unionists: at the first anniversary celebrations of the original learning agreement in June 2014, the then TUC President (and Unite member) Mohammad Taj spoke of the union movement's commitment to learning and development.

"Promoting learning to working people has been at the heart of the trade union movement from its early pioneering days and continues today through the work of ULRs, who act as evangelists for learning and training among their colleagues and workmates," he said.

"Higher skills and training mean improved productivity and performance, better morale and a workforce that can adapt to new work processes: these benefits transfer to their home life as well."

Senior politicians have also lent support: addressing the Association of Colleges (AoC) national conference in November 2014, the then Business Secretary Vince Cable specifically singled out Kirklees College for outstanding work in adult and community learning (clarifying afterwards that this was partly in recognition of its work at the council).

After the original agreement was signed two years ago, the steering group programmed a series of awareness days to promote the agreement to managers in order to demonstrate the benefits of

## North East, Yorkshire and Humberside

releasing staff to enrol on courses that would help them improve their English, maths and computer skills.

"The key major heads of service are fully on board and the council has appointed managers to be service champions by using all the information we send them to facilitate all relevant learning needs," Richard explains.

Given the diverse nature of the local authority workforce, the group has prioritised encouraging the benefits of continued joint working with all the unions at the council.

Richard currently chairs the joint steering group, which meets every six weeks to oversee the learning programme. "There is a really good team spirit now: everyone has an equal say, whether you're a manager or a rep," he says.

Ruth Redfern, who is director of transformation and change at the authority, says the council is very proud of its work with the unions on Functional Skills.

"The initiative was launched in recognition of the importance of these skills both at home and at work, the stigma that can be attached to it, and the need to inspire and motivate individuals who may have been put off from learning because of their previous experience at school or perhaps because they have not undertaken any formal learning for a long time," Ruth says.

"I see lots of benefits for the council through the special role union learning representatives (ULRs) are playing to encourage employees to come forward to develop their English and maths skills: we are benefiting from the ULRs' role as ambassadors for learning and training among their colleagues."

In common with local authorities across the country, Kirklees faces challenging times in the immediate future – but the council is responding by supporting the Unite-led programme of workplace learning in order to demonstrate that it not only values its staff but aims to motivate and empower them, Ruth says.

"We want to get the best from them as an organisation and at the same time to get the best for them as individuals: for some it starts with developing their essential 'life' skills and I am pleased to say the unions in Kirklees are playing a big part in this," she says. ■



Unite has established itself as the main player in union-led learning within the north-west region of NHS Property Services.



*Left: ULRs Monika Rostkowska and Jon Wood (standing) are delivering new learning opportunities for NHS Property Services staff in the North-West, thanks to the national agreement signed in 2013 by Unite Health National Officer Barrie Brown (pictured right)*

## LEADING ON LEARNING FOR NHS WORKERS

**W**hen NHS Property Services (NHSPS) became the first national NHS organisation to sign a union learning agreement in September 2013, Unite set about establishing itself as the go-to union on learning within the regional part of the facilities management arm of the NHS.

“The starting point was to recruit and develop a team of union learning reps (ULRs) in the Oldham and Manchester area,” explains Unite lead workplace rep Mike Powell, who works as a specialist workplace craftsman for NHSPS in Oldham.

“Then with the agreement of NHS Property Services and Staff Side, we carried out a learning needs assessment in Greater Manchester, where our reps interviewed around 200 members of staff about the skills they needed.”

Since IT skills was a top priority for many staff, at both basic and advanced levels, Unite learning rep Sue Langley set up a mini training suite in a vacant office at Werneth Medical Centre in Oldham, where she began training staff on how

to use the NHS IT system to book annual leave, record sickness absence and check emails.

Manchester-based ULR Monika Rostkowska (who left her native Poland to work in the UK 10 years ago) has further developed the learning offer with the help of fellow ULRs Shabana Kosser and Jon Wood.

Using the IT facilities in the Unite office in Salford, the team has delivered the Basic IT course on the Learn My Way digital platform twice in recent months, first for caretakers, then for domestic staff.

“The training sessions for caretakers were an amazing success, and the outcome was fantastic: the course has not only improved their life at work by showing them how to book time off and read emails but also made their home lives easier now that they can use the internet and shop online,” Monika says.

Development of the learning programme has been further helped by Jon Wood securing the support of his boss, who is the regional training consultant.

“Jon’s manager has been an asset to the ULRs with his support and guidance and

even though he had never been in a union in his life, he was so impressed with our work that he decided to join Unite,” Mike says.

In Oldham, ULRs Shabana Kosser and Ruth Brankin are currently creating a new union learning room by refurbishing a small office in the Integrated Care Centre (ICC), the central health, well-being and social care development facility that employs around 500 staff.

“Once Shabana and Ruth have set up the learning suite at the ICC Oldham, we aim to launch it with an open day – and use it to promote our union,” Mike says.

When 150 non-unionised domestic staff from a Manchester agency were TUPE-transferred into NHSPS late last year, Mike and the team saw another great opportunity to establish Unite as the key learning union.

All eight reps plus Learning Organiser Steve Hewitt attended three staff consultations and a full induction day held at a Manchester hotel, where the team distributed Learn With Unite packs and some union merchandise from the Unite stall.

The team also secured a slot at the end of the inductions for Monika and Sue to discuss the learning agreement and inform the new staff about the learning opportunities that were available to them now they were on the NHSPS payroll.



NHS PROPERTY SERVICES

Once again, the learning need is clear within a group that includes so many migrant workers: around two-thirds of the new staff have Functional Skills issues and at least half of them have problems understanding English.

“One thing about migrant workers is that they have travelled sometimes three-quarters of the way around the world to get here to gain qualifications and better paid jobs,” says Steve.

Taking the Unite learning message out to the new staff with the support of the regional learning team has paid off, Mike says. “As well as raising Unite’s profile as the union of choice, we have signed up new members and recruited a workplace rep,” he says.

“We could not have been achieved this without the fantastic support of the Learning Organisers, particularly Steve Hewitt,” Mike says.

The hard work of the ULRs was recognised in April when the team was shortlisted in this year’s Health Estates & Facilities Management Association awards.

Since becoming a ULR in 2014, Monika has been happy to help people gain new skills. “I was attracted to the ULR role because I really wanted to get involved in learning and development and because I wanted to support people who are in the same situation I am, where English is not our first language,” she says. “When learners thank you for showing them how to find information online that they could not do before, it gives you a nice feeling of fulfilment.” ■



**The course has not only improved their life at work by showing them how to book time off and read emails but also made their home lives easier”**

Monika Rostkowska

# IT'S ABOUT FAIRNESS FOR ALL

Helping Argos workers at the retail firm's West Midlands distribution hub improve their English, maths and IT skills is paying off for Unite's organisation onsite.

**W**hen Stuart Webb took on the learning rep role at the Argos distribution and logistics site in Barton, Staffordshire, he believed learning could not only engage existing members but reach out to people who didn't yet carry a Unite card – and he has been proved right.

"I had been a steward for a long time, but I saw that union learning had the potential to engage people, members and non-members, and show them what a modern trade union is about these days," he says.

Two years later, and he has helped turn that idea into reality. "People have embraced learning with Unite: learning has helped show them that the union is pro-active in seeking fairness and justice for everyone," he says.

The high level of interest in the learning needs survey Stuart organised immediately after becoming a ULR was a sign of things to come.

"Most people were keen on English and maths, but there was also a lot of interest in IT: although we are an automated warehouse and can all use IT, people were keen to gain a qualification that confirmed what they were capable of doing and could move on to the next level," he says.

Once the survey results had been assimilated, Stuart invited the local college to come on site and conduct initial assessments of everyone interested in taking the courses on offer.

Keen to ensure workers on all three shift

patterns have the opportunity to improve their skills, the branch arranges courses onsite around shift changeovers, so workers can study either before they start work or after they finish.

And as part of an existing learning agreement with the company, Argos gives one hour's paid release to every learner who matches that with an hour of their own time.

For one member, the branch's commitment to learning has helped them avoid disciplinary issues that were rooted – as it turned out – in undiagnosed dyslexia.

"Since the college screening confirmed they had dyslexia, we have put a support plan in place, the company have made adjustments, and now our member is a lot more confident, more involved and more productive," Stuart reveals.



**Relations between the two sides are as good as they have ever been – and I credit learning with helping make that change"**

*Stuart Webb*



ROY PETERS



## One thing leads to another at Carter Retail

Claire Benham was not a member of Unite when the union's regional lifelong learning and education teams arrived at her workplace to deliver a series of training sessions on equality and dignity at work last year.

But now she not only carries a Unite membership card but is also keen to become a union learning rep at Carter Retail Equipment, which manufactures refrigerated display equipment for the retail sector.

The dignity at work sessions, delivered to all management and staff at Carter's Birmingham headquarters, were followed by a Level 1 ITQ course, which was delivered onsite by the regional lifelong learning team.

Claire, who was one of 25 learners who gained the qualification in 2014, admits the ITQ course was far more interesting than she expected it be. "I really enjoyed learning with my work colleagues in a relaxed environment," she says.

Fellow learner Gary Ashmore is now more confident sending emails and using the internet, while Rob O'Malley said the confidence he gained on the course means he is able to help his children

with their homework for the first time.

With her confidence boosted by completing the course, Claire is keen to move on to the Level 2 ITQ course through the LearnWithUnite platform, partly because it will help her give more support to the one of her three children who has dyslexia.

Since taking the course, Claire has not only joined Unite but has also volunteered to take on the union learning rep (ULR) role at Carter's.

"I feel I will be able to support and encourage my colleagues to take up learning opportunities even if they are a bit nervous, as I can share my experience and how I have benefited," she says.

"This is a great example of joined-up working between the regional education and learning teams going into a company together to promote equality and then moving on to deliver IT training that greatly benefits our members as well as raising the profile of Unite," says Learning Organiser Pat Campbell.



The branch is now looking into providing courses in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) to address the needs of colleagues from Eastern Europe and Asia.

Developing the learning agenda is paying off for union organisation onsite, Stuart says. "Membership retention on this site has been up and down in the past, but numbers are much more stable now, plus people are more aware of who is who in the branch – the popularity of the union has been vastly improved."

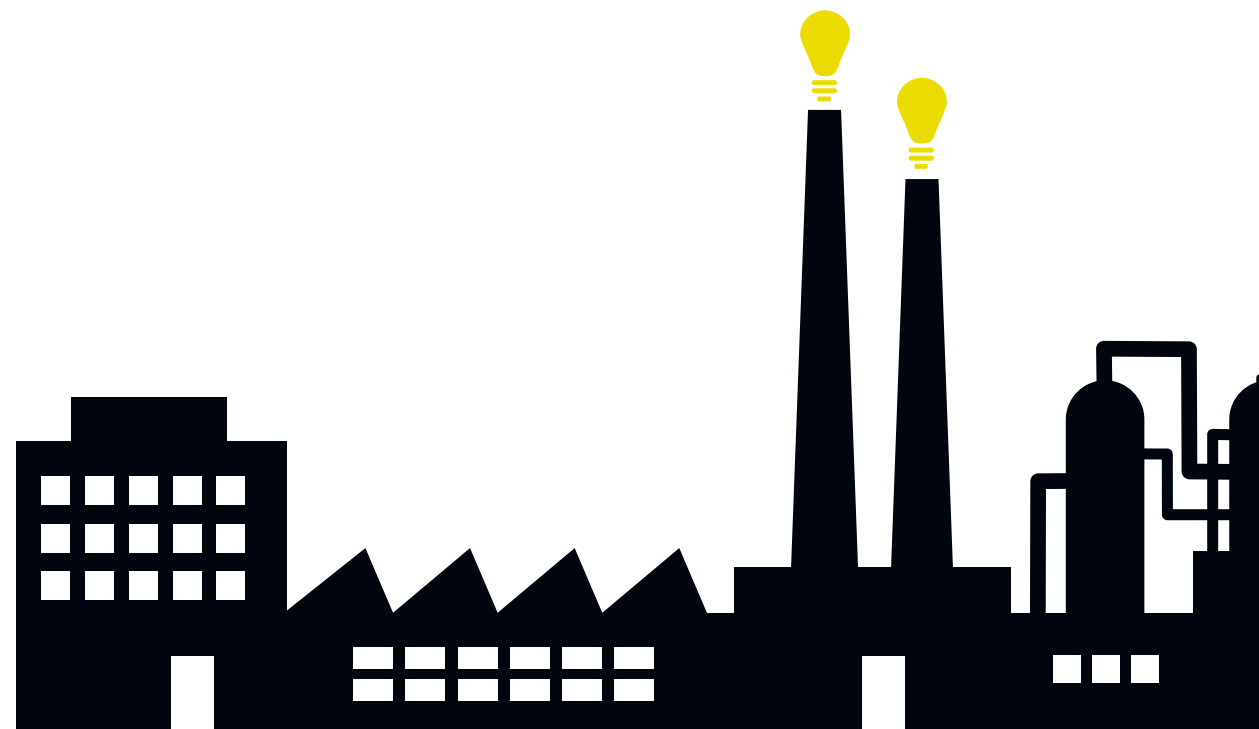
Learning has also helped the branch develop new activists. While there are currently six learning reps in addition to Stuart, two for each shift, another half dozen activists are familiar with the work since they

started as ULRs and have since moved on to become stewards, health and safety or equality reps.

And championing the learning agenda has also played a role in improving industrial relations at the site, Stuart says.

"We have had some difficult times in the past, but of late the talks between management and union are more productive, the direction we are going in is a lot more productive, and relations between the union and management are as good as they have ever been – and I credit learning with helping make that change," he says. "None of this would be possible without a strong network of ULRs, learning organisers and supportive providers, working together to achieve." ■





# FOOD WORKERS DEVELOP A TASTE FOR LEARNING

Unite's regional learning team is serving up a creative solution to meet the need for English language training at a Nottingham pizza-making plant.

**W**orkers at The Pizza Factory in Nottingham, who stone-bake 1.2 million supermarket and own-brand pizzas every week, have got the chance to start on their learning journeys, thanks to Unite's regional learning team.

With many workers from Asia and Eastern Europe, and the company committed to developing its workforce, courses in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) were a top priority when Unite Learning Organisers Gary O'Donnell and Magdalena Janaszek started talking to Unite learning reps and the HR department in summer 2014.

With no government funding for ESOL classes available, the obvious solution was to train a set of workers as facilitators who could deliver classes using the resources available on the LearnWithUnite platform.

Magda and Gary ran an initial session for a group of union activists and a member of the training department in October 2014 to show them how the whole platform works, with particular attention to its ESOL resources.

"It is a user-friendly platform, but it was very useful to be able to show everyone technical issues that are not

always easy to explain, as well as take them through the content of the lessons," Magdalena explains.

From that initial session, six reps (half of them ULRs) have volunteered to work as facilitators at the workplace.

"They are people who have a good understanding of the English language who



**Offering people whose first language is not English something developed by Unite shows that we are here to give the best possible opportunity to working people"**

Gary O'Donnell



## Harnessing social media skills

Retired members in the East Midlands are gaining social media skills to help them spread the Unite message, with the support of members of the regional learning team and unionlearn.

"I wanted to build on the IT course we had already done through the union by showing people the importance of social media like Facebook and Twitter to help us keep in touch with each other and build our organisation," explains Mike McLoughlin, secretary of the retired members' regional coordinating committee.

"So I invited Learning Organiser Gary O'Donnell to deliver a session on why as retired members should be using social media."

Gary delivered a two-hour seminar on the benefits of social media, showing the 15 retired member activists how to set up individual Facebook accounts, and explaining



some of the basics such as sending and confirming friend requests.

"They all enjoyed it, and at the end

they said they wanted to learn how to use new media, so we organised a full training session at the Leicester Unite office with unionlearn tutor Alan Cook," Gary explains.

Nine retired members joined the Leicester course in November 2014, and by the end of day they were familiar with individual Facebook pages, closed groups, the Messenger app, and how to use Facebook's tools to communicate with each other.

"As a member of Unite myself, delivering courses like this to retired members is giving something back, and from a personal perspective, it's some of the most enjoyable and rewarding work I have done," Alan says.

would like to help their colleagues express themselves better," Magdalena says.

To continue preparations for the ESOL programme, the Unite team organised a training session in January 2015 for the six facilitators and six learners to help them get familiar with the platform and learn good practice to help ESOL students get the most out of the classes.

"If you read out the instructions, you cannot assume that everyone in the class will understand a task first time: if people don't understand what is being said, often they will just smile and look at you with confidence!" Magdalena says.

"That's why it's good practice to ask each person, 'Do you know what that means?' or 'Can you tell me what you have to do in this task?' because if they don't understand, they won't be able to complete the task, and then they won't feel comfortable or confident and

might not want to take part in classes in the future."

And the future is what it's all about: the aim of the classes is to give migrant workers the tools they will need to drive their development by moving on to Functional Skills courses to further improve their English and maths.

"As long as they have enough English to understand what is being said and what they are being asked to do, they will have many opportunities to educate themselves through Unite or a learning provider like a Further Education (FE) college – English is the key," Magdalena says.

Delivering the ESOL training will help Unite build its strength in the workplace, Gary says. "Engaging people in the workforce whose first language is not English and offering them something that has been developed by Unite shows that we are here to give the best possible opportunity to working people," he says. ■



## FRESH IDEAS DELIVER AT DHL ICELAND

A positive partnership at DHL Iceland in north London has literally brought learning in from the cold.

**W**hen Unite shop steward Steve Callear decided to focus all his union energy on the learning rep role at the DHL Iceland site in Enfield Lock four years ago, he knew he was facing a major challenge.

The learning centre at the back of the north London site was a cold, windowless space with no internet connection, and only the most dedicated learners were willing to put up with the less than ideal conditions.

And there were further obstacles to widening participation: workplace learning was not a key focus for the previous management team, and the original learning provider withdrew in search of more profitable work.

But with close to 40 years' experience as a union rep, Steve wasn't going to let any of that get him down.

"I was already a steward and a safety rep when I became a ULR, but I decided to devote myself to the learning centre because that's what needed most help," he recalls.

The potential was enormous since the need onsite was clear: of the 600 staff, including 150 agency workers, a huge percentage were from Eastern Europe and elsewhere and their lack of fluent English language skills created communication

problems both with co-workers and managers.

Everything began to change just over a year ago, when a new management team committed to working with Unite on the learning agenda took over, and the union began working with the experienced and committed trade union education department at the College of Haringey, Enfield and North-East London (CONEL).

New Operations Manager Richard Dannatt and his team had seen the benefits of an active workplace learning programme on other DHL sites and, having experienced the benefits first hand, they were eager to work with Steve to achieve something similar at Enfield Lock.

"Learning is such an easy way to give something back to people, and improving people's maths and English always helps both operationally and from a business point of view," Richard says.

Working with Unite on the learning agenda has helped create a more successful programme, he says.

"Reaching out through the union shows that this is a genuine approach, you don't have that suspicion of what we're doing, people asking, 'Why are the managers trying to get

*Learning at DHL Enfield Lock is blossoming with the help of (from left) DHL Operations Manager Richard Dannatt and ULR Steve Callear, backed by Learning Organiser Micky Herbert*

me to learn English?" he points out.

"And while we have trainers to teach you how to drive a forklift truck, we are not qualified to teach you how to use English properly or how to do maths, whereas Unite is the ideal partner who can go out and find us the resources we need, which suits us perfectly."

Unite Learning Organiser Micky Herbert, who worked closely with Steve to bring effective learning back to life at the Enfield site, is full of praise for the new management team and its commitment to workplace learning on site.

"The change at the top has made all the difference: the new management team is completely onboard and supportive, which is fantastic," Micky says.

The first set of Functional Skills classes started in March 2014, targeted at the predominantly Eastern European workers for whom English is not their first language. With two-hour classes twice a week onsite, 40 people have completed qualifications from entry level up to Level 2.

"We have great tutors from CONEL: they are fantastic, they love coming to Enfield Lock and they have a great rapport with the learners," Micky says.

The feedback from the learners to date has been positive, according to CONEL tutor Malcolm Seward. "A lot of the work is done with people who have English as a second language and want to improve it for all sorts of reasons," he explains.

Steve has now got the help of two Polish Unite members who have signed up as ULRs. "It really makes a difference because they know how the guys need a bit of pushing to carry on sometimes," Steve says.

And the management team is so committed



**"I used to feel like my feet were stuck in cement before, but now it's like I'm on ice skates!"**

**Steve Callear**

## London & Eastern

to workforce development that it has built a new learning centre not once but twice since courses resumed in March 2014.

"The company promised they would build us a new learning centre at the front of the building and that was officially opened in October 2014," says Micky.

"When they had to turn that into a locker room, they not only built a brand new learning centre that was finished in January 2015, but they added a new union office as well."

To promote a new raft of courses that got underway in February 2015, the union organised an open day onsite in December 2014, when it signed up 132 people for English and IT courses, as well as maths and a few for business studies.

"24.7 Recruitment Services, the agency that provides cleaning and catering workers, is now onboard, which is a major breakthrough, so ten of their staff are currently attending our weekly English classes, and are getting 50 per cent paid release," Micky says.

Support for learning does not only come from the top: Steve says that his own line manager is very supportive of the learning agenda, and that is true for everyone in the management chain.

In fact, one of the current managers is so impressed that he is determined to help set up a learning centre wherever he finds himself posted next in the company.

For Richard Dannatt, the impact of workplace learning is clear. "A year ago, there were people I would have struggled to hold a proper conversation with because their English wasn't that good and my Polish isn't that great!" he says.

"But now I can talk to them about their achievements in the learning centre, and that is a very powerful thing that helps from an operations point of view and an engagement point of view."

And Steve Callear is glad to be working with the Enfield management team to create opportunities for personal and professional development that the whole site can feel positive about. "I used to feel like my feet were stuck in cement before, but now it's like I'm on ice skates!" Steve says. ■





# NEW SKILLS FOR THE MEN AND WOMEN FROM THE PRU

Unite members at the Reading headquarters of financial services firm Prudential are using distance learning to help them advance their careers and look after their families.

Unite members at the Reading offices of financial services firm Prudential are improving their understanding of health, mental health and social care issues by taking distance learning Vocationally Related Qualifications (VRQs) through the union.

Half a dozen members directly employed by Prudential are currently undertaking the courses, with another dozen due to start later in 2015. In addition, eight members who work for Capita in the same building have already completed Unite's Certificate in Equality & Diversity (Level 2) and 10 have signed up for the VRQ offer (see box, right).

Unite activists in the branch (which organises both Prudential and Capita staff) began promoting the union's learning offer with an event in the building in summer 2014.

"We used the event to raise awareness of the variety of learning available to members through Unite, and what turned out to be most popular were the free NVQs, which are delivered by POA Learning," explains

Unite members at Prudential/Capita are gaining skills thanks to the teamwork by Capita joint senior workplace reps Graeme Hoskin (back, left) and Jan Bastable (front, right) and Prudential senior workplace rep Steve O'Donnell (back, right) and ULR Suzelle French



BRIAN DAVIS

Steve O'Donnell, senior workplace rep at Prudential.

"What really stimulated a lot of interest were the courses that were not work-related, such as mental health awareness, nutrition and health, management of diabetes and end-of-life care: many people are looking to support their families outside the workplace."

While Prudential gave people paid release to attend induction and enrolment, the courses themselves are



**We used the event to raise awareness of the variety of learning available to members through Unite"**

Steve O'Donnell



## Capita staff go the distance

Distance learning has proved popular among staff who work for Capita in Reading, explains Unite senior workplace rep Jan Bastable. (Capita members share the same building as Prudential colleagues after an outsourcing operation by Prudential several years ago.)

Jan began by enrolling eight members (herself included) on Unite's own equality and diversity course after learning about the Level 2 certificate from Equality, Diversity & Community Coordinator Lesley Stevenson at the union's national equality conference in 2014.

"We thought the course would be a good place to start, especially because some of our members haven't done any formal studying for 20-odd years," Jan says.

The branch was proved right. All eight who enrolled in the first cohort completed their qualification in

September 2014, and their feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

"People were worried they wouldn't have enough time to undertake the course in addition to their existing commitments, so they were really pleased to find that they could manage work and home and a bit of study as well," Jan says.

Jan is hopeful that the initiative will play its part in helping secure the national learning agreement with Capita that Unite is currently working hard to achieve.

Like fellow Unite rep Steve O'Donnell at Prudential, Jan knows that the learning offer has changed people's perceptions of the union.

"Several people have told me that they now realise the union is not just about when they are in trouble or trying to get a pay rise – there's a lot of stuff out there that we can do to help them," Jan says.

undertaken in people's own time, using materials and workbooks sent to them directly by the provider.

"We have offered to facilitate a meeting for members on the same course to help them overcome any problems they might have returning to learning," Steve says.

"I know some of the learners stay in touch about the course over email because one of them recently told me how rewarding it was to put in a lot of work and share ideas with other people doing the same course, even if that's not in a formal meeting."

Steve hopes that the first group will act as informal ambassadors for learning at Prudential once they have completed their qualifications, and the branch is already planning a formal celebration event that Steve hopes will also help further raise the profile of learning in the building.

"Some people may have been put off by thinking they won't have time, but when this first group gets through

we will be able to say, 'Talk to these people, they have done it, learn from their experience'," he says.

The second group of Prudential learners includes members who have opted for some vocational qualifications, including team leading. "We hope that will give them an extra string to their bows that will allow them to move on in their careers," Steve says.

"We know that the world has changed: the days of a job for life have gone and many people have more caring responsibilities for family members now," says Steve.

"What we are showing to people is that Unite is not only there to fight battles and deal with disciplinaries, we are here to help enhance our members' lives both from a personal and a work perspective: and people were generally unaware that we offered this, so learning has opened their eyes to a different idea about who we are." ■



# MAKING POSITIVE PROGRESS IN PLYMOUTH

Union members at Plymouth City Council (PCC) are gaining new workplace learning qualifications, thanks to the sterling work of Unite learning rep Sam Quigley and the multi-union learning agreement signed two years ago.

**A**fter unions and management at Plymouth City Council promoted their 2013 learning agreement with roadshows at the south-west local authority's six main depots, they decided to launch a pilot scheme in the environmental services operation at Prince Rock and in domiciliary care.

Unite took the lead in negotiations with managers to secure learners would be given paid release to enable them to take part in Functional Skills courses.

The first group of six staff completed their English Level 1 course in February 2014, while the first ITQ course finished three months later in May – a firm foundation that was celebrated with a civic centre event in June attended by the senior elected members, followed by two days of events to further promote learning at the authority.

There are English Level 1 and 2 courses, Maths Level 1 and 2 and ITQ Level 1 courses running regularly, with more than three dozen union members studying, the vast majority of whom are members of Unite.

Sam Quigley became a ULR two years ago when his work as a workplace rep revealed that large numbers of his colleagues struggled to fill in forms to, for example, log accidents or near-misses.

"It really shocked me to see that people's literacy and numeracy issues were keeping them from doing 101 things, including filling out an application form to get another job, or lacked the IT skills to access the



Plymouth council learners (from top) Lucas Wybranec, Scott Gallagher and Dean Barlow



**Without the union, I don't think I would have done this or would have known about what training was available to me"**

Lucas Wybranec

internet and get really good offers online," he recalls.

Sam knew that many of the very union members who would most benefit from the new learning opportunities would not sign up if they had to do so in an office away from their own work environment they felt comfortable in.

So he made one-to-one contact with as many individuals as he could himself, personally collecting two-thirds of all the expressions of interest in learning that council staff completed across the authority.

"We were able to demonstrate that if you want people to engage with learning at whatever level, the way to do it is by having that personal one-to-one contact so you can overcome objections and deal with any concerns on an individual basis," he says.

Sam's contribution to the success of the programme has been massive, according to Unite Learning Organiser Nigel Jones. "He has concentrated on the area where he works, which is Streetscene, and he has been absolutely fantastic with getting people into learning – he's been brilliant," Nigel says.

Many of Sam's co-workers agree. "Sam was pivotal in getting me on the courses," says 33-year-old Lucas Wybranec, who moved to the UK from Poland a decade ago, with a range of technical qualifications from his homeland that are not recognised in this country.

With Sam's encouragement, he has achieved his Level 1 English & Maths, Team Leading Level 2 and is currently studying for his Level 2 Maths and has started the Level 3 management course.

"Without the union, I don't think I would have done this or would have known about what training was available to me," he says. "Gaining these new skills has made me more confident and a better communicator and I have a better understanding of people's needs and expectations."

Scott Gallagher also took up learning after hearing about the courses on offer through Sam. "I was expelled from school for being a bit of a tearaway and never got any qualifications but now that I have grown up a bit, I thought I would try to improve myself," he says.

Scott started with English Level 1, moved on to Level 2, completed maths and ICT courses and has now embarked on a Level 3 management course now that he realises he has what it takes to progress.

"It's something I would never have thought possible a year ago, but completing my English and maths has given me the confidence to have a go," he says.

Leading the workplace learning programme has not only raised Unite's profile at the council but also enabled it to recruit and retain members, Sam says.

"We have gained new members, and when existing members who were on the cusp would ask, 'What has the union done for me?' we have been able to show them the learning programme," he says.

Street Services Assistant Director Simon Dale has been behind the initiative since Sam first broached the idea with him, having witnessed for himself the positive effect Functional Skills courses could have in his previous post at Stockton-on-Tees.

"When Sam first approached me, I thought it was a really good initiative: I applaud Unite for launching this programme and creating the capacity to make it happen," he says.

Learning has paid off for the authority, he points out. Morale is improving, productivity is improving, and more people are completing better quality accident and near-miss reports, and sickness absence has dropped from 13 days per employee per year to around eight days, which is the average across the council.

"We are seeing big improvements, and although they are not only because of the learning, they have been backed up by the learning, so for me it's a massive positive," Simon says. ■

ALL PHOTOS: NIGEL JONES

# REMOVING BARRIERS TO DISABLED DEVELOPMENT

Unite is helping disabled workers, trainees and school pupils improve their skills by supporting onsite learning at a new ICT operation in the Rhondda.

Ever since E-cycle was created through a management buyout of the former Remploy computer recycling business in the Rhondda, workplace and community learning has been central to the development of the new enterprise.

Sited in a new premises in Williamstown, Rhondda, E-cycle is an ICT asset management operation, securely erasing data from computers no longer needed by organisations such as the Welsh Assembly, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the NHS.

The company employs 33 full-time staff, most of them disabled workers who had been working in similar jobs at the nearby Remploy factory before it was closed in 2013, plus six trainees – five through the Welsh Assembly programmes Job Growth Wales and Bridging The Gap and one from a local school.

The onsite learning centre was part of the



**Above: Welsh Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology Ken Skates unveils the plaque to celebrate the opening of the learning centre at E-cycle**

original business plan when the buyout was going ahead, with the support of the Welsh Assembly, the Wales TUC and Unite.

Equipped with computers from E-cycle's own stock of recycled IT equipment, paid for by Unite, the learning centre is run by Unite learning rep Alison Hunter, who has 100 per cent facility time to carry out her role.

"I had worked on production for years but I was bored and I was thinking to myself, 'There must be something else I could do'," she recalls.

"When Learning and Development Manager Denise Taylor first approached me about the ULR role, I wasn't sure I could do it, but then I thought I would give it a go."

Alison initially doubted herself because of her dyslexia. But the support of her colleagues and the experience of completing the TUC's ULR course with a group of learning reps with disabilities made all the difference.

"Before, I would try anything to get out of saying I had dyslexia, but now I just come out and say it:

**Before, I would try anything to get out of saying I had dyslexia, but now I just come out and say it: I'm not ashamed to tell anyone now"**

**Alison Hunter**



## Delivering CPD for ambulance workers

Hundreds of Welsh ambulance service staff have been able to easily access high-quality good value continuous professional development (CPD) thanks to the annual learning and skills days organised by Unite learning rep Steve Hutchinson.

The first two events, held in October 2013 and 2014 at Cardiff City FC stadium, each attracted 120 ambulance staff from all over Wales, with lectures and presentations on crucial skills such as basic life support, major trauma and sepsis (when the body's immune system goes into overdrive).

"One of our in-house training officers who attended the first year was raving about the event at training sessions afterwards, and some of the people I work with say they learned a lot from a talk by one of our medical directors about extrication from vehicles," Steve says.

Steve also organised a range of skills stations to help paramedics brush up skills they might not have used recently or try new equipment they weren't familiar with.

"While you have some people like myself who have delivered ten babies in

a year, I know paramedics with 20 years' experience who have never delivered a baby: it's those sort of skills that can need brushing up," Steve explains.

While all ambulance staff are expected to undertake CPD training on their own initiative, Steve points out that admission to a conference in London can cost £100, with travel and accommodation on top of that.

"By contrast, we charged £25 last year because we're about bringing in quality education at a price people can afford – and we give people a certificate for every lecture and skills station they attend to add to their CPD portfolio," he says.



I'm not ashamed to tell anyone now," she says.

The centre delivers work-related courses for all staff that covers display screen equipment, site security, waste management, manual handling and health and safety.

In addition, the centre is putting together a development programme for workers who have flagged up their aspirations to progress through the personal development plan (PDP) reviews Alison and Denise conducted at the end of 2014.

The centre also offers training to local disabled students, while Alison and Denise are also currently putting together a plan to offer work experience and training to local school pupils

who do not want to take the academic route.

"Alison has this brilliant rapport with all the trainees, and she is very honest and open with everyone: she is able to tell people areas where they have weaknesses without crucifying them!" Denise says.

As well as helping put together the development programme for her colleagues, Alison is also on a development programme of her own, as she would like to take over Denise's role eventually – a process Denise is helping by being her mentor.

"Alison was an operator who has learned a lot since she became the learning rep for the site and now I am supporting her to help bring her to the next level," Denise says. ■



Unite has helped 18 engineering apprentices at Scotland's biggest bus firm gain vital skills they will be able to use throughout their careers.



## HELPING APPRENTICES ENHANCE THEIR SKILLS

Unite has successfully enhanced the engineering Apprenticeships at bus firm First Glasgow by organising two fully accredited courses with the help of financial backing from the Scottish Union Learning Fund and the full support of the company itself.

The two courses, which the apprentices themselves helped choose, covered Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) and European Computing Driving Licence (ECDL) Essentials, giving the young people involved vital transferable skills that will help them throughout their career.

First Glasgow gave the 18 apprentices paid release to attend the courses, which were both delivered in workplace learning centres – PAT testing by West of Scotland College and ECDL by Learn With Unite Scotland tutors.

The apprentices themselves are very appreciative of the chance to develop themselves even further with the help of the union.



"It was good to have accredited IT skills recognised by the company – the ECDL course was easy to follow and I would like to thank the tutor and Unite for giving me this opportunity," says apprentice Kieran McSkeane.

Paul Hart was equally positive about the PAT course. "This course will benefit my future: with this qualification, I hope to keep learning about new appliances and learn more in the future," he says.

Unite learning rep Jimmy Lillis is proud of the hard-working apprentices for completing the additional courses. "On-going training within the learning centre at Caledonia Depot Glasgow has now given our apprentices another string to their bow," he says.

Scottish Union Learning, which funded the courses, is impressed with the way Unite has made the most of the resources available to provide enhanced opportunities for First Glasgow apprentices.



**This benefits the apprentices both individually and collectively and secures a higher skilled workforce for First Glasgow"**

*Sylvia O'Grady*



### Our time is just starting

Eleven learners from Glasgow Regeneration Agency have gained professionally recognised qualifications in counselling skills they could never have achieved without the backing and financial support of Unite.

"I have always been interested in counselling and felt it was something I would like to study but I could never afford it, so when I got the chance though Unite, I was both excited and very grateful," says Shirley Moore.

"I have learned so many new skills through doing this course, which has helped me a great deal in my current role at work, and I cannot thank our rep Jennifer Calder enough for all her hard work in organising it!"

Unite secured the funding from Scottish Union Learning for the 11 learners to undertake the Counselling Skills Course provided by COSCA, the professional body for counselling and psychotherapy in Scotland.

The course gives students the chance



to investigate skills, knowledge, self-awareness and ethics in a counselling context, and develops good inter-personal and communication skills based on active listening and verbal and non-verbal skills.

The students also had the opportunity to develop their skills in experiential learning, through practising in small groups.

They took their first of the four 12-week modules in 2013, completing a year later in November 2014.

"I have wanted to do the COSCA Counselling Skills Certificate for some time but have never been able to afford the fees," says Jennifer Calder.

"This course has improved my ability to do my own job well and has opened up the potential for further personal and career development or change."

"This arrangement benefits the apprentices both individually and collectively, secures a higher skilled workforce for First Glasgow, and is an excellent example of the added value trade unions bring by working constructively with employers and partners on the learning and skills agenda," says Lifelong Learning Manager Sylvia O'Grady.

Unite secured total commitment to the initiative from First Glasgow, which recognised the benefits of bringing the skills into the company through its apprentices.

"I believe this has given them the opportunity to gain useful and transferable skills to enhance their trade abilities, which benefits not only them but helps First Glasgow build its reputation of engineering excellence," says First Glasgow Fleet Support Engineer Wendy Findlay.

Union Learning Organiser Pat Egan says the pilot has proved so successful that the union is looking into adapting the model for other workplaces and other sectors.

There are four key elements that must be included in similar schemes elsewhere, he says:

- courses must be accredited to at least national industry recognised standards;
- courses must enhance transferrable skills;
- apprentices should be involved in the decision-making process;
- employers must release apprentices for courses.

"As well as adding value to the learning, it helps to develop and instil an on-going learning culture from the outset of what we hope is a long and successful career for our apprentices," Pat says. ■



BLAINE KILGALLON

Unite steward and learning rep Fred Harper (right) is tackling the challenges of his dyslexia thanks to the support of Unite and NACCO human resources manager William Kerr (left).

## DELIVERING SKILLS MEMBERS NEED

Unite's learning programmes in Northern Ireland are helping members gain skills, qualifications and confidence that benefit members and employers alike.

Unite's workplace learning programme is helping hundreds of learners across Northern Ireland gain new skills and qualifications they would not have been able to access through other routes.

At the Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim, site of Ryobi Aluminium Casting, where Unite members produce complex aluminium casting products for the automotive industry, dozens of learners have developed new ICT skills thanks to the union.

"Union learning really appealed to the workers at Ryobi as many didn't have the opportunities to develop such skills inside or outside of the workplace," says Unite Organiser Lynn Doran, who worked with members and reps onsite.

The appeal of developing these new skills through LearnWithUnite was part of the reason the union has been so successful in engaging and organising the workers in Ryobi, she says.

"Learning is a great tool not just for

recruiting members but also for developing union learning reps," Lynn says.

Ryobi is one of many examples across Northern Ireland where learning and organising have worked hand in hand to enable Unite to deliver for the membership and the organisations where they work.



**Learning is a great tool not just for recruiting members but also for developing union learning reps"**

Lynn Doran

The Essential Skills courses in English, maths and ICT have proved to be very popular and useful to hundreds of learners across Northern Ireland as workplaces continue to evolve educationally and technologically, says Blaine Kilgallon, a Unite youth activist who is currently working with the regional learning team.

"What we have found is more members wanting to take part in ICT courses as more work is being computerised and more employers are moving HR administration online, for example by setting up online forms for employees to book annual leave," Blaine says.

"Members with few computer skills see this as a daunting prospect until Unite ICT classes have helped them grasp the basics and overcome this technological barrier."

In addition to helping groups of members, Unite's learning team is also well-equipped to help individual members who need one-to-one support – members like shop steward and ULR Fred Harper, who works for Forklift truck manufacturer NACCO Materials Handling in Portadown, Co. Armagh.

Fred has struggled throughout adult life because of his dyslexia, the learning difference that affects the way people process, store and recall information, but which was only diagnosed recently, thanks to Unite.

Fred believes the education system let down a generation of pupils whose dyslexia was undetected at the time.

"School was a place I dreaded, not because I found the work overly hard but because I was frustrated by the fact I was held back by my problem," he says.

The legacy has meant he has struggled with reading, spelling and handwriting his whole adult life.

"Spelling has been a nightmare for me and it comes out not the way it is in your head: letters can change shape and words go missing and the amount of concentration needed to read can leave you drained."

But everything began to change for Fred after he talked to Unite Learning Organiser Clare Caulfield, who arranged a dyslexia assessment and set him up with a tutor to develop a programme to tackle his difficulties.

"To get this help has opened a new door for me: I can't thank Unite enough for the help



**School was a place I dreaded, not because I found the work overly hard but because I was frustrated by the fact I was held back by my problem"**

ULR Fred Harper

and support they have given me," he says.

"My tutor Peter has not only given me tools to help, but self-belief: he encouraged me to put some of my ideas and my passions for swimming into writing, which has been a success as I've helped people to get teaching and coaching awards in this sport."

Fred is also very happy that HR Manager William Kerr has supported him throughout, providing company time and resources to enable the programme to be delivered onsite.

"The great support from William Kerr and the company as a whole made Fred's programme easy to run," says Blaine.

Like many people with dyslexia, Fred says he has often tried to slip under the radar and not push himself to the front because of the stigma attached to dyslexia and the issues it can create for people.

Yet the condition often involves many positives, he points out. "We are good at solving problems: we have to be – that's what we've had to do to get through life."

Fred's experience is not uncommon, and one that will be familiar to many Unite members who have – or know someone who has – dyslexia, says Clare Caulfield.

"However, the education and support Unite can provide to help members with learning differences breaks down barriers and obstacles and instils confidence and self-worth," she says. ■



JOHN HARRIS/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK



## BLAZING A TRAIL FOR PRINT AND PAPER APPRENTICESHIPS

Unite's Graphical, Paper, Media and IT sector is building two training-based partnerships with employers to begin renewing Apprenticeships in the paper and printing sectors.

**W**orking with key employers and the employers' federations in both the paper and print industries, Unite's Graphical, Paper, Media and IT (GPM&IT) sector has co-ordinated successful bids for government funding to overhaul Apprenticeship standards.

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) announced in March 2015 that it was financing the two projects as part of its Trailblazer programme, the employer-led scheme to reform Apprenticeship standards across the country's various industrial sectors.

When London and Eastern Regional Officer Louisa Bull, working with South East Regional Officer Tim Elliott, first set about co-ordinating united bids for the Trailblazer funding a year ago, it helped that Unite had already been talking to employers about the future skills needs of the industries.

**In November 2014, Unite and Caterpillar Peterlee signed the unionlearn Apprenticeship Charter, which contains key provisions relating to fair pay, trade union involvement in the programme and commitments to ensure young people receive high-quality training. More details: [bit.ly/1EqbuOd](http://bit.ly/1EqbuOd)**

"We had run two high-level events with key employers both in the UK and Europe looking at what jobs and skills would look like in the sectors by 2020," Louisa explains. "And what came out of

those events was that we needed to bring back Apprenticeships both in printing and in paper."

The timing of those events couldn't have been better, since the government had recently launched its Trailblazer programme to help groups of employers and other stakeholders work together to update and improve Apprenticeship frameworks in their sectors.

"While the programme is employer-led, Unite was the only organisation that could have got all the big employers together in one room, and it was easier for us to get them together again having held those two joint events about the future of the industry already," Louisa says.

"And we didn't only get people from HR or training departments, we had CEOs and operations directors, people who could make decisions about how we would work together on this issue."

To ensure the new Apprenticeship standards deliver high-quality training with decent rates of pay, Unite persuaded all the employers to sign up to a set of principles covering collective bargaining, job security and apprentice rights.

"We had a very robust Apprenticeship scheme until about 1990, so it was a question of asking the employers, 'Do you want to get back what you used to have before now?' and they were all really keen to do it – and to do it together so they wouldn't be poaching each other's trained people, which is what has been happening for years," Louisa says.



**We had a very robust Apprenticeship scheme until about 1990, so we asked the employers, 'Do you want to get back what you used to have before?'"**

**Louisa Bull**

**In March 2015, Unite launched a new campaign to encourage more young women into science and engineering Apprenticeships with the publication of a new booklet highlighting the positive experiences of young women members at companies such as Brush, BMW and Unilever. Download the booklet at: [bit.ly/1O5geB2](http://bit.ly/1O5geB2)**

In the print sector, the 20-strong consortium is led by Yorkshire-based printing firm Ryedale, and includes major players such as security printers De La Rue, news groups Trinity Mirror and the Guardian, and packaging companies Pulse Flexible and Multi Packaging Solutions. Alongside Unite and Proskills, the group is also supported by The Printing Charity (which is going to help apprentice members of Unite with education grants) and the employers' federation British Printing Industry Federation (BPIF).

Getting the BPIF and Unite to work once again on a joint project has been a very positive step since the federation had originally submitted its own rival bid for Trailblazer funding last year, before the arrival of new Chief Executive Charles Jarrold a year ago helped change the weather.

In the paper sector, the development group is led by ArjoWiggins, alongside more than 20 employers including De La Rue, Kimberley Clark and Smurfit Kappa, plus Unite, the Confederation of Paper Industries (CPI) and the Proskills Sector Skills Council (SSC).

Unite's lifelong learning team, which is represented on both steering committees, will be helping Louisa and Tim develop the training modules and source training providers, and the union intends to use the Trailblazer momentum to sign more learning agreements with the companies involved. ■

# YOUR LEARN WITH UNITE TEAM



The team comprises the Head of Lifelong Learning, Regional Learning Managers, learning organisers and national coordinators.

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# USEFUL RESOURCES



## IMPROVING SKILLS

### Alison

Free online courses  
[www.alison.com](http://www.alison.com) Apprenticeships

### Apprenticeships

0800 015 0400 [www.gov.uk/further-education-skills/apprenticeships](http://www.gov.uk/further-education-skills/apprenticeships)

### British Dyslexia Association

Support and resources for dyslexic learners  
[www.bdadyslexia.org.uk](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk)

### Learn My Way

Free online digital skills  
[www.learnmyway.com](http://www.learnmyway.com)

### Learn with Unite

Your union's own learning portal with a range of resources and courses including ESOL  
[www.learnwithunite.org](http://www.learnwithunite.org)

### Move On

Campaign to improve adult literacy and numeracy  
[www.move-on.org.uk](http://www.move-on.org.uk)

### National Extension College

10% discount for union members on distance learning opportunities  
0800 389 2839 [www.nec.ac.uk](http://www.nec.ac.uk)

### Quick Reads

Publishes annual collection of short novels for emergent adult readers  
[www.quickreads.org.uk](http://www.quickreads.org.uk)

### Skills Workshop

Free functional skills resources  
[www.skillsworkshop.org](http://www.skillsworkshop.org)

### Six Book Challenge

Useful reading initiative for workplaces  
[www.sixbookchallenge.org.uk](http://www.sixbookchallenge.org.uk)

### INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE (IAG)

### National Careers Service

Provides IAG on learning, training and work opportunities  
[nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk](http://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk)  
0800 100 900

### Unionlearn

Helps ULRs inform, advise and guide their learners  
[www.unionlearn.org.uk/supportinglearners](http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/supportinglearners)

### Floodlight (Course Search)

Covers 40+ UK towns; cities and regions  
[www.floodlight.co.uk](http://www.floodlight.co.uk)

## Sector Skills Councils & Bodies (Directory)

Independent, employer-led organisations that help shape the learning opportunities available to Unite members.

<http://fiss.org/sector-skills-council/directory-of-sscs/>

## CAMPAIGNING ORGANISATIONS

### Campaign for Learning

Runs Learning At Work Week  
[www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk](http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk)

### National Institute for Adult Continuing Education

Runs annual Adult Learners' Festival  
[www.niace.org.uk](http://www.niace.org.uk)

## EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

### Equality & Diversity Forum

Network of national organisation committed to progressing equalities  
[www.edf.org.uk](http://www.edf.org.uk)

### Equality and Human Rights Commission

Responsible for promoting equality and human rights, producing codes of practice and giving advice  
[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

## HIGHER EDUCATION (HE)

### Birkbeck, University of London

Union members can claim a 10 per cent discount on their course fees at London's only specialist provider of evening higher education, which runs regular free advice and support sessions for prospective students  
[www.bbk.ac.uk/unions](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/unions) or [www.bbk.ac.uk/tryit](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/tryit)

### Whatuni.com

Degree guides, rankings and reviews  
[www.whatuni.com](http://www.whatuni.com)

### UCAS

Useful search tool to find Foundation, undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses  
[search.ucas.com](http://search.ucas.com)

### Openlearn

Free online learning resources from the Open University  
[www.open.edu/openlearn](http://www.open.edu/openlearn)

### Graduate careers advice

Download free career planning publications from the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) from the OU careers site  
[www2.open.ac.uk/students/careers](http://www2.open.ac.uk/students/careers)





# ***STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD***

Improve your skills through LearnwithUnite

LearnWithUnite is your union's very own virtual learning platform, designed to help you update and improve a wide range of skills online – and many of the courses are free. All you need is access to a computer and a valid email address and you are good to go.

Our on-line basics course will help any first-time users find their way around the internet and email, and then you can move on to fully accredited ICT qualifications at Levels 1, 2 and 3.

Our programme for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is free to Unite members and covers key issues at work and in the community.

We are developing an English and maths Functional Skills programme at Levels 1 and 2 to support our members.

And we offer the Back to Work Support Programme to give you the edge when applying for a new job with the help of a new CV, covering letter and much more besides.

Getting and keeping a job is all about gaining and maintaining the right skills these days. Stay ahead of the game with the help of your union's virtual learning platform.

Register/log on at  
**[www.learnwithunite.org](http://www.learnwithunite.org)**