

For information

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Leading learning and skills

# Trades Union Congress and Learning and Skills Council Protocol

March 2005

Of interest to Chairs and union members of local Learning and Skills Councils, senior trade union officials, and other LSC, TUC and union staff.



Learning and Skills Council  
National Office

Cheylesmore House  
Quinton Road  
Coventry CV1 2WT  
T 0845 019 4170  
F 024 7682 3675  
www.lsc.gov.uk

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TUC

# Vision

The TUC and LSC will work positively and actively together nationally, regionally and locally to help maximise the contribution of each organisation to promote learning and skills and raise demand among young people, adults and employers.

Both the LSC and the TUC recognise the value of the other organisation as a key stakeholder. Each organisation will seek to use its networks to support effectively both the TUC's and the LSC's roles in learning.

## Key shared priorities include:

- equality and diversity
- implementation of the Skills Strategy
- the national employer training programme
- the Skills for Life Strategy
- Apprenticeships
- information, advice and guidance
- improving the skills of workers who deliver public services.

## The Role of the TUC

TUC Learning Services:

- provides a strategic framework and support for the contribution unions make to workforce development and lifelong learning
- raises awareness of the value of learning and the contribution that unions can make
- develops capacity-building in relation to both unions and providers
- provides co-ordination, dissemination, evaluation and quality assurance in relation to union learning activities.

## The Role of the LSC

Relevant LSC activities include:

- planning and funding post-16 learning and skills development
- ensuring learning reflects priority needs that promote social inclusion and economic development at local, regional, sectoral and national levels
- increasing awareness of, and demand for, learning from individuals and employers
- setting out key activities in an annual statement of priorities.

Our two organisations have a number of shared objectives which we can help each other achieve. We are both passionate about providing opportunities for people to engage in learning, particularly those who lack the confidence and opportunity to improve their skills from a low level. If we work together we can make a real difference to the demand for learning and the skills of young people, adults and employers.

We each recognise the other is a key partner and have agreed this protocol. It sets out the shared priorities of our organisations, and the ways we work together. This relationship is important at all levels – local, regional and national. The protocol includes a range of examples of good practice, where a collaborative approach helps both organisations achieve their objectives.

We want this protocol to be a live document that is reflected in the way both the Trade Union Congress (TUC) and Learning and Skills Council (LSC) work. We urge you to discuss joint working and the protocol at regional and local level. In particular, local LSCs will want to consider the protocol and review how joint working with the TUC might be enhanced. The TUC and unions will want to reflect on how positive engagement with the LSC and regional skills partnerships can best be achieved. This could take place via the network of trade union representatives on local Councils, TUC Learning Services, and regional joint union learning forums.

**This is a great opportunity to develop even more synergy between our activities, and to build on effective joint working.**



Chris N Banks CBE  
Chairman  
Learning and Skills Council



Frances O'Grady  
Deputy General Secretary  
Trade Union Congress



## Joint working will involve a number of key areas that are outlined here.

## National and regional case studies

### Communication and networking

Within communications and networking, key joint activities are:

- LSC to raise awareness at regional and local level of the respective roles of trade union learning representatives, the TUC and trade union members of local LSCs
- TUC and LSC to seek effective working arrangements at national, regional and local level, including a joint approach to supporting union learning projects towards sustainable implementation, and working in partnership to support union learning representatives
- TUC to support the network of trade union members of local LSCs and other LSC groups to optimise their capacity to engage in and drive the learning agenda
- TUC and LSC to work together to provide effective induction for new trade union members of local LSCs and national groups

The administration of the Union Learning Fund (ULF) was transferred to the LSC in April 2003. The ULF is administered nationally and has supported more than 60 trade unions in delivering almost 500 projects with £59 million of investment. The LSC and TUC have built up an excellent relationship in managing and supporting ULF trade union projects.

The introduction of the ULF database ([www.unionlearningfund.org.uk](http://www.unionlearningfund.org.uk)) has enabled the two organisations to share information easily so that a joint approach to supporting and contract managing the projects is more effective. The trade unions involved in projects are also able to access relevant parts of the database so that they can share information online, give and view advice on good practice, and access contractual information.

In the West Midlands, regular local trade union/LSC meetings have been held for some time in Coventry and Warwickshire. More recently a regional approach has been agreed with an initial meeting for trade unions and staff from the six local LSCs. This is planned to continue on a regular basis to facilitate improved communications and joint working.

- the Union Learning Management Board to provide a forum to develop and improve communication strategies
- in the recruitment of trade union members to local councils, the regional TUC to propose suitable candidates, who would then apply and be subject to the usual selection process. If no union candidates are successful, further nominations will be sought from the TUC.

### Sharing strategic direction

Within strategic direction, key joint activities are:

- both organisations to raise awareness of each other's priorities and strategic direction through joint events, meetings and regular briefings
- LSC and TUC recognised as important strategic partners at national, regional and local level.

### High-level engagement

Within high-level engagement, key joint activities are:

- TUC members on the LSC National Council, local LSCs and the LSC's statutory committees
- regular 'keep-in-touch' meetings between senior colleagues
- TUC to involve the LSC at a strategic level where possible, such as developing the union learning academy and one-off projects.

### Shared approach to feedback

Within the shared approach to feedback, key joint activities are:

- LSC and TUC to develop strategies to ensure effective feedback on successes and issues related to learning in the workplace and educational institutions.

trade unions on learning initiatives. In 2004/05, the LFA fund is supporting 25 projects involving eight different unions. This is an important illustration of how effective partnership across the TUC, LSC and other stakeholders can make a real difference. An external evaluation of the LFA fund concluded that 'the fund has had considerable success in raising awareness and increasing participation in learning in the region. It has acted as a significant catalyst to facilitating learning and has also been key to accelerating the process of assessing learning need, and the identification and delivery of learning provision'.

*Union Learning Representatives Survey Page 14*  
(see [www.yorkconsulting.co.uk](http://www.yorkconsulting.co.uk))

The South West TUC and West of England LSC have built up an excellent relationship over recent years. West of England LSC has been proactive and supportive of union learning, and works closely with the South West TUC. Together they have developed training in personal development and mentoring for union learning representatives. The West of England LSC has also funded a pilot project to increase and develop the offer of information, advice and guidance in three workplaces.

- LSC and TUC to respond to each other's formal consultations and to ensure local, regional and national engagement as appropriate
- joint policy work through the Union Learning Management Board's activities (see below)
- local and regional trade union involvement in planning and strategic area reviews as appropriate
- use of annual conferences such as the union learning event and similar events to gather feedback on union learning.

### Union Learning Management Board

The Union Learning Management Board (ULMB) has a membership drawn from the LSC, the TUC and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). It meets quarterly to review policy developments and share information at a national level on union

learning activity. The ULMB will be an important forum for discussing feedback on issues such as trade union learning projects, third-party discussions, priorities and initiatives across Government and basic skills policy development. The ULMB will also provide a mechanism to feedback on stakeholder issues including those covered by this protocol.

In the Southern and Eastern regions of England, a number of formal and informal initiatives have been developed to facilitate effective working relationships. The Southern and Eastern Regional TUC (SERTUC) and local LSCs meet quarterly to discuss collaborative work. These meetings involve all five London LSCs, SERTUC Learning Services, as well as trade union board members on local councils and other interested unions. The group provides a forum to discuss and develop mutual objectives and to review current engagement work. An example of this joint working is that the London LSCs are providing £330,000 to support the training of 800 union learning representatives and encourage employer engagement.

Trade unions and local LSCs work together effectively on initiatives that meet their mutual objectives. For example, LSCs Cambridge, Essex, London East and Kent and Midway all work closely with the South East Regional TUC on employer training pilots.

In the partnership working between the Southern and Eastern TUC and LSC London East, sharing good practice is an important aspect. Partnerships based on trust, openness and equality with regular contact have led to effective outcomes in terms of learner numbers and retention in learning.

The six LSCs in the South East and SERTUC have worked together on the Trade Union Fund South East, which has resulted in 15

learning activity. The ULMB will be an important forum for discussing feedback on issues such as trade union learning projects, third-party discussions, priorities and initiatives across Government and basic skills policy development. The ULMB will also provide a mechanism to feedback on stakeholder issues including those covered by this protocol.

### Annual evaluation of protocol and joint working

Within the evaluation of the protocol, key joint activities are:

- the ULMB to review this protocol annually and to report to relevant TUC and LSC internal groups on its effectiveness and the need for any action or amendments to it.

union-led learning projects being developed, backed by £300,000 of LSC funding.

The role of unions in providing effective Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) is important. In Cambridge and Essex, trade unions are represented along with Jobcentre Plus, Connexions and the local Government Office on IAG strategic boards to develop a more strategic approach to IAG services across Cambridgeshire.

In the East Midlands the TUC have been facilitating regular meetings between trade union project workers, education officers and colleagues from the five local LSCs. These meetings provide forums for discussion of mutual objectives, sharing good practice and information about local initiatives and in some cases LSC funding for trade union projects. However given the regional nature of most union structures, it became apparent that a regional trade union/LSC approach might prove more effective. Discussions have taken place at regional LSC level and a strategy has been drafted which will be presented for consultation to trade unions at a joint event in March 2005. This draft includes roles, key shared priorities, communication and sharing strategic objectives. At local level ULN networks typically meet at LSC premises.