

unionlearn

with the North West TUC



Changing lives through learning

a guide to **unionlearn**



This publication is an outcome of the TUC High Road project. The project is part of a community programme called Equal, a European Social Fund initiative that tests and promotes new means of combating all forms of discrimination and inequality in the labour market. The GB Equal Support Unit is managed by ECOTEC.

All TUC publications can be made available in accessible formats for dyslexic or visually impaired readers.

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Foreword

From the Director

Unionlearn is about creating strong unions for the future. It's about building on their success in learning and skills. It will provide a coherent framework for bringing together union rep training and wider learning. It has been established under the auspices of the TUC and as such will be run by unions for unions.

With an annual turnover of £12m in 2007/2008 and around 120 staff, the new organisation will be able to give the union movement much more impact on learning and skills.

In providing such support to unions, unionlearn will be responsive to their individual needs. The services will add value to and not compete with existing union provision. They will all be 'kitemarked' to a high quality.

Unionlearn will also be very much a devolved organisation, with most of its staff operating in offices in the six TUC English regions. They will support unions directly and through a network of unionlearn branded learning centres, based in colleges, union offices and workplaces.

Our goal is to become the centre of excellence in England for supporting high quality union-led learning activity. Our success will be determined by how we can help unions put learning and skills at the heart of their organising agenda.



Liz Smith

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Liz Smith".

Director, unionlearn

From the Regional Manager

Unionlearn is a unique and exciting opportunity to build on the work already undertaken by trade unions in the North West. With over one million members, we need to ensure that unions and their members take full advantage of every opportunity unionlearn can offer.

Over 3,000 union learning reps (ULRs) in the region helped over 25,000 workers engage with learning last year. At the same time, as many as 9,000 union and health and safety reps were trained in the North West, protecting tens of thousands of workers. Unionlearn will build on this success.

We will continue to deliver briefings and seminars on new initiatives such as Train to Gain, to ensure that members are well placed to take advantage of paid time off to train.

We will also continue to promote Skills for Life and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) opportunities throughout the region. To achieve these aims we will continue to work with trade unions, employers and key regional partners, including local learning and skills councils and the North West RDA.

We want to ensure that the North West has more high performance workplaces that offer quality jobs and training in transferable skills. But unionlearn is also about improving equality and securing social inclusion through learning and skills.



Dave Eva

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dave Eva'. The signature is stylized and fluid.

Regional Manager, unionlearn



Mission statement

Our belief

is that the life chances of all people can be transformed through access to learning, throughout their working lives. Such learning opportunities must be available to the entire workforce, regardless of their employment status or educational background.

Everyone should have fair and equal treatment to develop his or her potential, free from discrimination. We believe people's learning and skills can best be delivered collectively with trade unions.

Our purpose

is to help unions open up a wide range of learning opportunities for their members. This will both promote their personal progression and develop their trade union role, strengthening workplace organisation.

We will guarantee that all provision is of a high standard and continuously improves in both its quality and diversity.

Our goal

is to become the centre of excellence for supporting high quality union-led learning.

We also aim to become the authoritative organisation for promoting innovation and research and disseminating best practice in such learning.

Our success

will be determined by the sustainability of this activity, through unions securing learning and skills at the heart of their organisation.

Main functions

Unionlearn will help unions to become effective learning organisations. It will do this by:

- running programmes for union representatives
- delivering programmes for regional officers
- providing strategic support for national officers
- promoting integrated learning and organising strategies
- supporting Union Learning Fund and regional projects
- offering a consultancy service on funding, management, standards etc.

Unionlearn will help unions to broker learning opportunities for their members. It will do this by:

- providing support for unions and their union learning reps
- supporting learning centres (including learndirect provision)
- promoting learning agreements at the workplace

- establishing websites to advise learners and their union representatives
- providing a brokerage service to secure quality provision
- 'kitemarking' provision to a quality standard.

Unionlearn will help unions to have an impact on learning and skills policy. It will do this by:

- researching union priorities in learning and skills
- identifying and disseminating good practice
- helping evaluate unionlearn projects
- supporting union members on learning and skills bodies
- helping to shape and deliver sector skills agreements.

A close-up photograph of a man with a goatee, wearing a dark beanie and a high-visibility yellow vest over a dark jacket. He is looking down at a stack of papers on a table. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be an indoor setting with other people.

Unionlearn targets

For 2006/2007:

- 3,500 new ULRs to be trained
- 600 ULRs progressing to Skills for Life module
- 18,000 Skills for Life learners
- 4,000 NVQ 2 learners
- 100,000 learners going through the union route.

By 2010:

- 22,000 union learning reps in place
- 250,000 learners going through the union route.

The union record

- Every year more than 42,000 union representatives are trained through the TUC Education Service.
- More than 13,000 ULRs have been trained.
- More than 450 Union Learning Fund projects have been run, covering over 3,000 workplaces.
- More than 67,000 learners access courses each year through the projects.
- The Trade Union Hub runs 87 learndirect centres.

The senior regional team



Regional Manager:

Dave Eva

Dave is responsible for the strategic development of unionlearn in the North West. Reporting to unionlearn's Director and the TUC Regional Executive, he promotes, develops and manages a wide range of activities with the support of the national managers. These include trade union education, learning centres and regional learning fund projects as well as supporting union project workers and regional ULR networks.



Regional Education Officer:

Pete Holland

Pete organises accredited courses for union reps, safety reps, union learning reps, pension scheme trustees and other union representatives, as well as providing bespoke courses to meet the specific needs of unions. He also works closely with colleges and trade union tutors to ensure high standards and quality delivery of the union officers programme being delivered in the region.



Union Development Co-ordinator:
Tony Saunders

Tony leads the union development team, ensuring there is effective support for Union Learning Fund activity in the region. He also helps establish networking opportunities for union learning reps, organisers and project workers and has responsibility for co-ordinating unionlearn's learndirect centre activity in the region.



Development Workers:
John Halligan and John Inskip

Tony is supported by Regional Development Worker John Halligan and John Inskip, the Regional Co-ordinator of the North West's learning centres. The team also includes eleven project workers who work in two teams, Lancashire/Merseyside and Cheshire/Manchester.

Union learning representatives

Union learning representatives (ULRs) are the driving force of union-led learning. Their unique position in the workplace helps them to provide their colleagues with advice on learning, identifying learning needs, arranging training and consulting with employers.

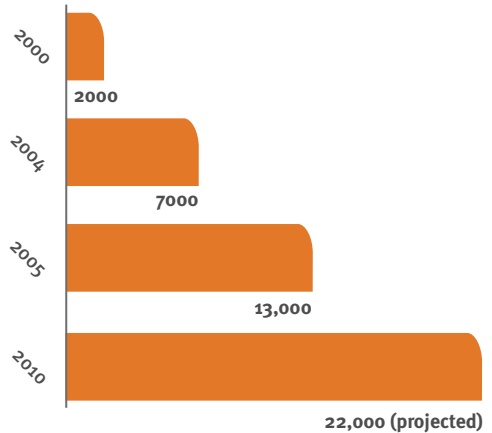
Over 13,000 ULRs have been trained to carry out their roles. Under the 2002 Employment Relations Act they have rights to paid time off to train and to carry out their functions within union recognised workplaces. There has been a significant increase in the number of ULRs trained since their recognition.

With over 4,000 ULRs already trained in the North West Region, thousands of workers have already benefited. But we want to do more. By working with affiliates, we aim to have 6,000 ULRs in the region by 2010.

Unionlearn will develop the key role of ULRs in raising demand for learning, especially among workers with low skills levels. This will involve:

- training more ULRs and to higher levels

ULRs: The growing national army



- supporting regional networks of ULRs
- strengthening the role of ULRs through agreements with employers
- helping unions to integrate ULRs at workplace and branch level
- securing ULR involvement in the delivery of paid time off to train through Train to Gain
- maximising ULR impact delivering sector skills agreements.





Engaging with unions

Unionlearn will add value to union provision, not attempt to replace it. It will respect union traditions, democratic processes and delivery. Unions that want to will continue to provide their own training programmes and learning services. Relations between unionlearn and individual unions at national, regional, branch and workplace levels will be governed by clear agreements on funding and outcomes.

The aim of unionlearn is to provide generic services that can be used by individual unions to develop their own provision. It will also customise services for unions. It will be up to individual unions to decide which services it requires from unionlearn.

Unions will continue to bid for projects under the Union Learning Fund when it transfers to unionlearn. Projects will help unions develop and deliver strategies for sustainable learning, integrated with their organising agendas.

An important innovation has been the region's Digital Divide project, opening up Information and Communication Technology (ICT) opportunities for union members.

Strengthening union organisation through learning

Unions will be able to:

- use learning services to help recruit potential learners into union membership and develop a more diverse membership
- use learning to retain members and build active workplace organisation
- reinforce the statutory rights of ULRs in learning agreements at the workplace
- ensure that ULRs have a central role in the union organisation and have strong links with shop stewards
- encourage union learners to train to become union representatives
- use learning centres as union support centres for ULRs and other union reps.

Promoting partnerships

Unionlearn believes that working in partnership to increase the skills and knowledge base of the North West workforce is the key to sustained economic development, increased social inclusion and improved competitiveness.

Many of the partnerships with local learning and skills councils have aimed at engaging employers and the workforce in Employer Training Pilots (ETPs). TUC project workers have done much to increase the number of low skilled employees taking paid time-off to train to a first level 2 qualification – especially in Skills for Life.

ETP is being rolled out nationally into the Train to Gain programme. Having worked on two ETPs in the past three years, one in Manchester and one in Lancashire, unionlearn in the North West Region is well placed to help trade unions and their members take full advantage of the opportunities which Train to Gain offers.

The region is also working with Aimhigher to help workers identify and take up higher education opportunities.

Unionlearn will:

- support unions and their ULRs to work with brokers on delivering the programme in the workplace
- ensure as many eligible employees as possible take up the offer
- support ULRs in mentoring the learners and helping them to progress to higher levels of training
- help unions to integrate paid time off to train into learning agreements reached with employers.

Working together

We have worked with partners on a number of activities.

With Northwest RDA:

- promoting Skills for Life
- delivering Workforce Development Training modules
- providing cultural diversity training
- establishing sector networks.

With local learning and skills councils:

- promoting Skills for Life
- accessing courses at levels 2 and 3, including apprenticeships
- delivering Employer Training Pilots in Lancashire and Manchester
- establishing and supporting learning centres.



TUC Education

The key to an effective employee voice in the workplace is training union workplace reps and professionals to a high standard. TUC Education is responsible within unionlearn for offering high quality, accredited training through a partnership with colleges and universities across the UK. Fuller details of the provision are set out in the *Unionlearn Directory of Programmes and Centres*.

TUC Education provides training for:

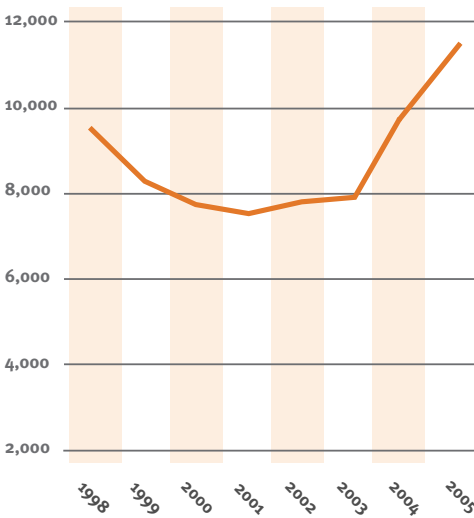
- union reps
- safety reps
- learning reps
- pension scheme trustees
- equality reps
- other trade union reps
- union professionals
- trade union tutors.

TUC Education has gone from strength to strength in recent years, with over 42,500 course enrolments each year. The programme is organised by the Regional Education Officer and delivered locally through dedicated TUC units in 76 colleges around the UK. All course materials are designed, developed and provided by the TUC and tutors are recruited for their expertise in trade unionism and the world of work. Courses are accredited through our awarding body, the National Open College Network.

Quality is taken very seriously within TUC Education – ten consecutive Adult Learning Inspectorate reports have rated provision as Grade I and classed it as “outstanding”. Before starting their rep courses, many participants had gained no qualifications since leaving school. Now some are progressing to further and higher education.

Unionlearn will build on the 11,500 trade union reps, health and safety reps and union learning reps trained during

Union reps trained in region



2005 in the North West region. The number of courses will also increase, adding to the 900 delivered last year.

We will continue to offer training to union officers. In addition to Officers' courses we will carry out a survey and run focus groups prior to publishing the 2007 Officers programme to ensure that it reflects their training needs.

During the past 12 months we have:

- increased the numbers of courses available online, including Union Learning Reps, Tackling Racism and Safety and Occupational Pensions
- developed a new ULR course
- piloted a new Learning and Organising course
- developed and rolled out a Regional Unity and Diversity programme
- rolled out the National Schools Programme regionally.

Under unionlearn, TUC Education will:

- build and sustain the education programme in further education
- open up new opportunities to access education programmes online
- support the work of union reps on learning and skills bodies through new support programmes
- establish a mentoring service to enable union officers to support each other's development needs
- train and develop equality reps, using high quality learning materials.

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Published by:
unionlearn
Congress House
Great Russell Street
London WC1B 3LS
T 020 7079 6920
F 020 7079 6921
www.unionlearn.org.uk

October 2006

Printed by Precision Printing
Company Limited

Photos by Mark Thompson