

# **Unionlearn strategy for supporting learners:**

**Providing quality information,  
advice and support for learning**

**April 2017 – March 2020**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2008 unionlearn has evidenced a successful track record of supporting learners' activity. The wide ranging scope of the supporting learners work and the key achievements outlined in this document are testament to the reach and extent of unionlearn's distinctive contribution to the learning and skills landscape.

It is recognised that unions are in a unique place to engage with a wide range of partners and communities effectively engaging and supporting learners in the workplace and beyond.

The strategy for 2017 onwards has been developed after extensive consultation with key partners and stakeholders. It underpins the key messages outlined in the unionlearn Communications Strategy and supports the delivery of the unionlearn Business Plan and the TUC Strategic Plan. The Supporting Learners themes have been determined with reference to the developing government policy context for learning and skills. Most notably; the post-16 technical skills reforms, Apprenticeships, English and Maths developments, the Industrial Strategy and the emerging Careers Strategy.

The 6 key Supporting Learners themes are:

1. Promoting Apprenticeships
2. Supporting the union approach to English, Maths and Digital Skills
3. Helping disadvantaged learners
4. Supporting learning and progression for all ages by facilitating access to quality, impartial information and advice about learning and work
5. Supporting Older workers
6. Working with key partners and stakeholders

The Supporting Learners priorities underpinning each theme have been defined by undertaking a practical appraisal of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for union learning. Unionlearn is well-placed to respond to the continuing move towards 'digital by default' focusing on web-based online resources, support and learning materials. The unionlearn Supporting Learners' model provides a well-tested and valued wrap-around service to unions and learners delivered through effective partnership working.

The priorities in the strategy will be translated into a development plan for Supporting Learners and will be evaluated and monitored regularly by the unionlearn Service Team.

## 1.0 Introduction

The strategy for Supporting Learners is an underpinning strategy for all unionlearn activity with the primary aim of making all learning and progression opportunities available to working people, particularly those who are disadvantaged in the workplace.

### What is Supporting Learners?

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

There has been a Supporting Learners Strategy since 2008 and the current strategy includes the successful 'Network Model' for Supporting Learners. The model places the work of union reps at the heart of the strategy. ULRs are ideally placed to support learners as they speak the same language as their members and have their trust. Learners then feel supported in accessing the right learning and courses for them or to consider their career options.

ULRs support people who would otherwise struggle to take advantage of the opportunity to improve their English and maths, get to grips with computers, boost their technical or professional skills and even enrol at university. Union learning is open to members' families, to non-members and to local communities helping to support the 'social justice' agenda.

### What is careers advice and guidance?

The purpose of careers advice and guidance as stated by the National Careers Service (NCS) is:

***'To help people realise their full potential, improving productivity and supporting social mobility by making sure everyone, regardless of background or circumstances, has access to the right information, at the right time, to support them in making the best decisions for themselves about their education, training or career options.'***

## 2.0 Scope of unionlearn Supporting Learners work

**Supporting learners' initiatives April 2014 – March 2017** have included:

### **Apprenticeships**

Unionlearn continues to support union engagement in Traineeships, Apprenticeships and other youth skills initiatives. They ranged across a number of employers and ULF projects. The TUC Charter on Apprenticeships was developed to promote good practice and contains the principles to help unions negotiate good quality training for young people. Unionlearn led on and promoted key events and exhibitions, responded to government consultations and participated in advisory groups. Unionlearn developed a Youth Employment Guide and further developed the Apprenticeship Toolkit.

### **English, maths and Functional Skills**

Literacy and numeracy learning has been a cornerstone of unionlearn and union learning projects since their inception. Unionlearn supports unions, their officers and reps, to help people in the workplace to engage and motivate workplace learners. English and maths continue as priority areas of work for both unionlearn and Union Learning Fund (ULF).

The entitlement for government funding up to level 2 in numeracy and literacy gives a solid starting point to union learning. The peer support union learning reps provide is invaluable in encouraging adults to improve their skills. No other organisation has the same reach and results as unions. Unionlearn has produced a number of resources and tools and developed stakeholder relationships to help both delivery and policy work. Over the last three years unionlearn's English and maths support has included activities such as:

- Contributing towards the Functional Skills reform programme run by Education and Training Foundation (ETF) by commission from DfE (formerly BIS). Unionlearn has responded to consultations and organised focus groups. The new standards will be available from 2019.
- Provided a website briefing note for unions about the recommendations in the final report of the BIS Select Committee Inquiry, Adult Literacy and Numeracy, which highlighted the effectiveness of union support for English and maths in the workplace and the important role of unionlearn in helping unions to deliver on this particular learning agenda.
- Submitted a response to the call for evidence to ensure the effective implementation of the new English and maths GCSEs.
- Launched the free Use-IT initial assessment tool online and as an app. Use-IT offers initial assessments in English and maths.
- Gathered information on resources and tools unions have used in supporting English and maths learning. These resources and tools are available on the website [www.unionlearn.org.uk/english-and-maths-learning-resources-and-tools](http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/english-and-maths-learning-resources-and-tools) with related case studies.
- Collaborated with external stakeholders such as National Numeracy and Citizen Maths to develop a series of free maths learning tools for learners and union reps [www.unionlearn.org.uk/maths](http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/maths). These include the Working with Figures eNote.
- In autumn 2016 unionlearn ran a maths campaign week (#mathsworkout). An English campaign (#literacyworks) followed in spring 2017. Both campaign weeks included activities on and offline to engage unions and workplace learners to have a go at checking their English and maths skills.
- TUC Education courses for reps were mapped against functional skills standards.
- Produced an English and maths specific section for the Apprentice Toolkit.

- Worked with the Behavioural Insights Adult Skills and Knowledge (BIT ASK) Team to research how to better engage adult learners. BIT ASK is a nudge unit commissioned by DfE (and previously BIS) to do the research and do engagement trials.
- The ULF and unionlearn evaluation report [www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/evaluation-union-learning-fund-rounds-1516-and-support-role-unionlearn](http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/evaluation-union-learning-fund-rounds-1516-and-support-role-unionlearn), annual reports and the review of unionlearn's first ten years [www.unionlearn.org.uk/about](http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/about) gathered details of the reach of union learning in English and maths.

During the period 2014- March 2017 more than 70,000 learners were helped to improve their Functional Skills, English and maths. The Use-IT platform which assists unions in engaging learners through initial diagnostic testing, has enabled over 3,500 initial assessments to be undertaken.

Unionlearn has collaborated with partners on a number of successful initiatives. A set of maths activities was produced to help ULRs stimulate learning opportunities during Learning at Work week. Support was also provided for unions engaging in the Learning at Work Institute's Citizen's Curriculum pilot linked to health, well-being and nutrition.

Unionlearn promotes and supports World Book day and Quick Reads in conjunction with the Reading Agency. Unionlearn provides books to ULRs who use the books in workplaces, learning centres and in the community to inspire people to rediscover the pleasure of reading and in many cases this leads to the first steps back into learning.

### **Digital skills**

In 2014/15 the government provided funding for digital skills training up to level 2 plus support for people to gain basic digital skills through the Future Digital Inclusion and Widening Digital Participation programmes. Union learning has supported more than 89,000 learners on ICT programmes during the last 3 years of ULF Round 15.

Unionlearn continues to support TUC Education to develop innovative approaches to learning delivery for union learners. Reps now have access to new flexible online learning programmes which they can access at their own convenience. The new courses can be self-study, blended, or used as a resource on classroom courses. This opens up the provision to many more union reps and the next generation of younger reps and can be accessed via PCs, tablets or smart phones.

### **Resources and information**

Resources and information designed to keep ULRs and reps up to date with news, developments to support learners in the workplace and up and coming campaigns, events, and learning activities form a key part of the supporting learners offer. A suite of TUC Education Supporting Learners eNotes includes: Supporting learners, supporting mid-life development, the unionlearn climbing frame, apprenticeships, mentoring of apprentices and supporting learners into higher education.

### **Careers Information, Advice and Guidance**

Publicly funded impartial careers information and advice services have undergone significant changes during the period of the last Supporting Learners Strategy. The loss of the Connexions service offering advice and guidance across the country has led to a patchwork of different offers across the regions of England. Despite this unions and ULRs have continued to support workplace learning and giving advice to individuals on their learning opportunities.

In 2016/17 almost 83,000 adults were supported with information, advice and guidance and ULF learner support referrals totalled 117,000, well above the target, highlighting the substantive amount of support provided by union reps.<sup>1</sup> Unions deliver a range of high quality workplace IAG interventions these include the use of carbonated IAG pads which serve as both a record and a simple action plan for the learner. Alternatively some unions use an IAG app loaded on to tablets and mobile devices to encourage workers to complete a short survey to identify their learning needs and interests.

### **Informal Adult and Communing learning (IACL)**

Unionlearn continues to support Festival of Learning and Learning at Work week. IACL is an important way of engaging new and hard-to-reach learners and over 40,000 were supported into making those first steps into learning during 2016-17. This continues to be an effective way for engaging learners, most of whom will progress on to formal courses. Unionlearn contributes to the Festival of Learning Strategic Group, is a key partner in supporting and promoting Festival of Learning activities, as well as a member of the judging panel for the national awards.

### **Higher learning – [www.unionlearn.org.uk/higher-learning-work](http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/higher-learning-work)**

Unionlearn is committed to supporting and developing pathways to higher learning for union learners and has secured agreements with higher education institutions to support this agenda. Unionlearn partners the Open University to support the production of free online information, advice and guidance and learning materials.

The Part-Time Education for Adults Returning to Learn (PEARL) website ([www.pearl.ac.uk](http://www.pearl.ac.uk)) is aimed at adults (18 years and above) who are looking for part-time and flexible learning opportunities primarily across England. It provides a comprehensive range of information and signposts sources of support and resources which will help to identify academic and vocational pathways (including informal to formal journeys) through post-compulsory to higher level learning.

The website contains case studies to inspire adults to return to education, letting them know that they are capable of achieving their dreams through education. There is also an 'Advise Me' tool on the website, which gives personalised learning options to suit learner's individual circumstances.

### **6 new free online courses**

Unionlearn worked in partnership with the Open University to develop six free online courses that take about 15 hours to complete. Learners can collect digital badges, which can be shared with employers, displayed on social media sites and kept in their TUC Education backpack<sup>2</sup>. The six courses are:

1. Planning a better future
2. Introducing practical healthcare
3. Supporting children's development
4. Caring for adults
5. Taking part in the voluntary sector
6. Starting your small business

<https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/forms/ou-national-networks-collaborative-outreach-project>

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<sup>1</sup> Unionlearn ULF database

<sup>2</sup> My badges section of My Learning on the TUC Education website: [www.tuceducation.org.uk](http://www.tuceducation.org.uk)

### **Support for union learning centres**

More than 350 workplace learning centres are supporting a cross-sector of workers including shift workers and delivering digital skills training to older workers. 50% of union community learning centres are located in the top 30% most deprived areas of the country and provide a diverse range of learning opportunities including English, maths and digital skills often embedded into learning practical tasks such as CV writing and learning how to send emails and use the internet. Workplace learning centres are a great resource to both staff and employers and the wider community contributing to initiatives such as English, maths, digital skills and apprenticeship support.

### **ULF**

A significant part of supporting learners is delivered by the DfE supported Union Learning Fund (ULF). Since 1998 trade unions have been supporting ULFs and working with employers, employees and learning providers to encourage greater take-up of learning in the workplace.

A recent independent study of the ULF rounds 15 and 16<sup>2</sup> evidences how ULFs can boost the support they give to learners where there is a union learning centre in the workplace. There is evidence of how ULF projects have advanced union support for apprenticeships, supported career progression leading to promotion or starting new jobs. Over half of these learners have no previous qualifications and just under half of those starting with Entry or Level 1 qualifications progressed onto a qualification at a higher level with ULF support. Three quarters of these learners said they had become more enthusiastic about learning with 9 out of 10 saying they were interested in further learning. 77% of employers agreed that the ULF has a positive effect in the workplace with 68% saying that unions inspired reluctant learners to engage in training and development.

### **Health and well-being**

Health and well-being has always been a core trade union policy and helping workers learn how to stay healthy through union learning initiatives reflects the growing importance of this agenda to an ageing workforce and changing demographics in society. Increasing stress in workplaces has led to an increasing prevalence of mental health in the workplace. TUC Education has developed a workbook to integrate the reps role in mental health at the workplace within reps training and a Mental health in the workplace eNote.

### **Mid-life career reviews**

This continues to be a popular agenda as unions continue to support working people at all stages of their lives. As more and more people have to work longer due to shifting pension regulations and the changing jobs market this results in people needing to change jobs and retrain more often. The concept of a 'job for life' and working for the same organisation throughout life is no longer relevant to many people. It is believed that individuals on average will change jobs 6 times during their working life.

The importance of this agenda is underlined in the **Fuller Working Lives Strategy - a Partnership Approach**<sup>3</sup> published by the Department for Work and Pensions in February 2017.

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<sup>2</sup> University of Leeds Business School – Report on the Evaluation of the Union Learning Fund Rounds 15-16 and Support Role of unionlearn – October 2016

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fuller-working-lives-a-partnership-approach>

A vital contribution to this agenda was delivered through the government funded unionlearn Mid-life Career Review Project which ran from 2013-2014 across 15 unions placing union learning representatives at the heart of supporting individuals to think about their options in mid-life (defined as aged 50+). As a 2016 EU report heralded:

*‘Particular mention is made in the UK case study of the work of unionlearn, which delivered MCRs (Mid Life Career reviews) to 700 individual union members, considerably overshooting its target of 400 clients. ULRs explored novel ways of appealing to members and interesting them in the idea of a MCR, using effective awareness-raising and campaigning approaches’.*

A recent report by John Cridland<sup>5</sup> includes plans for a new mid-life MOT to help people plan their later lives, addressing their lifestyle, their skills, paid and unpaid work, and their retirement income. For this to work, the review would have to take place in a workplace setting. After all, an employer’s support is needed for adjustment to workplaces, moves to flexible working or training for a role more suitable for an older worker, which are all essential if people are to stay in the labour market. But the principle is a useful one and the logical extension of a policy the TUC has long championed.

Following the Mid-life Career Review project unionlearn continued to disseminate, train and encourage trade unionists to engage with the mid-life development agenda. This work resulted in approximately 5,000 people undertaking mid-life and older workers’ activities and a wide range of materials and resources being developed to help support this work.

During 2016 unionlearn undertook a survey of over 2,500 members to assess the continued impact of mid-life review activity for individuals, employers and families. The role of unions in the mid-life review process has never been more important. Unionlearn will continue to support trade unions to embed mid-life development reviews into their learning and skills work within the context of all-age, intergenerational approaches to supporting learners.

The survey outcomes can be found on the unionlearn website<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup><https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2017/labour-market-social-policies/changing-places-mid-career-review-and-internal-mobility>

<sup>5</sup>[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/602239/print-ready-independent-review-of-the-state-pension-age-smoothing-the-transition.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/602239/print-ready-independent-review-of-the-state-pension-age-smoothing-the-transition.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/supporting-midlife-development-survey-report>

### 3.0 Purpose of the Supporting Learners Strategy

In a changing adult learning and skills landscape, this strategy will further refine the model for Supporting Learners across unionlearn, TUC affiliated unions and providers of impartial learning and careers advice. It will contribute towards the achievement of key objectives in unionlearn’s Business Plan and the TUC Strategic Plan.

The Supporting Learners Strategy is underpinned by unionlearn’s Communications Strategy which outlines unionlearn’s unique selling points (USPs) namely:

- no other organisation can engage so effectively with so many partners and communities
- no other organisation can engage so effectively and reach the learners who other parts of the skills system do not reach.

It supports the role of ULRs who are ‘trusted people like us’ who can motivate, guide and support working people. They are seen as honest brokers, independent of providers, giving working people a voice with employers.

ULRs are the cornerstone of the unionlearn Supporting Learners model. Their role is recognised by Ofsted as ‘outstanding’ – not only in reaching learners with English, maths and digital skills needs, but in supporting them to achieve and progress.

The Supporting Learners Strategy contributes to and promotes unionlearn’s key messages:

- ULRs are based in the workplace and have the best understanding of skills needs
- ULRs are uniquely placed to engage with hard to reach learners
- ULRs have a good track record of engaging, supporting and enabling disadvantaged learners to achieve
- More than 35,000 ULRs have been trained by TUC Education and this continues to steadily grow
- unionlearn supports unions to create learning opportunities for nearly a quarter of a million learners a year
- 50% of union community learning centres are located in the top 30% most deprived areas of the country
- unionlearn and unions work with some of the nation’s most disadvantaged learners, those lacking basic English, maths and digital skills
- For every £1 invested in the ULF there is a return to the economy of £10.60
- Union-led learning builds links between local communities and the workplace. Many community learning centres mix working and non-working learners in a safe supportive environment and some unions have introduced community ULRs.

The accompanying development plan provides an overview of proposed future developments to the end of March 2020. Key milestones and internal targets are in the annual Service Team operational plan.

The Strategy will be further refined once the government’s strategy for careers guidance is published.

## 4.0 Policy Context

The new Supporting Learners Strategy 2017 - 2020 has been developed against a backdrop of reduced and re-focused funding for learning and skills initiatives. The direction of travel for the government's Careers Strategy is based on a 'ladder of opportunity' supporting 5 key elements:

1. Improving the prestige of careers
2. Expanding the quantity and quality of careers provision
3. Meeting the needs of the skills economy
4. Support for the most disadvantaged
5. Job security



This approach chimes directly with the supporting learners work promoted by unionlearn. However, until the Strategy is published it's important that unionlearn continues to focus on both younger and older workers and concentrates resources on what 'adds value' to the union offer for members in the workplace.

### Post 16 skills and technical education

The Post-16 skills plan and the report into Technical Education by an independent skills panel<sup>7</sup>, chaired by Lord Sainsbury, has recommended the simplification of the current system providing 15 high-quality routes with standards set by the Institute for Apprenticeships. Unions have an important role to play in setting and monitoring of quality standards ensuring that workers are represented and receive high quality training. Methods of Assessment, clear routes to occupations, transferability between academic and technical and transition arrangements for aged 16+ are all key features that need to be developed and can be supported by unionlearn to ensure that the proposed routes are a success.

### English, maths and Functional Skills

English and maths provision is also referred to in the plan and report referenced above. Each of the 15 routes will include a 'common core' which applies to all individuals studying that route and is aligned to Apprenticeships. The panel also recommends 'a single set of maths and English exit

<sup>7</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-skills-plan-and-independent-report-on-technical-education](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-skills-plan-and-independent-report-on-technical-education)

requirements which should be seen as the minimum level of maths and English which all individuals must achieve ahead of securing technical education’.

Unionlearn’s literacy and English skills campaign aims to raise awareness and promote literacy learning opportunities via the union route. A maths focused campaign encourages people to take up an initial assessment and explore everyday maths. People are encouraged to access online resources including the free Use-IT online diagnostic assessment tool<sup>8</sup>.

### **ESOL and migrant workers**

Unionlearn supports the NATECLA strategy ‘Towards an ESOL Strategy for England’<sup>9</sup> launched in October 2016. The strategy supports the call for more English language (ESOL) courses to allow more migrants to contribute to the English economy and society as a whole and reduce costs to public services.

At a time when immigration is perceived to be a major public issue, the government is mounting increasing pressure on migrants to learn English and integrate, but waiting lists for English language (ESOL) courses are at an all-time high and unaffordable or inaccessible to many who need them.

Trade unions play an important role in supporting ESOL learning in the workplace and some unions continue to offer ESOL to their members but the lack of funding makes it difficult to source affordable provision. The TUC ‘Working in the UK’ guide<sup>10</sup> translated into 13 community languages, helps migrant workers know more about their rights in the workplace. TUC Education also has an eNote ‘Language support for workers’ which focuses on ESOL in the workplace and equips reps with the skills to plan, arrange and promote ESOL activities, including recognising the value of these activities to support union organising. Much of what is secured for ESOL learners in the workplace is achieved via learning agreements with an emphasis on paid time off to learn for this vulnerable cohort who often have more than one job in order to make ends meet.

### **Apprenticeships**

Unions will continue to work with employers to make a success of the levy and the apprenticeships it funds. Unionlearn welcomes the support for people from disadvantaged areas to ensure the opportunity to undertake an Apprenticeship is open to everyone, no matter where in England they live, their background or family circumstances.

The quality of Apprenticeships is an area of concern and where unions can play an important role. Recent reports from the DfE evidence that one in twenty apprentices are not receiving any kind of training either formal or informal. As in many European countries, trade unions play a central role in setting and monitoring quality standards. Investment in further education to be able to deliver high quality training is also essential and the development of five new National Colleges in priority sectors for high speed rail, nuclear, onshore oil, digital skills and creative and cultural industries is an interesting development. Unions can play an important campaigning role in the importance of safeguards to ensure work placements are high quality and that young people are not exploited or the apprenticeship system is not undermined.

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<sup>8</sup> [www.unionlearn.org.uk/use-it](http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/use-it)

<sup>9</sup> <http://natecla.org.uk/uploads/media/208/16482.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.tuc.org.uk/workingintheuk>

### ICT and digital skills

The digital skills strategy published in March 2017<sup>11</sup> was pre-empted by an announcement in October 2016 that the government plans to ‘make training in basic digital skills free for adults lacking relevant qualifications’ via the Adult Skills budget. The announcement is welcome and should put digital skills on a similar footing to English and maths. Unions are well placed to respond to this agenda having a long tradition of supporting digital skills in the workplace especially via ULF projects and the work of ULRs. Unionlearn will continue to make the case for the importance of the union role in supporting and promoting the delivery of any digital skills entitlement.

The government has published some telling statistics including that more than 10 million adults lack digital skills and that 5.3 million people in the UK have never used the internet. Older people are less likely to have these skills 57% of the over 65s compared to 7% of 15-24 year olds posing real opportunities for the unionlearn supporting older worker priorities.

### Adult Education

A new report commissioned by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Adult Education by The Warwick Institute for Employment Research (IER)<sup>12</sup> has made five recommendations to boost the role of adult education which resonate fully with the unionlearn supporting learners agenda:

1. Establish a national and regional strategy for adult education, health, employability and wellbeing
2. Re-distribute resources fairly for adults across the different life stages
3. Improve awareness by providing careers information advice and guidance in local communities, greater use of labour market intelligence and mid-life review
4. Gather more evidence on the impact of adult education
5. Encourage more employers to offer opportunities to adults, especially older adults keen to remain active in employment

The recommendations drew on the pioneering work of ULRs in supporting adults, especially the most disadvantaged, to return to learning and the work of the union-led mid-life review process to empower ULRs to support adults to take stock of their skills and job prospects. Also, the role of unionlearn and unions in supporting disadvantaged learners to improve their English and maths.

### The Industrial Strategy

The Industrial Strategy<sup>13</sup> green paper consultation published in March 2017 places developing people’s skills as one of the 10 pillars of the strategy and high quality careers advice potentially will play a critical part in the realisation of this. The strategy makes a commitment to ‘high quality careers provision’ but is focused on young people. There is an acknowledgement that *‘we need to go further if everyone is going to get the information, advice and guidance they need to succeed. Careers provision continues to be patchy and inconsistent – both in schools and later life’*. The government is also keen that the quality and impartiality of information on post-16 options (whether they be academic or vocational routes) given to students by schools is given equal weight. The government plans to legislate for schools, colleges and training providers to utilise external experts

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-digital-strategy/2-digital-skills-and-inclusion-giving-everyone-access-to-the-digital-skills-they-need>

<sup>12</sup> [http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/research/adult\\_education/dh\\_adult\\_education\\_full\\_report.pdf](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/research/adult_education/dh_adult_education_full_report.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/586626/building-our-industrial-strategy-green-paper.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/586626/building-our-industrial-strategy-green-paper.pdf)

to make sure young people are aware of all the routes to higher skills in the workplace – ULRs and unions could play a part in delivering sessions to young people.

The strategy also commits to ‘*testing new approaches to lifelong learning*’ acknowledging the barriers that can exist for adults to train/re-train or gain qualifications. It is a known fact that as we get older we train less. This culture needs to change as the demands of shifting demographics pose challenges to the ‘five generational workforce’ we see today.

### **Careers advice and guidance**

Publically funded impartial careers information and advice services have undergone significant changes during the period of the last Supporting Learning Strategy. The loss of the Connexions service offering advice and guidance across the country has led to a patchwork of different offers across the regions of England.

In July 2016 a Parliamentary Select Committee Report on careers advice and guidance<sup>14</sup> was published and made a number of recommendations to improve the services offered. It also made comment on how a host of policy changes, initiatives and new bodies introduced over the past few years have failed to make serious improvements and in some cases have been counter-productive.

However, the government response<sup>15</sup> in November 2016 did not support all of the recommendations including the need for a single organisation to take responsibility for an all-age careers service. There are therefore 2 key organisations engaged in the promotion of careers advice in England at present.

The increasing commercialisation of the sector has caused concern about the negative impact on the careers advice offered to young people. The CBI/Pearson 2017 skills survey found that 84% of businesses do not feel the quality of careers advice young people receive in schools is good enough. The survey also highlighted that firms believe there is a lack of awareness among young people of the education routes they need to take to enter particular careers (50%) and careers advice being poorly aligned to the sectors (49%), which leads to skill shortages.

### **The Careers & Enterprise Company <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/>**

This links schools and colleges with employers and providers of careers and enterprise activities. These partnerships are giving young people a better introduction to the world of work and a clear understanding of what their future might hold. The Company delivers connections between local businesses and nearby schools and colleges through their Enterprise Adviser Network. The Company has appointed 78 coordinators and almost 1200 advisers. Over 700 schools and colleges (in 37 out of 38 Local Enterprise Partnership areas in England) have been helped to develop better careers and enterprise programmes for their pupils.

### **The National Careers Service <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/>**

The service has a ‘*Right Advice Right Time*’ approach and provides free, up-to-date, impartial information and advice about education, training or work to adults and young people aged 13 years and over. This is twinned with up-to-date information on careers, jobs and routes into apprenticeships and work. Individuals can access support via a website, helpline and web chat. The

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmese/205/205.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

website receives an average of 2 million visits a month and 75,000 face to face sessions are delivered per month. The National Careers Service has a new digital service where users are able to explore career paths, develop their own personal profiles and prepare action plans for reaching their potential. Careers professionals and ULRs can use the digital service to support their work with individuals.

Schools (and other agencies) can choose to commission careers advice and other careers-related support from quality-assured National Careers Service contractors which are 'area-based'. The National Careers Service contractors are also required to broker relationships between local schools, colleges, communities and employers – working with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Jobcentre Plus where appropriate. The partnerships provide young people with first-hand experience of the world of work and provide good labour market information as well as introducing people from the world of work to schools to provide support to the careers education curriculum. They are also contracted to make sure the advice they give is underpinned by relevant and up-to-date labour market information that takes account of LEP local priorities, including the sectors that are growing and the requirements of local employers. National Careers Service contractors are also required to share with young people, adults and local partners' details of careers events and campaigns in their geographic area.

Although it is branded 'an all age service' the NCS particularly focuses on low skilled adults without a level 3 qualification, as well as NEETs and adults facing redundancy. Out of the 511,924 adults who accessed the service from April 15 to March 16, 91% were from priority groups ie unemployed, in custody, ex-offenders and those at risk of redundancy.

Since 2014 the NCS has been a key partner for unionlearn and trade unions in supporting free services for people in the workplace but their remit now is limited. Unionlearn has promoted the NCS through its website, events, publications and promotional materials for use in the workplace. However, many people still do not know about the service and seem unwilling to access the website or telephone service. It does not seem to be reaching priority groups in the workplace.

Generally, there is a lack of understanding about disadvantage in the workplace, and services are often focused on unemployed people via Job Centre Plus, and others who are out of the labour market. Many working people are particularly in need of high quality free careers guidance, including the development of career management skills so that they can take charge of their own working lives and overcome barriers to progression. Trade unions and unionlearn have been successful in working with traditionally hard-to-reach groups in the workplace, and in engaging with employers. These are some of the groups in the workplace who need targeted careers support, and who unions can reach:

- Workers at risk of redundancy
- Older workers
- Low-paid workers
- Temporary or agency workers
- Part-time workers
- Shift workers
- Unqualified or unskilled workers
- Apprentices
- Migrant workers, refugees and others who may have ESOL needs
- Workers at risk of discrimination

- Workers recovering from mental illness or other long-term health issues
- Workers in non-unionised workplaces
- Working parents/ lone parents
- Workers on zero hours' contracts

Unionlearn and trade unions are in a good position to reach all of these groups but need the active support of impartial careers services and professional advisers and other experts to promote and deliver adapted and targeted services.

The DfE Careers Strategy will not be published until 'late 2017', however, in the meantime, the remit for careers guidance has been given to the Apprenticeship and Skills Minister in the Dept for Education...who states: *'I want to root our approach to careers provision firmly at the heart of the government's focus on social justice and our desire to make sure that everyone, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to progress in life'*<sup>16</sup>

It is hoped that when the government strategy for careers is published it will contain:

- A commitment to tailored support for people most in need, at whatever stage of life
- High quality careers advice and support for everyone
- Support for those most disadvantaged and to support social justice

### **The focus on young people**

Young people are a strategic priority in the TUC Campaign Plan (Priority 4: Reaching young workers). Unionlearn is committed to promoting high quality training and careers provision for young workers. The Gatsby Foundation's 'Good Careers Guidance'<sup>17</sup> has established a set of benchmarks which capture the important dimensions of careers guidance for young people. The Gatsby Foundation and The Careers & Enterprise Company have developed the Compass self-assessment tool, which aims to help schools gain a better understanding of how their current careers provision compares to the Gatsby Benchmarks. Unionlearn will reference the benchmarks to support the quality assurance of the IAG support offered by ULRs.

In March 2015 the TUC signed a charter with the NUS and UNISON looking at 10 key areas to support young people to make informed choices before embarking on life changing pathways. Unionlearn also hosted a joint 'Voice of Apprenticeships' event with the NUS during National Apprenticeship Week 2016 giving a unique opportunity to apprentices to 'have their say' to ensure quality provision that affects their future career.

Unionlearn is a partner with Inspiring the Future<sup>18</sup> an organisation that connects schools and colleges with employers and people from the world of work. ULRs and other union reps are available to give talks in schools. ULRs are well placed to develop school and college partnerships due to the role they can play in supporting young people with subject knowledge, careers inspiration or practical workplace expertise.

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<sup>16</sup> Robert Halfon Apprenticeship and Skills Minister speech 31 January 2017

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/reports/pdf/gatsby-sir-john-holman-good-career-guidance-2014.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.inspiringthefuture.org/>

In April 2016 unionlearn published a Youth Employment Guide<sup>19</sup> providing a practical tool for union representatives highlighting the routeways into employment that Traineeships and Apprenticeships can provide for young people.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/youth-employment-guide-union-representatives>

## 5.0 Unionlearn Supporting Learners – SWOT Analysis

### Strengths

- More than 35,00 trained ULRs acting as trusted intermediaries
- ULF projects delivering IAG in the workplace
- Proven track record of delivering IAG to disadvantaged learners
- Engagement with a wide-range of partners and communities
- Online offer - TUC Education and Supporting Learners resources
- Successful campaigning on issues such as mid-life development reviews for all aged 50+
- Unions are effective in engaging employers in learning and skills
- Robust unionlearn and unions infrastructure to support ULRs work with learners
- All party support for unions supporting learners work
- Effective action planning takes place via ULRs using IAG pads and online tools

### Weaknesses

- Funding drives priorities which can change over time
- Reduction in facility time for ULRs to carry out their role
- Future of EU funding
- Limited NCS offer for working people
- Young people's careers advice and guidance patchy across the country
- Limited ability to support union learners that don't need priority skills support eg professional, highly skilled learners

### Opportunities

- Established workplace learning centres, often in deprived communities, delivering English, maths and digital skills already set up to deliver on priorities
- Models to support high quality apprenticeships and traineeships
- On-going campaigning
- Access funding support from devolved skills budgets and other sources
- New careers strategy to be launched in late 2017
- The introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy
- Ageing demographics mean the mid-life careers review work is becoming a more important priority for policy makers
- Continue to make the case for the introduction of Personal Learning Accounts

### Threats

- Payment by results and proving return on investment on initiatives outside of the ULF framework
- Resourcing of online offer to ensure high quality resources, information and learning materials continue to be produced
- Short term unionlearn funding
- Increasingly challenging and changing skills landscape
- Lack of engagement from National Careers Service prime contractors
- Lack of high quality impartial and independent careers advice for young people on apprenticeship opportunities
- Reduced employer buy-in to joint union learning infrastructure e.g. learning agreements, facility time, learning centres.
- Lack of ESOL funding is a significant engagement barrier.

## 6.0 The Strategy

The Supporting Learners Strategy has been set in the context of the unionlearn business case 2017-18. The key objectives for unionlearn this year have been summarised as:

- support the levy and promoting apprenticeships
- help disadvantaged learners
- refresh and relaunch the union approach to English and maths
- continue to demonstrate value for money and effectiveness
- implement learner tracking efficiently
- supporting older workers

Unionlearn also has a stated set of objectives to support the delivery of the ULF including *‘helping unions and ULRs with an IAG framework’*

The Union Learning Fund (ULF) has developed successful and effective models of IAG delivery, leading to engagement with learning across every sector and every level of learning from Functional Skills through to Higher Education. A recent report carried out by The Leeds University Business School on the ULF stated *‘partners noted the capacity of unions to engage adult learners, notably, but not exclusively, those in lower grade occupations, and encourage them to participate and progress into learning.’*<sup>20</sup>

Stakeholders also emphasised the union role in supporting engagement, completion and progression from one learning level to another or to moving from informal to more formal learning opportunities. This is evidenced by the ULF learner support referrals which were 136,773 in 2016 well above the target, highlighting the substantive amount of support provided by union reps.<sup>21</sup>

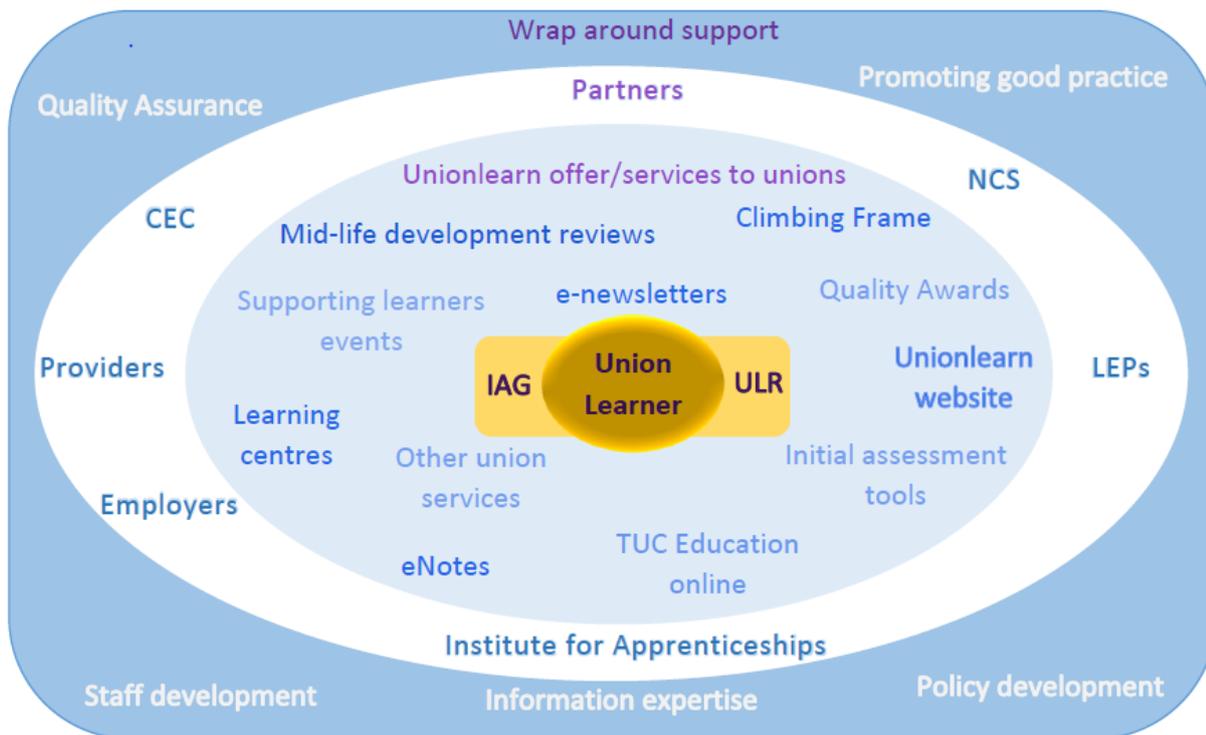
The key achievements since 2014 and the current policy context outlined above is reflected in the themes, priorities and strategic plan for Supporting Learners 2017-2020.

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<sup>20</sup> Centre for Employment Relations, Innovation and Change Leeds University Business School – Evaluation of the ULR rounds 15-16 and Support Role of unionlearn – Final Report October 2016

<sup>21</sup> unionlearn Annual Report 2016

## 7.0 Unionlearn model for Supporting Learners



The model has been revised and updated to reflect the current situation but is still based on active working relationships with IAG providers where they exist. It is flexible and provides a ‘wrap around’ offer of up to date information, advice and support to reps. It recognises that ULRs and union reps need to engage with other agencies in order to find the information they need to help their members and to broker workplace opportunities effectively. The model continues to build on good practice in unions and across the unionlearn network generally.

The key features of the unionlearn model for Supporting Learners are:

- central role of the ULR or union rep, in supporting, coaching, mentoring, signposting and facilitating learning
- working with a range of agencies who can offer services to union learners
- agreements and joint actions for working together with the network
- standards of service that union learners can expect of these partners
- access to information and advice and resources for ULRs, other union reps and union learners
- identifying and sharing good practice
- supporting progression (ladder of opportunity)

Key members of the network include:

- unions/ULR and other union reps
- learning centres
- other learning and training providers (Adult and Community, Further and Higher)
- the National Careers Service (NCS)
- the Careers Enterprise Company (CEC)
- employers
- local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)

## Supporting Learners Strategy 2017 – 2020

- the Institute for Apprenticeships

This model is dependent on good working relationships with others in the network, which can in part be secured by a Partnership Agreement with commissioning agencies.

## **8.0 Key Achievements April 2014 to March 2017**

The Supporting Learners Strategy has resulted in numerous achievements since 2014, with the following being of particular note:

- More than 300,000 ULF learners have received information, advice or guidance from a ULR or other union rep to help them progress and get on at work
- The Climbing Frame has more than 20 Learning Themes and almost 7,000 registered users. A user survey conducted in early 2017 found that 94% of respondents would recommend the website to colleagues
- Worked in partnership with the Open University to develop the PEARL website and 6 free online learning modules aimed at adult learners
- Campaign and influencing work most notably for the mid-life development review entitlement for everyone aged 50+. Unionlearn's mid-life development review campaign has resulted in the Cridland Review and the Skills Commission recognising the importance of these reviews as a way to support and develop the skills people will need in the future
- The mid-life development support and infrastructure provided to ULRs means that unions are now the biggest provider of workplace mid-life career reviews with more than 5,000 reviews conducted
- Developed and produced a number of high-quality resources to support union reps deliver mid-life development reviews including a Climbing Frame theme, an eNote and Value my Skills Cards
- Published a practical guide to delivering reviews in the workplace 'Valuing the Skills of Older Workers: how to do a mid-life development review' and a 'Getting Active' publication was launched in 2016 which included activities that ULRs and other reps can run in the workplace
- Four mini signposting guides were published in late 2016 covering financial planning and pensions, health and well-being, mental health and helping carers
- Conducted a mid-life development review evaluation in early 2017
- Promotion and support of the Use-IT initial assessment tool with more than 3,000 assessments being carried out
- The design and development of a suite of Supporting Learners eNotes (bitesize online learning modules) these include: Ways to Support Learners, Using the Climbing Frame, Higher Learning and Conducting Mid-life Development Reviews
- Partnership agreements formalised with Memorandums of Understanding with the University of Wolverhampton that includes a 10% discount for union learners and National Career Service sub-contractor tchc
- Actively contributed and participated in Learning at Work Week and Festival of Learning Campaigns. Unionlearn is represented on the Festival of Learning Strategy Group and the Judging Panel for the National Awards
- Regularly published the Learning Rep e-magazine and Supporting Learners e-newsletter to keep ULRs and other reps apprised of latest Supporting Learners initiatives and developments
- Developed and published an online funding toolkit to support unions formulate high quality bids to funders
- Developed and submitted an Erasmus+ bid to create new online diagnostic tools to enhance the mid-life skills review offer for workers
- Regional and national events, briefings and conferences with a Supporting Learners focus for ULRs, other union reps and project workers

## Supporting Learners Strategy 2017 – 2020

- Unionlearn is a member of the Mayor of London's Skills for Londoners Advisory Group looking at a skills strategy for London.
- A range of effective good practice case studies have been published and promoted on the unionlearn website
- Attracted attention at EU and national conferences and provided an inspiration to unions and partners in other countries.

## 9.0 Key themes and priorities for supporting learners 2017 - 2020

Supporting learner activities are a central focus in all areas of unionlearn's work and are underpinned by the TUC values of fairness, equality, openness, solidarity and inspiration.

The role of unionlearn in terms of supporting learners is to take the strategic responsibility for supporting the work of ULRs and other union reps and the network in which they are operating. It has never been intended that unionlearn will be a direct deliverer of impartial careers information and advice services. Services may be delivered in the workplace or in learning centres, or by the National Careers Service and its sub-contractors. The Strategy 2017 onwards will continue to focus on supporting learners at all ages.

### Themes

The following themes form the basis of the key priorities in this strategy and will be supported by the unionlearn Communications Strategy. Information about Supporting Learners will be provided through websites, the Climbing Frame Learning Themes, e-publications and e-newsletters and events.

#### Theme 1 Promoting Apprenticeships

Apprentices require career development support in the workplace and ULRs can help to facilitate this. Unions could also be involved in supporting young people in work experience. The impact of the reduction of careers advice in schools has been widely reported<sup>22</sup> – resulting in services to adults being of crucial importance to ensure that people can make informed choices about learning and work later in life.

#### *The unionlearn Supporting Learners Strategy will:*

- campaign for high quality careers advice services for young people in schools and colleges, including apprentices/trainees
- provide up to date information and advice to union reps on the Apprenticeships Levy as a negotiating tool
- provide advice and support to enable access to high quality Apprenticeships
- further develop the Apprenticeship Toolkit/Tips/FAQs
- develop bespoke resources and materials, including e-Notes

#### **Priorities**

Support the Apprenticeship Campaign by:

- 1.1 continuing to promote the role that unions play in supporting Trainees and Apprentices in the workplace
- 1.2 publishing regular stories/case studies and articles using a variety of media
- 1.3 developing resources and material to support the campaign for high quality apprenticeships
- 1.4 organising events, presentations and workshops to raise awareness and support on the Levy
- 1.5 promoting and publicising the Apprenticeship Quality Award and Apprenticeship Charter
- 1.6 promoting the use of the Apprenticeship Toolkit and eNote
- 1.7 promoting access to high quality pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship programmes
- 1.8 Support the ULR role acting as mentors in the workplace

<sup>22</sup> Sub committee on Education, Skills and the Economy, Government inaction on careers provision failings is unacceptable  
1 November 2016

## **Theme 2 Supporting the union approach to English, maths and digital skills**

English and maths are basic skills that people require to be able to do their jobs, run a home, manage money and enjoy a social life. That includes the ability to read, write, speak English and use everyday maths. Unions are constantly highlighting these skills to employers as vital for the learning opportunities of workers, their careers and for the efficiency of businesses and services.

Unions and Union Learning Reps (ULRs) have a successful track record of supporting members with English, maths and digital skills and need support to continue to do so. Almost 30,000 learners were supported in English and maths via ULF projects in 2016-17.

Promoting digital inclusion and supporting digital participation through the use of web-based services and tools (including social media, blogs, forums, video-links), the Climbing Frame and App, and promoting on-line learning, including TUC Education eNotes and programmes continues to be an essential part of the Supporting Learners Strategy.

### ***The Supporting Learners Strategy will:***

- campaign for high quality English, maths and digital skills provision for all learners in the workplace
- further develop diagnostic assessment tools to support learners returning to education and training and support progression
- promote English, maths and digital skills resources and events
- assist Learning Centres to provide English, maths and digital skills support to workers
- embed Functional Skills into the union offer

### **Priorities**

Support the English and maths campaign by:

- 2.1 refreshing and update the digital offer to unions
- 2.2 promoting Use-IT initial assessment tool
- 2.3 continuing to deliver an English and Maths campaign via regular stories/case studies/blogs/briefing materials/specialised events
- 2.4 revising the Learning Centre directory and promote English and Maths offer/assessment tools to Learning Centres
- 2.5 continuing to contribute to the review of Functional Skills and provide information as they are revised
- 2.6 supporting the improvement of English, maths and digital skills through mid-life development reviews

## **Theme 3 Helping Disadvantaged learners**

A key theme of the ULF projects is to support those hard-to-reach learners who, for whatever reason, have missed out on the chance to learn. Based on principles of equality and diversity, this theme is about supporting ULRs to reach and motivate disadvantaged learners of all ages in the workplace and the community, and to help to raise aspirations about what can be achieved through learning. It is about inter-generational learning. It is also about promoting the transferable skills and knowledge that can be gained from taking on roles within unions. It is also about helping working people to develop career management/employability skills and the ability to cope with change in their lives, to develop strategies to stay in work and progress at work, and to develop holistic approaches to their life, work, health and wellbeing.

Unionlearn and union representatives do not only work with union members but with all working people, their families and the wider community. This activity promotes the benefits of union membership, but is not dependent on it. Unionlearn works on joint projects with community organisations and others to extend the benefits of learning in the workplace to all.

These groups include:

- families of union members
- unemployed union members
- disadvantaged groups, for example migrants
- older workers
- young people in schools and colleges, and NEETs
- others working in non-unionised workplaces

***The Supporting Learners strategy will:***

- assist ULRs to support hard to reach learners in the workplace and community
- promote progression pathways via briefings, events and the website
- work with partners to provide access to free or value for money learning opportunities
- continue to campaign for Personal Learning Accounts

**Priorities**

- 3.1 Ensure that good practice in Supporting Learners' activity is embedded into ULF projects
- 3.2 Provide guidance, information and resources to unions on Supporting Learners' activity
- 3.3 Organise events and produce regular briefings/e-newsletters and email alerts
- 3.4 Promote pathways from FE to HE, union discounts and free learning opportunities
- 3.5 Support the development of Personal Learning Accounts with partners
- 3.6 Promote lifelong learning and union learning centres with partners

**Theme 4 Supporting learning and progression for all ages at all levels by facilitating access to quality, impartial information and advice about learning and work**

Unionlearn recognises that all learning at all levels is valuable; progression is not always linear and upwards, and not just about qualifications. It is also about promoting the transferable skills and knowledge that can be gained from taking on roles within unions. It is also about helping working people to develop career management/employability skills and the ability to cope with change in their lives, to develop strategies to stay in work and progress at work, and to develop holistic approaches to their life, work, financial and retirement planning, health and wellbeing.

The 'Ladder of Opportunity' that will form the basis of the government's Careers Strategy is fully supported by unionlearn. We will continue to encourage and facilitate access to services, learning and funding for learning for all working people, particularly those who are disadvantaged in the workplace.

***The Supporting Learners Strategy will:***

- campaign for high quality affordable careers advice services for working people
- support progression for reps through TUC online learning programmes to nationally recognised qualifications at all levels.
- broker and provide access to informal and formal learning opportunities in English, maths, digital skills, apprenticeships, level 2 and 3 qualifications, and moving on to higher learning opportunities at levels 4 to 8
- use the Climbing Frame as a tool for informing and supporting progression

- support ULF projects to facilitate progression for reps and learners
- assist union learners to negotiate support for their learning from their employers
- make formal agreements with learning and careers advice providers (national and local), and engaging with employers to develop learning agreements
- agree partnerships (national and regional) to provide access to discounts and bursaries for union members, and services delivered in the workplace

#### **Priorities**

- 4.1 Identify and develop external funding opportunities and facilitate the bidding process
- 4.2 Maintain and manage the unionlearn learner tracking system and analyse the data for continuous improvement
- 4.3 Develop a new streamlined online Quality Improvement Framework
- 4.4 Work with TUC Education to update and promote the use of the four Supporting Learners eNotes and other eNotes
- 4.5 Refresh the Climbing Frame learning themes and promote and embed into unions' learning and skills work
- 4.6 Campaign for the introduction of personal learning accounts with partners
- 4.7 Continue to support and promote informal adult and community education events and national initiatives as the 'first step' on the ladder of opportunity for many disadvantaged learners
- 4.8 Maintain regular contact and dialogue with main delivery partners of impartial careers information and advice and develop agreements that enhance partnership working

#### **Theme 5 Supporting older workers**

Workers are retiring later in life, pensions are uncertain. Traditional forms of life-long employment are disappearing, replaced, in many cases, by short-term, insecure and constantly changing roles. Many workers will now change jobs several times during their working lives. Workers in mid-life, particularly those over the age of 50, who lose their jobs often find it difficult to find new work. Many have developed skills and experience, but are unaware of how they can be applied in new areas.

The 'Supporting mid-life development' campaign aims to:

- heighten awareness of the challenges faced by workers in mid-life.
- train ULRs to support older colleagues in their workplace.
- carry out mid-life development reviews to help older workers identify their transferrable skills.

Workers in mid-life often have a variety of care responsibilities, for children or for aging parents and relatives. The campaign aims to show how better use of skills and experience can aid in the development of work/life balance.

#### ***The Supporting Learners Strategy will:***

- continue to campaign for a universal entitlement to a mid-life development review at the age of 50
- support older workers to change their lives through learning by having a mid-life development review and creating an action plan
- train reps to carry out mid-life development reviews
- seek additional funding to continue to develop online tools and resources

### **Priorities**

- 5.1 Promote mid-life development reviews by the delivery of briefing sessions and e-Notes on line
- 5.2 Disseminate the findings and implement the recommendations in the midlife development review evaluation report
- 5.3 Continue to promote the unique value of the ULR as a trusted intermediary in the workplace
- 5.4 Continue to train reps to carry out mid-life reviews
- 5.5 Promote and further develop online tools and other resources to support older workers
- 5.6 Continue to work in partnership with agencies to support the government's Fuller Working Lives agenda

### **Theme 6 Working with key partners and stakeholders**

The breadth and scope of the Supporting Learners Strategy cannot be delivered by unionlearn alone. The support of key partners and stakeholders is imperative if adult learners are to continue to gain access to and benefit from high quality careers advice and guidance both inside and outside of the workplace.

#### ***The Supporting Learners Strategy will:***

- participate in collaborative working to ensure unionlearn's unique selling points are understood and shared with key partners
- ensure the needs of union learners are widely understood and valued
- continue to campaign for the needs of union learners in government priority areas

### **Priorities**

- 6.1 Participate in key forums/groups and advisory committees to ensure the role of union learning is understood
- 6.2 Continue to ensure that key messages as outlined in the unionlearn Communications Strategy are shared with stakeholders and partners
- 6.3 Ensure that the unique contribution of unionlearn's Supporting Learners' Strategy is widely understood and recognised
- 6.4 Support unionlearn campaigning in 2 priority areas, Apprenticeships and English and maths
- 6.5 Work with LEPS to develop strategies to meet regional skills
- 6.7 Assess effectiveness of current arrangements with partners and review, refresh and update MoUs to improve collaborative working

## 10.0 Timescale, monitoring and review

This strategy covers the period April 2017 to March 2020. However, once the government publishes its Careers Strategy in late 2017 then the impact on the Strategy will need to be reviewed. Normally, progress against the development plan will be reviewed twice yearly by the Service Manager.

### Monitoring effectiveness of the strategy

Evaluation will be undertaken on a continuous basis on the purpose and effectiveness of each theme or priority, using the guiding principles below:

#### **Tackling Inequality**

- \*Widening access to under-represented groups
- \*Supporting learners from disadvantaged groups
- \*Providing opportunities to people with disabilities, black and minority ethnic individuals or groups, supporting the LGBT agenda in the workplace, supporting learners with specific needs eg dyslexia

#### **Impact**

- \*Perceived benefits to learners
- \*Perceived benefits to employers
- \*Perceived benefits to unions

#### **Supporting learner progression**

- \*To higher learning
- \*To another job
- \*Career change
- \*Qualifications
- \*High standards and quality

#### **Partnerships**

- \*New partnerships developed
- \*Existing partnerships enhanced

#### **Added value**

- \*Input of union expertise
- \*Input of union resources
- \*Union brokerage
- \*Union delivered programme

#### **Innovation/Creativity**

- \*Developing new materials and methods
- \*Creative solutions to meet a specific need
- \*Technological advancements to support learners

#### **Learner Support**

- \*Range of support provided by ULRs
- \*Union learning centre support services
- \*Learner completion rates

#### **Employer support/engagement**

- \*Joint learning committee
- \*Learning agreement
- \*Employer funding for learning
- \*Paid release for learners to participate in learning opportunities
- \*Meeting a skills shortage

## **Consultation**

The development of this strategy has been informed through discussion, consultation and feedback from unionlearn staff, unions and other partners and key stakeholders.