

Unionlearn

Unions supporting high-quality
Apprenticeships



unionlearn
with the TUC



Foreword

One of our key priorities for the coming year is to continue to expand our work with unions to promote and support high-quality Apprenticeship programmes that can deliver for young people and adults alike.

This could hardly be more timely, as more employers will gain access to funding to recruit more people onto Apprenticeships now that the government's Apprenticeship Levy is in operation.

As this booklet amply demonstrates, trade unions are already making a difference for apprentices and the organisations that employ them in a whole world of different ways: by negotiating high-quality Apprenticeship programmes, by challenging gender stereotypes, by coaching and mentoring young people in the workplace, by helping employers remove barriers to Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) and disabled workers and by supporting older workers, to name just a few.

We have a wealth of knowledge and experience to offer young people, existing staff and employers when it comes to designing Apprenticeships that will deliver the best results for everyone. We look forward both to developing our existing partnerships in this vital area of work and to further expanding our networks in the years ahead.

Kevin Rowan

Director, unionlearn

Opening up Apprenticeships to everyone

More young women are developing careers in engineering, thanks to unions and employers working together to challenge gender stereotyping in Apprenticeships.

Unite member Nicola Greaves joined the Apprenticeship programme at Jaguar Land Rover three years ago after seeing a poster advertising opportunities near where she lives in Castle Bromwich, close to the world-famous factory.

It was the reputation of the company that attracted her, she says. "A lot of people want to get into Jaguar Land Rover because it's a good company to work for, their reputation is good and they pay well," she explains. "I have a general interest in cars anyway, and with the factory being local to where I live, I jumped at the chance of trying to get a job there."

After researching further online, Nicola applied for the mechatronics technician Apprenticeship, a four-year programme that she will finish next year.

During her first year, Nicola spent five days a week studying in college with occasional week-long placements in the factory where she had the chance to shadow a qualified tradesman.



Female apprentices are treated no differently than their male counterparts, says Nicola Greaves. Photograph: Paul Herrmann.

But since she embarked on her second year, Nicola has spent the majority of her time on the shopfloor, where she is being trained on the body construction processes she will be overseeing by the time she completes the programme.

"Now that I've started to be trained on specific tools and machinery, that's more of an eye-opener about what my role will be," Nicola says.

With Jaguar Land Rover's female engineers now making up 11 per cent of the total workforce, Nicola says she hasn't faced any problems as a young woman in a majority male shopfloor environment. "We are treated just the same as men and rewarded according

// I work on bespoke premium vehicles for customers across the globe and every day brings a different challenge. //





More than 200 students have taken part in the Jaguar Land Rover Young Women in the Know scheme in the last five years.

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to how well we do our job: being a woman doesn't even come into it and everyone I work with is really supportive," she says.

Nicola has also supported union learning by attending unionlearn's Voice of the Apprentice event in Warrington and helping to launch unionlearn's Use-IT online assessment tool in Birmingham last year.

Unite National Officer for Equalities Siobhan Endean says it's vital to tackle the unconscious bias among teachers, parents and employers that combines with out-dated perceptions about the industry to deter the women engineers of tomorrow.

"If we are to get the 87,000 new apprentices that the UK economy needs in engineering every year for the next decade, then we need to tackle the gender stereotyping of Apprenticeships," Siobhan says.

"Unite works hard with our members and employers to secure decent pay and good Apprenticeships with high-level skills and

the prospect of a real job at the end of it. There is a huge wealth of untapped potential among the nation's young women, which parents and teachers need to encourage and employers need to harness."

Committed to recruiting more young women like Nicola, Jaguar Land Rover runs a Young Women In The Know scheme that has engaged more than 200 participants since it was launched in 2012, more than 40 of whom have gone on to become apprentices at the company.

Ninety young women aged 15-18 took part in the latest Young Women in the Know four-day event at five Jaguar Land Rover Education Business Partnership Centres in the Midlands and Merseyside in December 2016.

They were able to tour design and manufacturing facilities, network with women employees, spend a day on work placement with a female mentor and brush up their employability skills with CV writing and interview practice.

Delivering on diversity

Unions are working to help extend opportunities to Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) young people and adults.

Lennord Carroll was in his early 50s and had been out of work for nearly six months when his local Jobcentre in Leeds set him up with an interview for a financial services Apprenticeship with Barclays.

The former dancer and teacher hadn't thought of the financial sector as an option before the opportunity arose. "What really attracted me was the possibility of being an apprentice at the age of 53 and learning something different from what I'd done before," he recalls.

While undertaking his Apprenticeship, Lennord was working in the complaints department as a decision-maker, and completed his NVQ Level 2 with a distinction in customer service.

The study component was delivered on site, with a talent scout coming in once a month to help all five apprentices with their course materials and lead discussions on the subjects they were covering.

Lennord joined Unite when he started the Apprenticeship, and was more than happy when he was asked to speak to Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) sixth-formers at an Apprenticeship Forum in London organised by The Voice newspaper when he was around six months in to his programme.

The event was designed to improve take-up of Apprenticeships among BAME sixth-formers and college students, since only 10.7 per cent of Apprenticeship starts in 2014/15 were by BAME youth, although BAME people make up 21.6 per cent of the working age population in England.

The Voice ran the event in conjunction with the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) and global banking firm HSBC, which hosted the day at its global headquarters in London's Docklands during National Apprenticeship Week 2016.

Unionlearn was one of the nine major organisations that gave presentations and led small-group networking opportunities for the participants, which is where Lennord took the chance to speak with the young people about his own experience.

"It was a good experience to go down to London and talk to these young people: I like talking to kids and giving them advice, as I have done in the past when I was teaching dance," he recalls.

"A lot of the young people came up with good questions regarding Apprenticeships and I enjoyed trying to give them an insight into how an Apprenticeship could work for them, finding a good role that would help them find a proper job afterwards."

When a new opportunity arose 15 months into his Apprenticeship, Lennord decided to move into the print sector and was happy to secure a new job with Communisis, the country's largest printer of chequebooks (its clients include Barclays), where he remains a Unite member.

"The union contacted me after the Apprenticeship Forum and I hope I can continue with being a part of the work, because it was good fun working with Unite and those young people," he says.



// I like talking to kids and giving them advice, as I have done in the past when I was teaching dance. //

Changing the workplace in partnership

A high-quality Apprenticeship programme can help change a workplace for the better.

A partnership between road transport union URTU, logistics giant XPO and provider Free2Learn has enabled more than 60 contract, agency and managerial staff at the Weetabix distribution centre in Burton Latimer, Northamptonshire, to improve their skills by enrolling them on a range of Apprenticeships from Level 2 to Level 5.

The programme launched 18 months ago, with close to half the staff at the site currently working on Apprenticeships in warehousing, business administration, team leading and management.

Separate assessors come onsite to oversee the office and the warehouse learners, while a Free2Learn tutor delivers the Functional Skills English and maths components embedded in the frameworks.

"In general, everyone is enjoying the Apprenticeships – they see that they are recognised qualifications for them," explains union learning rep (ULR) Kenny Wignall, who has been

// Having a recognised qualification can make a massive difference. //

instrumental in convincing site management of the benefits of investing in the workforce through the Apprenticeship programme.

The only bump in the road comes when time pressures mean lessons have to be postponed. "People do get frustrated when that happens, but I always keep them motivated," he says.

All sides are keen to incorporate feedback from learners in the delivery of the programme, Kenny points out. "We've come a long way and we're learning all the time: we're always thinking about how we can tweak the programme, because there's always room for improvement," he says.

Kenny, who started work as a forklift truck driver in his early 20s, is a passionate advocate for workplace learning.

"When I was at school, I didn't think education was that important, but as my children have grown up and my daughter has gone to university, I've come to recognise how important it is to have an education behind you," he says.

"Having a recognised qualification can make a massive difference, which is why I always tell people that their Apprenticeships don't belong to the company or to the provider, they belong to them and they will help them progress in life."

Since he is co-ordinating the programme on the shopfloor, Kenny himself is currently enrolled on a Level 3 Apprenticeship in management, which is offering him new perspectives on his life at work.

"Before, there were times when I used to get frustrated, but now I'm able to reflect on things and see them from a different angle," he says.

Site Manager Andy Flynn, one of two managers enrolled on a Level 5 Apprenticeship, also credits the qualification with helping him think





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about how the site is working, how he would like it to work and how to help staff get there.

"The process of enrolling on a Level 5 Apprenticeship qualification has provoked considerable self-evaluation, and has helped me to identify that my site is travelling in the opposite direction to the one I want, or thought it was actually going," Andy explains.

"This thinking has helped me to explain to the site team at Burton Latimer how we can all work together to change the site culture and improve the current path we are following – my experience so far has been a real self-awakening."

Free2Learn Head of Business Development John Cusworth says that he has witnessed the way

the Apprenticeships programme is making a palpable difference at the site.

"It's encouraging to see the training making a real difference on site at XPO, whether we are supporting individuals at the onset of their career in logistics, supporting the next generation of managers or offering higher level training to the current senior management team," John says.

"Seeing a change in culture and knowing that managers with over 25 years' experience are changing their attitude and management behaviours is testament to the employer and individuals themselves as they embrace the training being offered."

URTU Project Manager Jeff Latham says that the Apprenticeship programme at XPO shows how union learning can make all the difference in a workplace.

"This is a brilliant example of the critical intervention that the URTU learning project has enabled, which has made a real difference both to people's confidence and abilities but also to the sustainability of their workplace," Jeff says.

Breaking down the barriers

Unions are able to offer the support of trained representatives to help apprentices who are disabled and those with developmental disabilities such as autism.

As a young man with autism, David Herbert faced some significant challenges during his mechanical engineering Advanced Apprenticeship at the Sellafield nuclear power plant in Cumbria.

The kind of communication problems that are common among people on the spectrum sometimes led to conflict when David and his co-workers misunderstood each other, while his greater dependence on his parents (another common characteristic) made his transition from school to work a bumpier ride than for many of his peers.

But the quality of his work was never in doubt: he won a company award recognising his contribution in and outside work, and he was a finalist in the apprentice of the year category at the local Chamber of Commerce Excellence in Cumbria awards.

However, after he completed his Apprenticeship, there was no full-time position available in the transport department where he was first placed, so the company asked Carl Lewthwaite to help find an alternative place for David to progress in the business (Carl is the disability lead on the GMB National Equality Forum and works as the company disability, equality and welfare adviser at Sellafield).

Since Carl had supported people with autism before and has a nephew who is autistic, he knew it would be important to get to know David himself and learn about the barriers he himself faced in the workplace.

"I had to learn and understand the social barriers through David and then use that understanding and my knowledge of the business to come up with somewhere more suitable, where there would be a real job for an apprentice coming out of his time," Carl explains.

After getting to know David by spending time with him at work, visiting him at home and talking to his parents, Carl decided the young man would make a good addition to the team at Calder Hall, the now decommissioned site where workers are removing tens of thousands of fuel rods from its four reactors.

"I had a sense of what working life was like in that department because I'd personally supported other people who worked there, and knew the kind of people he'd be working with, and that there was a low turnover of staff," Carl explains.

Once the human resources department agreed the move, Carl regularly spent time supporting David and his new team leader, who had never worked with anyone on the spectrum before.

The new placement worked brilliantly: not only did David thrive in his new surroundings, but his team leader developed hitherto unsuspected paternal qualities that meant the two of them acquired the nickname 'dad and lad'. "They don't work together any more, but the team leader will tell you openly and honestly that working with David changed him as a person, which is wonderful," Carl says.

After three years in the department, David was encouraged to apply for a promotion by the head of engineering: although he was initially hesitant that he would be able to progress, David accepted Carl's help with interview preparation and secured his current role as an equipment engineer.

Now 30 years old, David continues to enjoy his work at Calder Hall. "The support that I received has eventually led me to overcome the hurdles and succeed in the workplace," David says. "One thing that I think is demonstrated in my story is not so much the support the union can provide to one individual but what benefits can be gleaned if both employer and union work together."

// The support that I received has eventually led me to overcome the hurdles and succeed in the workplace. //



Training the new train drivers

Virgin Trains and ASLEF have put together the first Apprenticeship programme for train drivers in the rail industry.

Virgin Trains apprentices (from left) Sam Jones, Simon Tyrer and Joe Wilson are the first to undertake the new Driver Apprenticeship programme.
Photographs: John Harris/reportdigital.co.uk

Train drivers' union ASLEF and Virgin Trains have worked closely together to put together a high-quality Apprenticeship programme for train drivers that is the first of its kind in the sector.

While rail engineering has used Apprenticeships to train new entrants for that part of the industry for decades, this is the first time a train company has put together an Apprenticeship on the

operating side that enables young people to progress into the driving grade.

"We've been trying for a long time to get an employer in the sector to buy into our vision," says ASLEF's Union Learning Fund (ULF) Project Coordinator Shirley Handsley.

"After the concept was negotiated by ASLEF Industrial Officer Kevin Lindsay, it was only when the Virgin Trains operations side became involved that the process moved from

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“As soon as they join the driver training programme, their salary will more than double.”

conversations into a real programme, which demonstrates the importance of operations leading on a programme like this,” she points out.

The operations side came in the form of Operations Project & Competence Manager Sam Edwards. When he started work on the programme last September, Sam had only recently completed a Degree Apprenticeship in Business Management at Manchester Metropolitan University, through the Virgin Trains Red Track Programme.

“Red Track is a new scheme, just like the one I’m running now, so I could use that experience to throw into this programme,” Sam says.

Both sides agreed that the best approach would be to start small, so the programme is currently underway with three apprentices, all based in the North-West.

While Simon Tyrer, Sam Jones and Joe Wilson are based in different Virgin Trains depots (Preston, Manchester and Liverpool respectively), they travel to Virgin’s Talent Academy in Crewe once a week to cover the NVQ component of the programme, when they can also work on their Functional Skills.

While the apprentices are earning £15,000 for the duration of the Apprenticeship programme, as soon as they join the driver training programme, their salary will more than double.

Although the programme is still in its early stages, both sides are very happy with how it is shaping up so far. “Virgin Trains has set the benchmark with this programme and I hope that others within the industry follow,” Shirley says. “The government’s Apprenticeship Levy will make a difference as well – I’m already speaking to employers I’ve never spoken to before about possible Apprenticeships.”

As for extending the programme in the future, both sides are cautiously optimistic. “From a union point of view, we’ll be looking for future intakes, but we’ll be evaluating the programme with the people on the Apprenticeship: their feedback will be vital,” Shirley says. Sam is thinking along similar lines. “We’ll have to see how this programme goes, but at the moment I see no issue with running more and potentially with higher numbers,” he says.



Helping older workers move on

PCS is helping dozens of older workers in HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) to improve their job prospects by enrolling on Apprenticeships.

// Staff have been able to use their five annual development days as study days for their Apprenticeships. //

More than 125 HMRC staff, many of them older workers, have enrolled on Apprenticeships in offices around Eastern England, thanks to a partnership between the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) and two different learning providers.

The Apprenticeships cover a wide range of skills (primarily IT, customer services, business administration and team leading and management); range between Level 2 and Level 4; last between 12 and 24 months; and are all open to both union and non-union staff in HMRC.

Cambridgeshire Regional College (CRC) originally approached the union about working together on Apprenticeships six years ago.

When PCS Learning Officer Peter Knight and Regional Learning Coordinator for HMRC Darrell Binding then met college staff to discuss a regional programme at HMRC, they were impressed not only with the possible content but also with the college's flexible approach to delivery.

Once Darrell signed a partnership agreement with CRC in September 2012, the enrolments began, with a big uptake in the Southend office and further support in Watford, Peterborough, Ipswich, Norwich and elsewhere.

Under the terms of the agreement, the college did not charge HMRC or the apprentices themselves for the programme. "Generally, the college would charge an employer fee upfront based on the number of apprentices signed up, but I negotiated there would be no fee, which was very good news for the department and very good for the apprentices, so everybody was a winner," Darrell says.

Once Darrell briefed the Union Learning Reps (ULRs) in the region on the CRC offer, the ULRs then invited the college to visit the HMRC offices in the region so they could introduce the Apprenticeships offer to management and staff.

CRC then carried out diagnostic assessments for staff who were interested in enrolling on

an Apprenticeship so that they could tailor the course to the needs of individual staff members. Regional management has been supportive of the programme, and staff have been able to use their five annual development days as study days for their Apprenticeships.

Feedback from staff who have enrolled on the programme has been overwhelmingly positive. "People have been very appreciative of the offer the union is able to provide," Darrell says. "When we started this initiative, there was an HMRC Apprenticeship system but it was very limited, and staff had to go through many hoops to get on it, but we have made things so much easier by facilitating this programme with the staff, and if ever issues have arisen, we have been able to resolve them on the apprentices' behalf."

Many managers across the region have also been grateful for the union's initiative. "I've had a few say they are very pleased that we've done this, and most notably, one manager in one section went out of her way to encourage members of her team to enrol on an Apprenticeship – and she wouldn't have done that unless she was happy with what was available," Darrell says.

Since the original partnership agreement with CRC wound up last year (the college continues to support apprentices who have yet to complete their programmes), Darrell has started working with a new provider on the same terms as before, West Suffolk College.

After attending a celebration event for HMRC apprentices in the Watford office last year, unionlearn Projects Officer Jane Warwick has been working to provide additional learning opportunities for staff there. As a result, unionlearn has been able to offer further support by delivering mid-life development reviews and Use-IT assessments to 26 Watford HMRC staff in April 2017.

"We worked with Jane to look at what we were providing and what else we could possibly do that would complement the Apprenticeships, and the mid-life development reviews have proved very useful," Darrell says.

Engaging with the local community

It makes sense to use an Apprenticeship programme to harness the power of social media to reach young people.

Ethan Kear-Davies was looking to start a career in marketing after finishing his media diploma at college when he found out about an Apprenticeship opportunity in the commercial marketing department at Pompey in the Community (PITC) last summer.

PITC is the charity arm of Portsmouth Football Club that provides education and coaching opportunities for children and young people using the facilities at the club, including the learning hub in the Pompey Study Centre kitted out by the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) and unionlearn 'Achievement Through Sport' programme.

"I'd decided that I wouldn't want to go to university and that an Apprenticeship would be a much more valuable route to go down," Ethan says.

Ethan wasn't quite first time lucky. Local training provider PETA (formerly known as Portsmouth Engineering Training Association) set him up with one scheme that wasn't right for him, which he left.

But when PETA alerted him to the PITC opportunity, he thought it could be much more what he was looking for – even though football isn't his preferred sport at all.

"I thought the Apprenticeship would be good because I really wanted somewhere I could expand my skills that had a strong brand," he says. "And I have become slightly more interested in football over time!"

Ethan spends a lot of his working days promoting PITC events, campaigns and initiatives on social media – writing content, uploading his own photographs and designing posters for use on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

"Social media is one of the strongest ways to connect with our community," he says. He's used his developing skills to promote events such as the Wheels for All cycling project for children and

The PFA's partnership with Pompey in the Community includes support for the charity's Apprenticeship programme.
Photograph: Ethan Kear-Davies.



// Working on events with the PFA gives me the chance to broaden my skills. //



Pompey in the Community apprentice Ethan Kear-Davies (above, far right) is developing his skills by working on a wide range of local initiatives.

Wheels for All photograph: Ethan Kear-Davies.

// Social media is one of the strongest ways to connect with our community. //



adults with disabilities and help run and promote sessions for Portsmouth FC Ladies.

The study component of Ethan's ICT Apprenticeship is delivered onsite through an assessor from PETA.

"I have a list of criteria to go through, and my assessor comes down once a month to review the work I've done," Ethan explains.

"Some months I've had too much work on and sometimes I'll give him four units worth of work at once but seeing him every month generally helps me keep on track."

Ethan is able to reap the benefits of working with the PFA when the union's 'Achievement Through Sport' programme runs events at the club, such as the Learning Centre Best Practice Day in October 2016, when he took photographs and ran a live social media feed as well as designing a 40-page booklet about the day afterwards. "That's probably the biggest design piece I've ever created and definitely the one I'm most proud of," he says.

Other PFA events Ethan has worked on include 'Empowering Women In Sport', a free one-day event jointly organised with PITC in May 2017 for young women, featuring workshops on playing, coaching and working in the sports sector as well as inspirational guest speakers.

He also took part in the PFA event in Portsmouth for National Apprenticeship Week in March 2017, reports PFA Project Worker Riz Rehman, who has worked with Ethan on all the union's events at PITC. "Ethan shared his journey to inspire the young people in the room, talking about how he became an apprentice, the skills sets he's picked up and what he would like to do in the future," Riz recalls.

"Any activities or programmes we facilitate at the Learning Centre, we give Ethan the opportunity to promote them so he gets that experience. We support a number of apprentices at our learning centres across the country, offering information, advice and guidance to encourage follow-on education and CPD for their development."

Ethan is always keen to take advantage of opportunities through the union. "Working on events with the PFA gives me the chance to broaden my skills," Ethan says.

Overall, Ethan believes the Apprenticeship has helped him do exactly what he hope it would. "I've become much more confident in my skills since I've been here," he says. "I've had a lot of guidance from my mentor in the commercial marketing department and from people at the PFA like Riz, and my design work now is much better than when I started."

Supporting apprentices in the Civil Service

Civil Service unions are working hard to support the thousands of new apprentices that are set to start work throughout Whitehall over the next three years.

// Government departments will have the benefit of being able to partner with unions for the support we can offer. //

With the Civil Service set to deliver at least 30,000 Apprenticeship starts by 2020, unions are determined to ensure that quantity does not compromise quality, and that the new recruits are not deployed as lower-cost replacements for existing civil servants.

"Employers need well-skilled and highly motivated workforces but imposing targets is counter-productive," says Public & Commercial Services Union (PCS) General Secretary Mark Serwotka.

"We want to see genuine Apprenticeships leading to fulfilling, well-paid careers, not ones that exploit low-paid and young workers simply to hit targets and keep down labour costs."

The Principles of Agreement that were signed in February set out how Civil Service unions can work together with government departments to ensure a positive experience for apprentices through:

- information sharing on apprentice starts between unions and employers
- union access to apprentices at staff inductions
- Union Learning Rep (ULR) access to apprentices to provide learning and development support
- union engagement on selection of Apprenticeship training providers
- union engagement on workforce planning at departmental level.

The agreement is an encouraging development for apprentices in the Civil Service, says PCS Education & Learning Officer Keith Johnston.

"We want the agreement to give our members, particularly young workers taking their first steps into work in the public services, a positive example of work that will stand apprentices in good stead for the rest of their career," he says.

"We want to work with managers in the Civil Service to support implementation of a genuinely progressive Apprenticeship programme that will serve as a best practice example for other UK employers."

The agreement will be beneficial to everyone, Keith says. "PCS will be able to support the

apprentices as union members from the start, while government departments will benefit from being able to work positively with unions – not only through the support we can offer individual apprentices but also for our ability to help in sourcing quality training providers for them."

Since Apprenticeships is the main theme for the current PCS Union Learning Fund (ULF) project, the union will be using some of its ULF resources to support the thousands of new apprentices who will be joining the Civil Service over the next three years.

Now that all the unions will have access to details of the new starters – both the departments they are working for and the locations where they are based – they will be able more easily to reach out to the apprentices as and when they arrive at work.

"Trying to get information centrally across all government departments can be quite difficult, so it's very helpful that the Cabinet Office agreement instructs all departments to provide that information," Keith explains.

"Not only have our ULRs now got access to those people but they should also have a role in selecting their training providers: we can suggest providers we have worked with ourselves, or are happy with when departments consult with unions about the providers to deliver the Apprenticeship training."

PCS, the largest union in the Civil Service, is now:

- helping ULRs implement the agreement at local level (through additional training and development of online resources)
- setting up an Apprentices Forum.

The union's young members' network will be taking the lead on the Apprentices Forum, since more than 90 per cent of the apprentices coming into the Civil Service over the past 12 months have been 29 years old or younger, Keith says.

The forum will aim to create a space where apprentices can come together to discuss the issues that concern them, whether that's help with completing their qualifications or securing permanent employment when they have finished their Apprenticeship.

Developing the next generation of organisers

Community has used a tailor-made Apprenticeship programme to help young people gain a wide range of organising skills.

“This was an incredible opportunity to change the lives of these young people and place them upon a career path of value.”

Five young people completed their two-year Apprenticeships with Community earlier this year, gaining qualifications in organising and business administration and a wealth of experience working with union branches throughout the country.

Community's Personnel and Training Director Tristan Thompson worked closely with unionlearn and with Shrewsbury College to design a programme that would give the young people involved a comprehensive learning experience that would act as a solid start to their working lives, wherever they progressed on completion.

The union designed a rigorous recruitment and selection programme to find the most suitable candidates. Rather than appoint recent university graduates, Community was keen to find young adults who may not have been high-achievers at school and were looking for a helping hand at the beginning of their working lives.

Tristan worked with the union's staff to prepare the ground for the apprentice intake, ensuring that everyone was clear about the goal and an all-encompassing learning journey, providing coaching and mentoring training for staff and participating in reviews of the apprentices' progress with their line managers.

The five apprentices were based in Community's regional offices around the country – Motherwell, Middlesbrough, Kidderminster, Northampton and London – where they worked as apprentice organisers, supporting branch development by running local campaigns, driving up recruitment and identifying potential new activists.

Their Apprenticeship programme comprised:

- an accredited organising qualification that reflected the Community ethos
- a mainstream accredited qualification
- a comprehensive programme of personal development.

“The vision of our general secretary, Roy Rickhuss, was to ensure that we created a pathway to accredited qualifications and live experience that could transform the working lives of our apprentices,” Tristan explains.

“The apprentices all completed a Level 2 Certificate in Organising designed by unionlearn and Shrewsbury College and we also supported them through a Business Administration NVQ at Level 2 or Level 3, as we recognised that a union-specific qualification might not be all someone needed if they went on to work outside the movement once they completed their Apprenticeship with us.”

In addition to training on workplace health and safety, equality and diversity and First Aid, the personal development programme was central to the Apprenticeship.

“Engagement was key, so we put together a series of interactive training courses that encompassed leadership skills, public speaking, making presentations, team-working and negotiating, which we delivered for the whole group in Community's conference and training centre in Northampton,” Tristan says.

“The learning journey was essential to evidence and was supported by reviews, learning statements and presentations as the apprentices created a learning portfolio of work to chart their experience.”

In addition, the union organised additional opportunities to support the development of all the apprentices: one became the Apprentice Champion at a forum set up by Northampton Borough Council (close to where they were based); another was able to travel to Hungary as part of the Academy for Young Trade Union Leaders; while a third represented young workers at an international event in Brussels.

When the two-year programme finished in February 2017, Community was able to offer further two-year traineeship contracts to two of the apprentices. Of the remaining three, one is now employed at Middlesbrough Council working towards her CIPD qualification in human resources, while another has secured a job working in the office of London Mayor, Sadiq Khan.

“The general secretary's vision was to create a lasting Apprenticeship scheme: this was an incredible opportunity to change the lives of these young people and place them upon a career path of value,” Tristan says.

Keeping fit for work

Firefighters are spreading the word about health, fitness and nutrition among their colleagues by volunteering to take personal training Apprenticeships.

“The knowledge of anatomy and physiology contained within the Apprenticeship is extremely helpful for firefighters.”

More than 500 firefighters are currently helping to promote, support and enhance the fitness of their co-workers in their physically demanding job by undertaking Level 3 personal training Apprenticeships through their union.

As well as improving their knowledge of anatomy and physiology, rehabilitation, diet and nutrition, firefighters on the programme are improving their Functional Skills English and maths (with support from the FBU Learning Centre, as needed, after an initial assessment).

Blending classroom time, individual coursework and days in the gym, the Advanced Apprenticeship creates fully qualified personal trainers who can register with REPS (the register of exercise training professionals).

The Apprenticeship programme units are:

- Level 3 Diploma in Personal Training
- NVQ Diploma in Personal Training
- Level 2 in Gym Instructing
- Level 2 Functional Skills maths
- Level 2 Functional Skills English
- Level 2 Award in Employment Awareness in Active Leisure and Learning.

The 18-month programme has been made possible by a partnership between the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) National Learning Centre, the Local Government Association (LGA) and Leeds City College.

Helping firefighters to maintain their fitness levels has become even more urgent now that the government has raised the pensionable age in the service 60, according to ULF Project Manager Mark Dunne.

“With all the stresses and strains, mentally and physically, of working in emergency environments, the knowledge of anatomy and physiology contained within the Apprenticeship is extremely helpful for firefighters: they can learn what happens to the body as we grow older, how to stretch and be flexible to prevent injury

and address the physical demands of being a firefighter at any age.”

When the union originally put together the programme 18 months ago, it was quietly confident that it would appeal to both firefighters and the Fire & Rescue Service (FRS).

South Yorkshire firefighter Mick Thompson is one of the 520 FBU members currently undertaking the Apprenticeship, after enrolling last summer.

“It’s a lot more in-depth than I initially expected and it’s a lot to cram in but don’t get me wrong, I’m enjoying it,” he says.

With annual fitness tests now part of firefighters’ working lives, Mick is more than happy to share what he’s learning with his co-workers. “If people ask me, I’m happy to pass on what I’ve learned about different exercises to work on different muscle groups or information on diet and nutrition and if I see something that someone is doing wrong, then I’ll mention it,” he says.

The firefighters who are currently enrolled on the Apprenticeship come from half of the Fire and Rescue Services around the country, and the union hopes that the rest will soon follow suit, especially since the introduction of the government’s new Apprenticeship Levy.

“The FBU National Learning Centre is now on the register of approved Apprenticeship providers, so when FRS employers are looking for quality and quality assurance in a provider with a proven track record of delivering, they can find us through the register,” Mark explains.

Feedback from the learners has been positive so far. “We were new to this 18 months ago, and we’re looking to improve all the time, to be more efficient and to provide better support for the students right the way through,” Mark says.

“The feedback we conducted with our first cohort at the mid-point was excellent: we’re hoping that positive word of mouth from FBU members, combined with us improving by acting on the feedback we receive, means that we’ll get to the position that all FRS employers want to take part.”

Photograph above: John Harris/reportdigital.co.uk

FBU members are helping their co-workers maintain their fitness levels through their personal training Apprenticeships.



Resources



Apprenticeship Levy: 15 useful negotiating tips

Describes the main issues for unions to consider when they enter into discussions with their employers to ensure the Apprenticeships in their workplace are good quality.

Download the leaflet or order hard copies at:

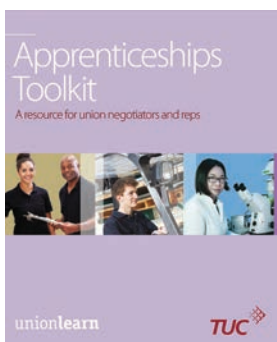
www.tuc.org.uk/publications/apprenticeship-levy-15-useful-negotiating-tips

Apprenticeships Toolkit

Reference and information resource for reps that collates set of factsheets providing concise information on a range of topics related to Apprenticeships, including the key elements of a good-quality Apprenticeship.

Interactive version available at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/apprenticeships-toolkit

Order hard copies from Paul Rey-Burns: prey-burns@tuc.org.uk



Apprenticeships eNote

Explains the key issues when negotiating for high-quality Apprenticeships in the workplace, including the elements of a high-quality Apprenticeship and how unions can help establish successful Apprenticeship programmes.

To complete the eNote, register or login at:

www.tuceducation.org.uk/enotes

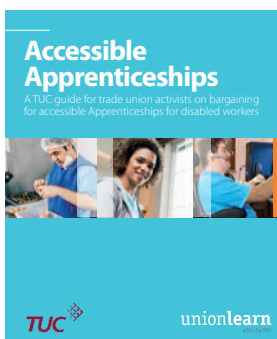


Apprenticeships – know your rights eNote

Helps apprentices, and those who support them, understand their rights at work, setting out why a quality Apprenticeship is a great way to earn money while developing skills for a rewarding career.

To complete the eNote, register or login at:

www.tuceducation.org.uk/enotes



Accessible Apprenticeships: a TUC guide for trade union activists on bargaining for accessible Apprenticeships for disabled workers

Provides detailed information on recent government reforms to the Apprenticeship system; breaks down key initiatives to support disabled workers; and sets out recommendations for unions to raise in negotiation with employers.

Download or order your copy from:

www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/accessible-apprenticeships



This title may also be made available, on request, in accessible electronic formats or in Braille, audiotape and large print, at no extra cost.

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