



LR

LEARNINGREP

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Listening to the voice of the apprentice

- ▶ *Changing the way we work*
- ▶ *Onsite, online, outdoors with CWU*
- ▶ *Apprenticeships for everyone*
- ▶ *Preparing for life after Tesco*
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unionlearn
with the TUC



BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

AS EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW BY NOW, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) has confirmed unionlearn's funding for 2016-17. This means that we have been able to get moving on all our priorities for the coming year, including new targets for Apprenticeships, English and maths learners and digital.

Unionlearn may have been born under a Labour government, but we have always attracted cross-party support because ministers can see that union learning represents real value for money.

"We have always attracted cross-party support because ministers can see that union learning represents real value for money."

Last year, we trained more than 3,350 union learning reps (ULRs), we helped close to 17,000 learners improve their English and maths, we developed more than 6,560 apprentices and in total we supported 230,000-plus learners across the board. We have hit these very significant targets for the relatively modest average expenditure of just £60 per learner, with every £1 of Union Learning Fund (ULF) money generating a £9 return on the investment.

It's figures like this that demonstrate exactly why Labour, Conservative and Lib-Dem politicians have actively backed our work since we launched 10 years ago. Our annual conference on Monday 4 July in London will be a chance for us to celebrate a very successful first decade, and help lay the foundations for the next. I look forward to seeing you all there! **LR**

Liz Rees is Director of unionlearn



unionlearn
with the TUC

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NEWS + VIEWS

Bristol Waste Company signs learning deal



Unite and UNISON marked #heartunions week in February by signing a learning agreement with Bristol Waste Company (BWC), which employs hundreds of refuse, recycling and street cleansing workers throughout the city.

After running a cycle maintenance training event in February, ULRs are currently conducting a learning survey to identify which courses members want to do as well as planning computer pop-up sessions.

"This will give members the chance to widen their skills and improve their career prospects," explained Unite ULR Pete Parker, with the agreement giving workers access to English, maths, IT and other courses.

The #heartunions launch was especially appropriate, according to Unite Learning Organiser Matt Gillett. "In a week when we are focusing on the positive contributions that unions make, this agreement highlights what can be achieved when we work with employers to support our members in the workplace," he said.

"Learn with Unite will, with our colleagues in UNISON, be making sure the widest range of opportunities are available to our members and be emphasising once more the benefits union recognition brings."

BWC HR Manager Karen Stephens said the agreement would help the business and its employees. "Improving functional skills will help our employees with current roles as well as developing them for future roles within BWC," she said.

POA serves up nutritious new maths course

The Prison Officers' Association (POA) has cooked up a smart way to teach maths by relating the subject to all aspects of food and diet.

"We wanted to look at how maths is embedded into nutrition and how developing maths is key to applying good nutrition to your diet," explains POA SE Regional Centre Manager Gareth Williams, who helped

develop the resource.

The guide looks at food labels, food groups, calories and more, including the traffic light system and body mass index (BMI).

As a result of feedback from learners, POA now plans to develop a similar resource based at entry level maths learners. It will also make the resource available online.

The union created the resource as a pilot for the Citizens' Curriculum at the Learning and Work Institute, which aims to ensure everyone has the core set of skills they need for the 21st century, including English, maths, ESOL, digital, civic, health and financial capabilities.

[Click here to order your copy of the guide](#)
[Click here to find out more about the Citizens' Curriculum](#)

Torquay jobs fair a brilliant success



Long queues formed when more than 600 people turned out to a unionlearn-sponsored jobs fair in Torquay, where more than 40 employers were attending to recruit staff.

Hailed a brilliant success, the free event in March was delivered by the Torquay Development Agency (TDA) and Jobcentre Plus.

"We were proud to sponsor this event as

it provided the perfect opportunity for individuals to speak to employers and gain an understanding about the requirements of the job roles and how to apply," said unionlearn Senior Union Support Officer Rob Garrett.

"South Devon offers a fantastic range of opportunities from tourism to construction, with seasonal, permanent, Apprenticeship and graduate roles available."

Nominations open for Festival awards

There's still time to nominate outstanding learners, tutors, projects and employers for an award in this year's Festival of Learning, which takes place from 1 May to 30 June.

Festival organisers have developed a new website that makes it easier to submit nominations for awards ahead of the deadline on Friday 20 May. The winners will be revealed at an awards ceremony in Birmingham in September.

Last year's winners included Kofi Amo, an IT tutor who has supported over 120 staff with regular IT Level 1 and 2 courses at HMRC in Southend-on-Sea and the Veolia Unite Learning Centre in Haringey.

"Teaching is something that gives me a special relationship with people from very diverse backgrounds: the unique connection I make with people through IT is incredibly satisfying," he says.

The new website also has a range of resources ULRs can use to help plan and promote Festival of Learning events, which are ideal ways to set up learning opportunities at work and promote the positive contributions made by ULRs.

"The new Festival of Learning is a way to build on the work that unions do and raise its profile even further in unionlearn's tenth anniversary year," says unionlearn Director Liz Rees.

[Click here to find out more](#)

New resources for English and maths

Unionlearn has brought together a comprehensive set of tools and resources as part of a new online guide to English and maths support.

Launched to coincide with World Book Day in March, the guide aims to help unions engage even more Functional Skills learners.

The guide provides useful and accessible information on tools and resources for union officers, Union Learning Fund (ULF) project managers, learning organisers and union learning reps (ULRs).

It includes information about how the resources can be used at work as well as cases studies exploring how unions are working with English and maths learners that will both help and inspire others to follow in their footsteps.

[Click here to download the guide](#)

[Click here to help enhance the guide by suggesting further resources](#)

REPTECH

Free mobile app for reps

The TUC's online community for unions reps has launched a brand new mobile app so its thousands of members can use their smartphone or tablet to help each other strengthen their role in the workplace.

The new UNIONREPS mobile app will help reps:

- network with more than 10,000 users
- discuss health and safety, education, equality, employment law, organising, environment, pensions and more
- post and share workplace experiences
- direct message other users
- track posts with push notifications.

"A great resource for reps, particularly new ones," says one union user. "The information allows you to increase your knowledge of workplace issues, which of course increases your effectiveness as a rep." If you are a union rep from a TUC-affiliated union, you can register for free either via the app or online.

[Click here to find out more about the app](#)





GETTING TOGETHER TO BOOST MENTAL HEALTH

Building workers' UCATT joined forces with unionlearn in March to stage a conference to address improving mental health in the workplace. Communications union CWU and firefighters' union FBU also partnered in the project.

Held in Liverpool, Mental Health and Work featured contributions from speakers including Shadow Mental Health Minister Luciana Berger MP (pictured above) and unionlearn ULF Contracts Manager Dave Eva.

"The idea came out of the work we were doing developing learning opportunities for the local community through our Union Learning Fund (ULF) project, called Putting Learning and Skills at the Heart of Anfield Regeneration," explained UCATT Project Organiser Keith Lewis.

The three wards that make up the Anfield Regeneration area are among the 10 per cent most deprived areas in England. Around 32 per cent of residents are claiming benefits compared with a national figure of around 13 per cent.

"We know that issues like debt and unemployment are linked to mental illness and we have found that many of the people coming in to use the community centre where we are based have mental health problems; often they are also linked to alcohol and substance misuse," Keith added. **LR**

- Health and well-being conference, page 7

Firefighter uses BSL skills in blaze



A Cheshire firefighter was able to help evacuate a hard of hearing man from a blaze thanks to the sign language skills he had learned through his union, FBU.

John Maddocks originally enrolled on his British Sign Language (BSL) course so he could communicate better with his five-year-old niece, who is hard of hearing.

But when he was part of the firefighting team that rushed to a thatched roof fire in a village near Widnes a few months ago, John was able to use his BSL skills to explain what was happening to one of the hard of hearing residents and reassure him about the evacuation.

"John's sign language skills proved to be a valuable asset during a very challenging incident," says watch manager Jason Fletcher from Widnes Fire Station.

"His commitment to his own development to secure this sign language qualification has been excellent and I congratulate him on his achievement."

Drivers learn the route to fitness

Road transport union URTU's learning project is helping drivers out of their cabs to improve their fitness with a Walking Challenge competition.

The competition aims to encourage people to increase their daily number of steps from an average of 3-4k towards 10k a day. A concern for the sector is around improving the health and well-being of drivers who spend a lot of time in their cabs.

This idea comes from URTU project administrator and ULR Claire O'Brien. She suggested using last year's World Book Night novel *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* by Rachel Joyce to challenge people to walk the same distance that Harold did in the story to see his ill friend Queenie.

Teams of up to 10, which must include at least one URTU member, can register before the closing date on Sunday 3 July. Teams will be issued with pedometers to track their steps as well as a copy of the book to read about Harold's journey.

[Click here](#) to download the application form

UNISON forum sets out learning priorities



More than 70 branch learning activists gathered at UNISON Centre last month to discuss their learning and organising priorities for the year ahead, develop skills in workshop sessions and listen to keynote speakers, including unionlearn Director Liz Rees.

UNISON Assistant General Secretary Roger McKenzie thanked all the learning reps and lifelong learning co-ordinators for their important work promoting development opportunities to their members.

"If you all believe in the sort of things we are doing giving people these new life opportunities, stiffening their backs so they can raise their heads a little bit and have some pride, we have to stand up and fight for them," he said.

ULF Project Manager Davinder Sandhu set out some of the project's key achievements over the last nine months of 2015, which included working with 2,000-plus learners, conducting 840-plus English and maths initial assessments and training 70 ULRs.

After visiting the range of stalls in the UNISON Centre atrium over lunch, participants spent the afternoon in their choice of two workshops of the four available, covering digital champions, confidence, learning/organising in schools and running events.

Safety reps get creative on course

Union reps on a recent TUC Education Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety designed Workers' Memorial Day posters on the course to use in their workplaces.

"Workers Memorial Day, which is commemorated throughout the world and is

officially recognised by the UK government, is a chance for reps to highlight safety issues in their workplaces," says course tutor Mike Lamprell.

"The group thought that designing posters for work would be an ideal way to remember those that have been killed through work but at the same time ensure that such tragedies are not repeated."

There are events and activities across the country to mark Workers' Memorial Day, which is on Thursday 28 April this year.

[Click here to find out more](#)

Technicians' campaign reaches for the stars

Behind every astronaut like Tim Peake there's a great technician, such as the one in the new profile-raising campaign Technicians Make it Happen, commissioned by The Gatsby Charitable Foundation.

Joe (pictured right), who works as a technician at RAL Space, was one of the team that tested the education kit taken on Tim Peake's

mission to ensure it was robust enough to endure its launch into space and cope with the environment within the space station.

The new Make It Happen website showcases the crucial and varied work technicians do, and also features videos of

technicians at work, quotes from employers about why their technicians are so important and links to live Apprenticeship vacancies.

The website shows how training to be a technician can lead to employment opportunities with some of the best employers.

To coincide with the new resource, an exhibition exploring the crucial role technicians play across society opened at London's Mall Galleries in April.

A virtual reality version of the exhibition filmed in 360-degree video is currently touring schools, colleges and events to inspire more young people into technician careers.

Unite member Richard Warhurst opted for professional registration because it allows technicians to gain recognition of their work

experience and responsibilities.

A technician at the Institute of Neuroscience at Newcastle University,

Richard supports academics in their work on a range of issues, including egg donations, epilepsy, stroke recovery and helping injured soldiers move their limbs again.

"Being a technician is a worthwhile career and it's rewarding to think that in years to come I could have helped people to have a better quality of life or find a cure for a disease," he explains.

[Click here to visit the new website](#)

[Click here to find out about registration](#)



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So long Harry, we'll see you in Turin!

After 24 years with TUC Education in Scotland, Harry Cunningham is moving to Italy to manage the training arm of the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) of the ILO, which trains governments, employers and workers' organisations about decent work and sustainable development.

Harry started working with TUC Education as a tutor at Fife College in 1992, before taking on the role of Scotland's Education and Training Officer in 2004.

"Harry has been an outstanding member of the TUC Education national team, always ahead of the curve, whether it be e-learning or working with the European Trade Union Institute on project management programmes across the EU," says unionlearn Director Liz Rees.

"He will be missed across the UK as well as in Scotland, where he leads a team of first-class tutors delivering for union reps: our loss is the ILO's gain, and Harry can expect a stream of visitors checking on his progress in Turin and taking advantage of the sunshine!"



© Paul Worpole



Paying tribute to an education pioneer

Some of the people who worked closely with Doug Gowan reveal how he left his mark on union learning over the past 40 years.

The face of trade union learning and unionlearn would have been very different without the contribution of educational pioneer Doug Gowan, whose death in February prompted many heartfelt tributes from people who had worked closely with him over the past four decades.

It was Doug, as head of the TUC Course Development Unit in the 1970s, who helped create the style of active, student-centred learning that still endures today, as UNISON Assistant General Secretary Roger McKenzie can attest.

“The idea that working people have something to say had to be fought for – and Doug was really the person who pushed that across the trade union movement,” he told the UNISON ULR forum in March.

“He was responsible for all the things we now really take for granted in trade union education, like small group work, exchanging ideas, reporting back to the wider group.”

Unionlearn Director Liz Rees worked with Doug for nearly 30 years, first at the TUC National Education Centre in Hornsey, and later while TUC Education Manager at Congress House. She agrees that Doug’s influence on the training of union workplace reps cannot be over-estimated.

“He laid the foundations for a programme that has reached more than a million, literally, workplace reps, with a huge multiplier effect in terms of their impact on Britain’s workplaces,” Liz says.

Doug was also a key player in the creation and development of



“Doug had a brilliant and far-reaching impact on adult and trade union education.”

unionlearn, even though he was at the same time setting up the Open Learning Partnership (OLP), the educational charity that specialised in expanding workplace and community learning through IT.

As chief executive of OLP, Doug played a vital role in helping the TUC and unionlearn expand their e-learning provision, working alongside Seb Schmoller at the Association for Learning Technology, among others.

Seb is someone else who considers himself fortunate to have worked with Doug regularly over the years. Speaking at the funeral, he

said he had never forgotten team-teaching with Doug on a one-week educational methods course for TUC tutors at Congress House.

“I learned more from this than in a whole one-year, full-time, FE teacher training course,” he said.

“Doug had a brilliant and far-reaching impact on adult and trade union education, on trade union organisation generally and, probably most importantly, on the effectiveness of hundreds of other people working in these fields – and alongside this, Doug was an absolutely lovely bloke.” **LR**

Changing the way we work

Identifying the real roots of workplace stress is the best way to genuinely promote mental and physical health at work.



While employers are encouraging staff to cycle to work, eat more healthily and learn mindfulness techniques, the key way to promote well-being is to address the root causes of workplace stress, TUC Senior Health and Safety Policy Officer Hugh Robertson told the unionlearn health and well-being conference in February.

Too many employer-led well-being initiatives placed the burden on individual workers for not exercising enough, not eating healthily or even smoking, he pointed out. Schemes like these failed to recognise how these problems were likely to be rooted in how workplaces themselves were organised.

People might not be eating well because they worked on an industrial estate where the only option was a fast-food joint; they might be unable to find time for a gym session after work because of childcare priorities; and they might be smoking in a misdirected attempt to manage their stress levels.

“In terms of stress, these well-being initiatives don’t work – the best thing to do is change how we work,” Hugh said.

“Training managers in early recognition of mental health problems has led to significant improvement in mental health in those workplaces.”

Greater public awareness of mental health issues has not yet translated into better workplace support for people with mental health issues, argued TUC Equal Rights Officer Peter Purton.

“The employment rate for disabled people as a whole remains stubbornly below 50 per cent but for people with mental health issues it is less than half even that deplorable figure,” he said.

Where there have been positive responses, the role of trade unions has been vital, he said. “Simple steps, such as joint programmes to train workers as mental health first aiders and to train managers in early recognition of mental health problems, have led to significant improvement in mental health in those workplaces,” he said.

RMT member Janine Booth pointed out that, while fewer than 50 per cent of disabled people were in work, just 15 per cent of all

autistic people had a full-time job, and more than 25 per cent of autistic graduates were unemployed.

“I don’t believe for one minute that this is because they are incapable of a job: I think it’s because workplaces are systematically autism-unfriendly,” she said.

“Sixty-one per cent of those autistic adults who are out of work say that they want to work, so why aren’t they working? Here’s a clue: 53 per cent say they want help to find work but only 10 per cent are actually getting the help they need.”

Met Office Prospect member Mary Sherwood explained how she had worked with management over the past couple of years to make Met Office HQ in Exeter dementia carer-friendly. “Many carers don’t tell their employers for fear of having their responsibilities negatively affecting assessment of their work performance,” she pointed out. **LR**

Onsite, online, outdoors

CWU members can not only gain qualifications in their 140 learning centres and on the union's e-learning portal: some of them are even taking to the woods to gain new skills.

➡ **Martin Moriarty**

When Paul Dovey became a union learning rep (ULR) for the Communication Workers Union (CWU) 14 years ago, pretty much the extent of his ambition at the time was opening what would be the union's first workplace learning centre in London.

How much has changed since then. These days, the union's national Union Learning Fund (ULF) project (which he now manages) supports a network of 140 learning centres all over the country, inside which hundreds of union members improve their working and personal lives every week.

Paul himself is a graduate of the CWU's own education programme, which he embarked on in the early 1990s when he first became active in the union. After an unhappy experience of the college component of his BT Apprenticeship, Paul was amazed to find there was another way of learning – the union way.

"The learning environment was completely different: the tutors treated you as an equal for a start, there wasn't that particular power relationship," he recalls.

"The first trade union course I did, one of the

tutors was a docker and one was a telephone engineer – trade unionists who had some experience in the world of work – and that gives you a nice rounded view of what is going on."

But the union approach to education, and learning in general, didn't just make for friendlier courses: it helped him become a better rep, he reckons. "One of the first things I realised when I went back from that course to the branch was that I had become much more effective, much more constructive, as a rep: I was better able to express a case and put forward solutions."

When he came to take the ULR course around a decade later, he particularly approved of the way it was structured so that new reps left with an action plan. "If it was down to me, you would leave all courses with an action plan because it's lovely collecting certificates but it's much better putting it to use," he says.

His own action plan was pretty simple: open that new learning centre in Edmonton, where he was working at the time as a payphone engineer. With the ULF in its infancy back then, it wasn't always straightforward explaining what a learning centre was, and

"The learning environment was completely different: the tutors treated you as an equal for a start, there wasn't that particular power relationship."





Hundreds of CWU members every week develop their skills in learning centres such as this one at Wolverhampton Royal Mail

what it could do. But he found one key manager who supported the idea, and that made all the difference.

“He thought it would be a good thing plus, as it turned out later, he was leaving soon, so he was in a position to say ‘Yes’ and it went on from there – I will always be grateful to him for that because it’s developed a lot since then,” he says.

While each individual’s learning journey is unique, from his standpoint Paul is able to identify some common trends. “Large numbers of people are interested in IT, significant numbers also take Functional Skills courses, others are interested in European languages, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and vocational courses – and then there are those who are interested in all sorts of different and interesting things,” he says.

“I like the different and interesting things because they are the subjects that can really open the door for people who would be reluctant to come in when you first open a learning centre – and those people are some of the reasons we are here in the first place.”

With learner engagement the name of the game, CWU branches are generating all sorts of creative solutions, from relatively sedate subjects like family history to belly-dancing and even a survival course in the woods (as organised by award-winning ULR Darren Rowbotham in Exeter late last year).

“You engage people with something they find interesting, and once they are interested you can point out that there is more information on the internet – and if they are not online, you can show them how it works and open up a whole conversation,” Paul says.

“The big difference is that people can develop their skills for a reason that has relevance to them and that

At the formal launch of the first CWU learning centre in London in 2003, Paul Dovey is flanked by Frances O’Grady, then TUC deputy general secretary, and BT CEO Ben Verwaayen

“You engage people with something they find interesting, and once they are interested you can point out that there is more information on the internet – and if they are not online, you can show them how it works and open up a whole conversation.”

makes a difference to their lives rather than because the governor says, ‘You have to learn something’.”

The CWU’s Regional Learning Committees (RLCs) are a key component of the union’s organisation: they enable ULRs to support each other and share experiences and good practice, while officers on the committees also meet regularly to help drive forward the union’s learning agenda.

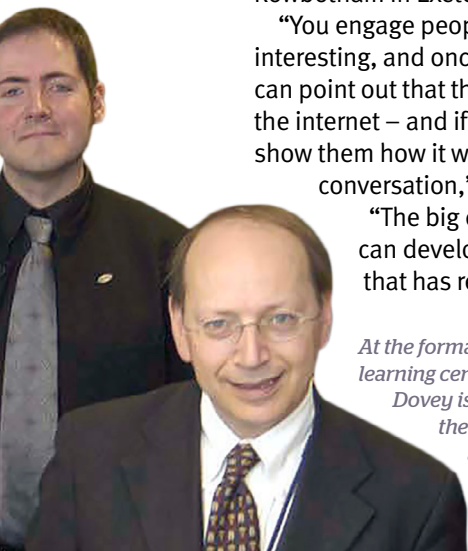
“ULRs on the ground working with each other, showing people what’s possible, learning from each other’s experiences, can be really useful,” Paul says.

The CWU has been hugely successful in engaging learners in centralised workplaces such as call centres and mail centres, where there are large concentrations of union members and potential members. There remains the challenge of reaching out to all the remote workers on its membership database, including the postal workers and phone engineers who spend most of their time working away from their depots.

“This is one of the reasons we are going more heavily into e-learning,” Paul explains. “Left Click, our e-learning platform, is accessible from anywhere, 24–7: last year, the one day when no-one accessed it was Christmas Day!”

Paul is keen to emphasise the collective nature of the CWU learning project. “For me, the strength of union learning is that it is collective learning: we all learn from each other and we all support each other,” he says.

And it is a project that is profoundly shaped by the contributions of the union’s ULRs, he says. “They are now very much embedded in their branch structures – to the benefit of both the ULRs and their branches – and our members are very clearly reaping the benefits of this: the smiles I see on the faces of people visiting the learning centres and collecting their certificates is testament to that.” **LR**



Telling it like it is

Around 30 apprentices from around the country shared their experiences, developed their communication skills and prioritised their workplace issues for the year ahead at the TUC's Voice of The Apprentice event in March.

✦ Martin Moriarty

Held at Warrington Collegiate during National Apprenticeship Week, this year's Voice of the Apprentice event kicked off with a presentation by Cogent Sector Skills Council (SSC) Director John Holton encouraging participants to become Apprentice Ambassadors.

"Ambassadors are individuals who go into schools, careers fairs, events like this and talk about their careers, the companies they work for, the opportunities they have as apprentices: the best way of improving the understanding of Apprenticeships is through people who have done them," he explained.

"Being an Ambassador is a great thing in terms of career development: it helps you develop your skills and it's a great way to get yourself recognised and talk to a new range of people in your company."

TUC National Organiser Carl Roper used a series of small group activities to tease out how both members and non-members saw trade unions – all the more important since just eight per cent of young workers currently hold a union card (compared to 25 per cent of the workforce overall).

"When I was your age, my parents were both in unions, most aunts and uncles and older people in my world were in – or had been in – unions, so when I started work, I had loads of people who said, 'Make sure you join a union, Carl'," he recalled.

"That's not the case any more: lots of young people work in places where there is no union to join even if they wanted to."

For most of the rest of the event, participants were in the hands of National Union of Students Apprentices Engagement Officer Ben Kinross, who led them through a series of interactive activities to develop their own communication and analytical skills and help provide hard data about apprentices' priorities for campaigners and policy-makers.

First up was an activity to help apprentices prioritise the issues they face at work by dividing a bagful of Starburst sweets (that's Opal Fruits to anyone over 30) among 12 different headings, including pay, learning on and off the job, sexism/discrimination and post-training employment. Close to 2,000 apprentices have now helped set the agenda through this activity over the past two years.

"Being an Ambassador is a great thing in terms of career development: it helps you develop your skills and it's a great way to get yourself recognised and talk to a new range of people in your company."



“It’s been useful to speak to other apprentices; I found that their opinions are similar to mine in the way I think and feel about things.”

For the communications training activities, Ben lined up the participants in two rows facing each other, and asked everyone to pitch the benefits of joining a union, completing an Apprenticeship and improving Apprenticeship pay to the person opposite, with the pairs changing each time the subject changed.

Many of the participants also took the chance to film straight-to-camera testimonies about their experiences for short videos to be uploaded onto the unionlearn website.

For the final activity, which focused on the different training systems across Europe, Ben picked four key components of Apprenticeship regimes in Germany, France, Finland and The Netherlands and asked groups to choose what they would like to see imported into the UK system (and what they wouldn’t).

Some of the most popular elements of other European systems were the social guarantee of a job (Finland), employers’ lifelong learning obligation (France) and co-production/social partnership (The Netherlands/Germany).

Participants got a lot out of the proceedings. “It has been useful to speak to other apprentices; I found that their opinions are similar to mine in the way I think and feel about things, which helps a lot as you know you’re not the only one,” explained Jaguar Land Rover apprentice Zoe Casali (pictured left, on the right), who is in the second year of her Level 3 electrical and mechanical engineering Apprenticeship.

Nicola Greaves (pictured with Zoe), who is currently in the second year of her mechatronics programme at Jaguar Land Rover, first applied after seeing a poster where she lives close to the plant. “With the high reputation of the company, my general interest in cars and it being local to where I live, I jumped at the chance to try to get a job there,” she explained.

But while Nicola is sure that she is exactly where she wants to be, she knows that’s not necessarily true for everyone out there. “If you’re not happy with your Apprenticeship, there could be somewhere else that’s more suited to you and coming to things like this can help you figure out whether you are in the right place,” she said.

Zach Hollis (pictured below Zoe and Nicola), who is in the third year of his engineering Apprenticeship at BMW, Oxford, said that his scheme had been brilliant. “You do a year in the training school, get the basic skills and qualifications and after that you’re working line-side and in some cases you’re helping run the line so you’re part of the team straight away,” he said.

He had picked up some useful information at the event, he said. “Speaking to the other apprentices, it seems many people here are on a better wage than the National Minimum Wage for apprentices – the technical side do get a better wage I think, which is quite interesting: I didn’t realise that,” he said.

Javin McKenzie, the Inspired to Aspire team leader at the social inclusion charity Salford Foundation, attended the event with one of the 16- to 19-year-olds Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) that the organisation exists to support.

“It’s really hard for a lot of young people who have not done well at school and don’t have any qualifications so they are that far away from the jobs market,” he said. “I think it’s useful for someone like Ryan to have his peers telling him about Apprenticeships at an event like this.” **LR**

“We know that there are a huge number of opportunities within the Apprenticeship arena that aren’t being transmitted to BAME communities.”



Opening up Apprenticeships to everyone

Black, Asian and minority ethnic school and college students spent the day at HSBC’s global headquarters to learn about a wide range of opportunities during National Apprenticeship Week.

◆ Martin Moriarty

Around 80 Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) pupils and students explored the possibilities of taking the Apprenticeship route at the first Apprenticeship Forum organised by *The Voice*, Britain’s leading BAME newspaper, during National Apprenticeship Week.

Designed to improve knowledge and take-up of Apprenticeships among BAME sixth-formers and college students, the event was organised in conjunction with the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) and global banking firm HSBC, which hosted the day at its headquarters in London’s Docklands.

The statistics make it clear that something needs to be done. While minority ethnic people currently make up 21.6 per cent of the working-age population in England (according to the 2011 Census), only 10.7 per cent of Apprenticeship starts in 2014/15 were by BAME youth.

“We know that there are a huge number of opportunities within the Apprenticeship arena that aren’t being transmitted to BAME communities,” explained *The Voice* Project Manager Trevor Raymond.

“We organised the forum because we felt there was an opportunity to lead the charge and shed some light on some of these opportunities.”

The day mixed presentations from companies and organisations (including unionlearn) with small-group networking opportunities for the sixth-formers and college students.

Each of the eight major employers at the event made a 15-minute presentation about their Apprenticeship schemes: HSBC, PwC, BT, BBC Academy, Just IT, Transport for London, Peabody housing association and London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

The presentations took a wide variety of forms. Some companies, such as BT and PwC, fielded their own BAME apprentices to talk about their experiences. "I know for a lot of Black, African-Caribbean families, going to university is the way," acknowledged PwC apprentice Ndiwe Rocque. "But the fact that you can say that the BBC and PwC are offering these sorts of things adds weight to the Apprenticeship programme, which is important."

Other organisations brought senior managers together with apprentices to deliver joint presentations, which was the model followed by Just IT, while in the unionlearn slot, Apprenticeships Policy Officer Matt Creagh offered participants a guide to what to look for in a quality Apprenticeship scheme.

The networking sessions involved two or three representatives from each of the

"I found out a lot more about the different types of Apprenticeships that there are and it's given me a better insight into what I can achieve."

participating organisations talking to small groups of pupils about Apprenticeship opportunities for 15 minutes at a time, before moving on to the next group.

The joint TUC/unionlearn team comprised Matt Creagh, TUC departmental secretary Carol Ferguson and Unite member Lennord Carroll, who is currently on a Level 2 Apprenticeship jointly run by Barclays and Capita that is targeted at older workers.

In addition, the Prime Minister's Apprenticeships Adviser, Nadhim Zahawi MP, made a speech in which he re-affirmed the government's commitment to increasing the proportion of BAME apprentices by 20 per cent during the lifetime of this parliament.

Participating companies have been very positive about the event, Trevor says. "The feedback from the companies is really inspiring: it gives us great hope for the future," he says.

Pupil feedback was equally enthusiastic. One participant said, "I found out a lot more about the different types of Apprenticeships that there are and it's given me a better insight into what I can achieve." Another commented, "It's been a really good event, I would recommend it to anyone looking for ideas about what to do after sixth form or college." And a third revealed: "I hadn't thought about Apprenticeships before the event, but after attending I am really considering whether I would want to go to university or do an Apprenticeship."

Comments like these showed the event clearly hit its mark. "We have certainly played a part in changing people's opinions and broadening people's horizons," Trevor says.

The good news for employers and BAME young people is that the forum was not a one-off event. "This will be a regular fixture, which we are looking to do bigger and better next time, and we hope that the TUC and unionlearn will work with us again as well," Trevor says. **LR**



REMOVING THE BARRIERS THAT EXCLUDE YOUNG WOMEN

While more young men are starting Apprenticeships in traditionally female-dominated sectors, too few young women are gaining a foothold in male-heavy industries such as engineering, IT and construction, according to a new report by the Young Women's Trust.

For example, the proportion of young men starting childcare Apprenticeships has risen from 2.9 per cent in 2002 to 5.7 per cent in 2014, while the numbers in health and social care have increased tenfold over the same period, reveals the report, *Making Apprenticeships work for young women*.

Yet the figures for traditionally male-dominated sectors are much more static. In 2014, for every female apprentice starting in engineering, there were 25 men; for every young woman starting in construction there were 56 men; and for every new female apprentice in plumbing there were 74 men.

"The UK desperately needs more engineers: just under one in five young people need to enter engineering to fill the gap," the report points out. "Clearly we can't meet this need by relying on one gender: we need women to be part of the solution."

[Click here to download the report](#)



Top, Matt Creagh sets out the elements of a quality Apprenticeship scheme and, bottom, talks to pupils with adult apprentice Lennord Carroll



With learning, every little helps

Dozens of Usdaw members at two Tesco stores due to be closed in Yorkshire have improved their job prospects with the help of the union's lifelong learning team.

➡ Astrid Stubbs

It was prompt action by Usdaw Mobile ULR Jonathon Charnock that helped nearly 50 staff at the Doncaster Tesco superstore when the site was named as one of 43 to be shut down.

With the help of Divisional Project Worker Martyn Warwick, Jonathon put together a support team that also included members of the superstore management, tutors from neighbouring colleges and local Jobcentre staff.

The team developed a range of materials and a specific questionnaire to identify learning needs and help people find a new job, which it used in a series of promotional days in the store's training room and surrounding warehouse space after the closure announcement.

The team also organised CV workshops, which ran alongside interview skills sessions over two full days to accommodate the number of staff who wanted to attend.

Because of the huge interest in IT courses, Jonathon set up a laptop so members could research qualifications they needed and local positions they could apply for once they

completed them. He also tracked referrals and interest in courses offered by popular provider Tribal, while the college took staff details so they could contact them about relevant courses.

One staff member who had worked in the Tesco pharmacy said, "I had an offer of a job at another pharmacy but it was reliant on me being almost at the end of my training so I'm really happy." Another said, "I didn't realise how many courses the union were offering for free. I have a one-year-old at home so distance learning is perfect for me."

In all, the team helped nearly 50 members of staff and made other referrals to courses. "It's a positive impact for the staff involved in the store closure," says Jonathon.

At Crossgates Tesco Metro in Leeds, another of the recent closures, Usdaw members were quick to ask for CV advice from day one, says Mobile ULR Tracy White (pictured, right).

Over the next month, many staff got back into learning for the first time since school as Tracy ran CV workshops alongside interview skills sessions, while store management offered everyone release to attend any of the courses

"Usdaw's profile has not just been raised in this store: other stores now have knowledge of what Usdaw has to offer."





laid on. Many other staff were signposted to other providers to gain qualifications in other fields, Tracy explains.

One member said they had secured their dream job working in a solicitor's office thanks to Usdaw's support. Another member, who gained the confidence to apply for a local hospital job they had always wanted to do, commented: "Thank you to Usdaw for helping me believe that there is life after Tesco!"

While Usdaw focused its support on members in the store, several non-members pledged to join if they stayed in retail because of the help they saw members getting.

"Uسدaw's profile has not just been raised in this store: other stores that have provided help and support now have knowledge of what Usdaw has to offer," Tracy says.

"Two personnel managers supporting the closure, one from Manchester and another from West Yorkshire, were unaware of the benefits of lifelong learning. They now want to talk about what we have to offer and how they can link into lifelong learning." **LR**

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GIVING YOUNG PEOPLE A GREEN FUTURE



Leaders from green industries joined forces with representatives of the arts and culture sector in Hull, East Yorkshire, to share local opportunities for vocational education with teachers and parents.

Called A Future for Young People in Hull, the event was part of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) Union Learning Fund (ULF) project, which seeks to inform members about careers advice, vocational education, and Functional Skills in education.

But ATL opened up this event to non-members and parents too in order to engage the local community and deepen local knowledge and awareness of vocational opportunities.

"Working with local ATL reps, we were able to put on an event that brought people together in Hull to demonstrate what local economic and cultural regeneration can offer to the young people that we teach, or parent" said ATL ULF Project Worker Miranda Harr.

"We worked hard to bring community leaders and members together and really engage our audience in a positive and lively afternoon of information and debate around vocational education."

With engineering giant Siemens investing £160m in a new rotor blade manufacturing facility at Green Port Hull, Carolyn Woolway, the company's head of human resources for the project, revealed the 1,000-strong workforce would include many apprentices.

Fourteen Advanced Apprenticeships in Wind Turbine Blade Manufacture will start this September, when the blade factory moves into production, and more will follow when it becomes fully operational.

Ian Read, head of education and participation at City of Culture Hull, highlighted the local opportunities young people were gaining as a result of City of Culture 2017 status, while local community arts hub Artlink discussed creative opportunities and Apprenticeships.

Mark Rowe from unionlearn set out what a quality Apprenticeship scheme should look like, Apprenticeship Ambassadors shared their experiences and ATL Policy Adviser Janet Clark offered the audience a first look at the union's draft Apprenticeship policy.

Click here to listen to ATL's Kate Quigley and Alison Ryan talk about the CPD opportunities ATL offers to members



It's all about learning on the move

When he wasn't driving trains or travelling to his IT course last year, Aslef member David Parr was pedalling his bike for charity.

♦ Astrid Stubbs

David Parr, who was named ASLEF Learner of the Year in March, spent a huge amount of 2015 on the move – and not just because he drives trains for a living.

Taking advantage of a union offer, the Plymouth-based railworker undertook a 400-mile round trip every fortnight to complete a Level 2 IT Application Specialist Diploma (ITQ Apprenticeship) that was being run in Birmingham.

The course, which also runs in Derby, Leeds and London, involves modules in IT security, word processing, e-publications, email and internet, PowerPoint presentations and Excel spreadsheets, as well as Functional Skills assessments in maths and English.

“David has worked very conscientiously throughout the course and I have seen his IT skills as well as his confidence in his IT abilities improve with each unit he has completed,” says David’s tutor, Cheryl Duncan-Radcliffe from Stephenson College.

“He is a positive role model for a mature student, successfully balancing

the course around his work, home and other commitments, including his charity bike ride.”

Yes, you read that right. As well as everything else he had going on, David found the time to cycle from Land’s End to John O’Groats last summer to raise money for the British Heart Foundation, putting in an average of 90 miles a day to complete the marathon challenge.

However, 2015 was not only a year of happy achievements. Just as David was nearing the end of his IT course last November, his father died suddenly – an especially hard loss since it was in the footsteps of his train-driving dad that David was following when he started as a trainee 30 years ago.

But it was a brighter moment in March when David collected his Learner of the Year award at the Aslef Union Learning Conference from General Secretary Mick Whelan. In his speech, Mick underlined the vital role ULRs play in setting up courses such as David’s for their members, as well as praising him for his hard work and commitment in completing the course.

“Education leads to choice, belief

“He is a positive role model for a mature student, balancing the course around his work, home and other commitments, like his charity bike ride.”

comes from education, education leads to liberation,” Mick said.

David, who is now preparing for his next challenge, the London to Paris bike ride, says it was an honour to receive the award.

“More than ever before, members are expected to have a certain knowledge of IT skills in the modern working environment, with new digital technologies being introduced,” he says.

“It is a worthy 12-month course and the only commitment is having the self-discipline to manage yourself. It’s a service to members paid for by the union that benefits you on a social level and in your working life.” **LR**