



# LR

## LEARNINGREP

[unionlearn.org.uk](http://unionlearn.org.uk) | Spring 2015

### *Monika wins ULR of the Year award*

- ▶ *Building through learning*
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**unionlearn**  
with the TUC



## SPREADING OUR SKILLS MESSAGE

**WE ARE ALREADY INTO THE ELECTION** campaign. What's our message to all the parties? That low-paid does not mean low-skilled. It is a core trade union message we need to get across whenever skills come up in the election campaign.

Far too often, commentators assume that low-paid means low-skilled. Not so. Many jobs in retail, catering, hospitality or social care would have been paid much more 20 years ago than they are today.

That's because today's economy does not properly recognise skills. Small wonder there has been a boom in low-paid jobs leading to the so called 'hourglass' economy with more high-paid and low-paid jobs but fewer in the middle.

***"Employers will recognise skills, train to fill gaps and help staff progress because that makes business sense."***

That's because many of the previously middle-paid jobs have slid down into low pay. Measured by skill, the economy looks much less like an hourglass, more like a straightforward column. That's why gaining skills is so important to getting and keeping a better job.

In the upcoming election campaign, we need to ensure that our message is heard loud and clear: a sustainable economy with decent jobs must recognise and reward skills.

Once employers need to pay the proper rate they will take training more seriously. They will recognise existing skills, train to fill the gaps and help their employees progress because that makes sense in business terms. Linking pay to skill helps build a more productive economy. **LR**

**Tom Wilson** is Director of unionlearn

## NEWS + VIEWS

### Health unions win NHS learning deals



Health sector unions secured two new learning agreements in the East Midlands in the autumn, the first at Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust in October and the second at Kettering General Hospital NHS Foundation Trust in December.

"Chesterfield Royal is the first Trust in the country to launch the NHS Employers Learning for Life campaign by signing a partnership agreement with the unions," says RCN Learning & Development Facilitator Irene Murray.

Learning for Life is the development initiative run by the NHS Social Partnership Forum (SPF), which brings together unions, employers and other key health sector stakeholders to discuss the workforce implications of health sector policy.

"The signing of the Partnership Learning for Life Agreement between the recognised trade unions and the employer at Chesterfield Royal will bring real benefits to all staff working at the hospital," Irene adds.

"With the support of our union learning reps (ULRs), unions can ensure

everyone has access to our resources, which cover brushing up English, Maths and IT skills, online training for health care assistants, right through to clinical information on drug error and accountability."

It took a three-year campaign led by the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) and supported by UNISON and the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) to persuade Kettering General to sign its Learning for Life agreement.

"Thanks to the tireless work to secure this agreement by Pat Edkins, RCN's senior rep at Kettering, we can now celebrate the success of reaching a stage where the employer is fully on board," explains Irene.

"We are all winners, as our members and their colleagues will have access to trade union learning and the benefits of the support of union learning reps."

Both agreements commit to giving ULRs reasonable time off to carry out their duties and both create joint union-management groups to oversee development of the learning agenda in their respective workplaces.

## Top author meets Usdaw readers

Best-selling author Martina Cole presented certificates to shopworkers who completed the 2014 Six Book Challenge when she visited Usdaw's Learning Zone at the Argos Home Delivery Store in Castleford, West Yorkshire in October.

Martina also talked to Usdaw members about her writing career, signed copies of her best-selling thriller *Revenge* and latest crime drama *The Good Life* and conducted a prize draw, where the prizes on offer were an e-reader, and vouchers from a supermarket chain and Waterstones.

"The wonderful thing about the Six Book Challenge is that people who don't normally read, or who think that reading isn't their bag, are encouraged to pick up a book," said Martina, who is also an ambassador for the scheme.



## ULR thumbs-up for Climbing Frame

The Climbing Frame, the free resource to help union learning reps (ULRs) support learners and promote learning in the workplace, has won a big thumbs-up from users in the latest annual feedback survey.

ULRs say the Climbing Frame helps them signpost learners to useful websites, resources and



materials; plan training programmes for learners; and gives them the information they need to perform better in their role.

The Climbing Frame can also raise a ULR's profile in the workplace, as one user pointed out: "It made me more visible as I've shown it to management and used it to help organise continuous professional development (CPD)."

Unionlearn is always updating the Climbing Frame, and uses the feedback from its annual users' survey to add new content and improve existing material, helping to make it even more useful for ULRs and other reps who work with learners.

Recent additions include a ULR events section for promoting upcoming events; information on free learning websites; and a dedicated area with resources for supporting mid-life development.

▶ [Click here](#) to register and log in to the Climbing Frame

▶ [Click here](#) if you need help using the Climbing Frame

▶ [Click here](#) to complete the current survey

## Technician Pathways launches phase two

Unionlearn has secured further funding from The Gatsby Foundation to finance a second phase of the Technician Pathways project, which will run for two years up to autumn 2016.

Phase two aims to engage more unions about negotiating strategies at



the workplace that support technician registration and access to more CPD.

The project will also build partnerships with professional bodies and other stakeholders to support the technician workforce, helped by the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Science Council at the 2014 annual conference.

▶ [Click here](#) to request a hard copy of the Technician Registration Toolkit – a resource for union negotiators and reps

## LET US KNOW YOUR VIEWS

There's still time to help us improve the *Learning Rep* and give yourself the chance to win one of three £20 book tokens by completing our new online readers' survey.

The survey doesn't take long to complete, and your responses will help us continue to improve our communications with our 30,000 ULRs.

To say thank you, we will pick three names out of the hat to receive a £20 book token.

▶ [Click here](#) to complete the survey

## REPTECH

### New ESOL resource

Unionlearn has teamed up with the British Council to produce a new online resource to help unions organising workplace courses in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

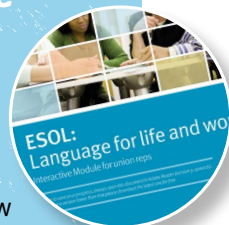
The interactive workbook aims to raise awareness about ESOL needs and how ULRs and other reps can help co-workers whose first language is not English.

*ESOL: Language for life and work – Interactive module for union reps* includes tips on organising face-to-face learning with local providers and how to set up a workplace language club.

"There are videos for ULRs to watch and activities they can try, as well as tips about using the workbook in the workplace," explains unionlearn Policy Officer Kirsii Kekki.

Several of the unions that have done most work on the ESOL agenda contributed to the development of the workbook, including BFAWU, UNISON, Unite and Usdaw.

▶ Look out for the online launch on the unionlearn website.





## DORSET UNISON MARKS 100 YEARS OF LEARNING

With the help of South West unionlearn, Dorset County UNISON attracted more than 70 people to a learning and history event at Dorchester's Shire Hall in November to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the town's first local government union branch.

'Working History Day – Dorset UNISON 100' included free guided tours of the Old Court House and cells, where the Tolpuddle Martyrs were tried and held before they were transported to Australia in the 1830s for trying to organise local agricultural workers.

It also featured talks on using the Dorset History Centre and the library service to research family and union history; an update from the Tolpuddle Martyrs Museum; and a case study on researching civil servants who fought in World War One.

Event coordinator Roger Bell says the branch is keen to build on the success of the day to further develop its work bringing together all the material it can find from the Dorset History Centre and the UNISON archive at Warwick University to tell the history of local government union organisation in the county.

He is also very happy that not only did some of the participants volunteer to help the branch take the project further, but also that two of them signed up to train as UNISON learning reps. **LR**

## TSSA lights up learners' lives



Transport and travel union TSSA lit the blue touchpaper to a special week of personal and professional development activities called Rocket Launch Your Learning! in Bonfire Night week.

"The Spring Into Learning initiative earlier this year, when ULRs took control of organising the events, was very popular so we decided to run another week this autumn with even more activities," explains TSSA National Learning Organiser Sal Morawetz.

"As TSSA members (as well as their family and friends) are interested in courses that improve their career, our next step is to talk to employers about what they can do to support their staff with career development."

As part of the week – which ran from Thursday 30 October to Wednesday 5 November – the union launched its first initiative with the Institute of Rail Operators, offering free and inexpensive opportunities to help members with career progression.

It also promoted the National Numeracy Challenge, with a special login to the campaign's website for TSSA members.

On day one of the week, Thameslink Trains Lead ULR John Bacon (who also

chairs TSSA's national lay forum of senior ULRs), helped run a stall at St Pancras International to promote the wide variety of learning opportunities available through the union to members and potential members.

Other opportunities on offer during the week included guitar and Hindi language tasters in London, Welsh language classes in Cardiff, a Women into Leadership Course in Scotland and a knowledge lunch with the union's employment rights adviser at The Quadrant, Network Rail's headquarters in Milton Keynes.

The union has already been raising its profile at The Quadrant with regular learning and recruitment stalls in the building, run with the help of ULRs Angela Belcher and Wendy Vant and Regional Organiser Matt Barrow, and support from unionlearn SERTUC Union Support Officer Oreleo Du Cran.

## UNISON boosts apprentice campaign

UNISON marked TUC Young Workers' Month in November by publishing a new booklet aimed at encouraging more branches to get involved in Apprenticeship schemes in their workplaces.

"Apprentices are a crucial part of the future of our workplaces," argues General Secretary Dave Prentis in his foreword.



“By working to ensure Apprenticeships are a rewarding and valuable experience, we can connect with a new generation of trade unionists.”

The 32-page booklet includes case studies of some of the Apprenticeship programmes that the union has helped develop through the Eastern Region project and the Apprenticeship programme UNISON launched in 2013 at its National Centre in London.

And it interviews young members who have become active in the union through their local government and health service Apprenticeships; and offers branches a useful checklist of key points to help create decently paid, high-quality Apprenticeships.

[Click here](#) to order your copy of *Training The Next Generation*

## Midlands team runs informal workshops

The unionlearn Midlands team staged more than two dozen one-hour workplace-based workshops as part of the Celebration of Learning in the autumn to help ULRs throughout the region encourage interest in informal learning.

More than 230 workers took part in the events, which focused on stress-busting, supporting mid-life development, understanding your payslip and the introductory IT online learning package Learn My Way.

The team of Lisa Stones, Mick Brightman, Alan Cook and Paul Humphreys led the events, which



helped ULRs from unions including shopworkers' union Usdaw, public service union UNISON and the public and commercial services union PCS.

Lisa's Supporting Mid-life Development workshop at the Birmingham Tribunal Service, which attracted more than two dozen participants, was a fantastic event, according to ULR Lindsey Naughton from the West Midlands and Warwickshire (Ministry of Justice) PCS branch.

“Everyone who attended thoroughly enjoyed it: members of staff were still talking about it the following day – one of the delivery managers also spoke to a PCS colleague to say how good it was,” Lindsey says.

## Prepare yourself to study with OU

Registration for the next round of Access modules at The Open University (OU) closes on Thursday 8 January for courses that start in February 2015 (another round will start in October).

Access modules are the ideal way to prepare for learners who want to study with the OU but are not quite sure they are ready.

“If you require confidence, then study an Access module,” says Access student Annabel Taylor. “The modules are straightforward

and the tutors are there when you need them: everything is written in such a way that it really helps your confidence.”

There's a choice of three modules: Arts and languages (Y031); People, work and society (Y032); and Science, technology and maths (Y033). Learners can choose the one that best fits with what they want to study next.

As students work through the module, they are introduced to skills like reading and writing for study purpose, note-taking, and organising study time – as well as the basic computing skills needed for study and online learning. Students need to put aside about nine hours per week, over a period of 30 weeks, to complete their module.

If you study an Access module as an additional preparatory stage towards an OU qualification you could be eligible to study your module for free (the actual cost of an Access module in England is £660).

In order to qualify to study for free you must:

- be resident in the UK
- have a household income of less than £25,000 (or be in receipt of qualifying benefits)
- have no previous experience of study with The Open University
- have not completed a higher education qualification at NQF Level 4 or above.

[Click here](#) to secure a place or call the OU on 01908 659253



## Yorkshire ULRs learn together

More than 65 union learning reps (ULRs) from across Yorkshire and the Humber came together in October for a ULR network event in the St George's Centre, Leeds.

“The event was an opportunity for colleagues to network and to talk about and share some good practice, and gave us in unionlearn a chance to discuss our current initiatives and work in the coming months,” explains

Mark Ball (with Ian Clayton, left, and Monika Paczkowska, centre).

The interactive, informative and enjoyable workshops covered: mid-life development reviews; digital inclusion; the Citizen Maths initiative; and creative literacy.

The day finished with each group of reps collaborating to write a poem on the theme of journey to be read out at the end by local author Ian Clayton: the poem that received the biggest ovation from participants was deemed the winner of the exercise.

“The poetry exercise was well received by all and a perfect ending to a successful event,” Mark says.

Feedback about the event was overwhelmingly positive. “It was very enjoyable and interesting and we all learned something,” commented one ULR. “It was that good, I can't wait for the next one!”

Another commented: “The venue, format and all the presentations fitted into a very productive day.”

*The union learning offer from Aegis helped persuade the Skipton and Yorkshire Building Society staff associations to merge with the finance union, says Project Worker Andrew Lambert*



# Building by learning

**A**ndrew Lambert's new role as project worker for his union Aegis has brought him all he hoped for in a job.

With its enviable location in the gorgeous North Yorkshire town of Skipton, there is much to love about his job's HQ.

But it's the union learning that he now organises for his former colleagues at Skipton Building Society that really make this new role his dream job.

The Skipton staff association merged with Aegis after an overwhelming Yes vote earlier this year. Aegis unionlearn started in Aegon UK (pensions and investments) a couple of years ago and quickly outperformed on all the targets set by the Union Learning Fund (ULF). This

was achieved by Aegis and Aegon working in partnership to ensure the success of the project.

"I would never have imagined it: I am very fortunate to be here," he says.

"When someone asks how the job is going I can say it is enjoyable and made more so by the fact that I am able to help people. I can't stress that enough. There's nothing quite like a happy learner and we have a growing band of happy learners who come back for more."

At both Skipton and the Yorkshire Building Society (whose staff association also voted overwhelmingly to join the union earlier this year), Aegis says it was the union learning offer that helped secure the merger agreements, and the recognition and learning agreements that followed at Skipton.

*"There's nothing quite like a happy learner and we have a growing band of happy learners who come back for more."*



***“I’d like to encourage people to take this great opportunity to learn new skills and develop.”***

Aegis General Secretary Brian Linn says Aegis unionlearn has been incredibly successful in a short period of time, reaching out to people in the finance sector who have not had the opportunities of union learning before.

“Aegis has trebled in size in 2014. I am convinced that our union learning offer has been a massive attraction to our new members and it has been pivotal in creating positive relationships with employers,” he says.

Skipton Chief Human Resources Officer Rachel Fawcett is very excited about the introduction of union learning within the Skipton Group. “I’d like to encourage people to take this great opportunity to learn new skills and develop,” she says.

For Andrew and the union’s band of ULR colleagues in both building societies, Andrew says progress is like a swan’s movement – serene on the surface but lots going on underneath.

As well as a raft of courses offered via the traditional classroom learning, the team is signposting to a range of learning opportunities online. It is also negotiating with its employers to provide regionally assessed courses so that members who work in the branch network do not miss out. The team is also looking into instant messaging to keep in contact with staff, along with video conferencing facilities to allow ULRs to keep in touch regardless of where they work. **LR**

## THE WRITE STUFF

Lorry driver John Cook always felt something was wrong when he tried to set down his thoughts on paper.

“In my mind I can do anything but what I can’t do is write it down,” says John. At school, he struggled with writing and the day his head teacher ripped up all his books because he couldn’t read John’s handwriting was the day he gave up trying.

John, who works for Biffa Waste in Cardiff, says it was only when a family member was diagnosed with dyslexia that things started to drop into place. And while he was on an URTU union training course, he decided to confide in ULF Project Worker Barry Marks.

Barry, who has been trained by the Dyslexia Foundation to carry out screening, confirmed that John was dyslexic.

John now hopes more colleagues can get help through Biffa’s learning zone.

Barry demonstrated the latest dyslexia screening tool during URTU’s learning conference in September.

“Sometimes these issues come to light when members seem to struggle with paperwork or timekeeping, or even in disciplinarys,” says Barry. Eight per cent of the population is dyslexic, about 2.9 million workers, says Barry. Dyslexia screening is a free service and comes with support from the URTU ULF education project.

The number who take part averages around eight per month, says Barry. “During the coming months we will be supporting groups who will be starting education courses in their workplaces,” he adds. “With the aid of our ULRs and workplace education providers, we will be able to assess higher numbers of new learners.”

▣ [Click here for more information about dyslexia](#)



## WEST BROM STAFF CELEBRATE SUCCESS

Dudley College Skills Hub Director Jackie Payne presented Certificate of Achievement awards to staff from the Learn Through Us Project run by the West Bromwich Building Society Staff Union. More than 200 people have signed up since the ULF project started last year. “It’s really inspiring to see so many people who have felt able to realise their potential and to discover new talents through the opportunity this initiative provides,” says ULF Project Manager Sue Farmer.





250 Usdaw members have taken 1,600 learning opportunities at DHL/Argos Castleford over the past three years, thanks to the hard work of ULR Coordinator Monika Paczkowska and her team

# It's all about the team

*Usdaw's Monika Paczkowska dedicates her recent ULR of the Year award to all her colleagues in DHL/Argos in Castleford.*

✦ Astrid Stubbs

**U**sdaw ULR Coordinator Monika Paczkowska collected the prestigious TUC ULR of the Year award from TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady at Congress in September.

"It was very exciting to win but this award is for everyone at our workplace," says the modest learning rep who works at DHL/Argos in Castleford. "I think this is my job and what I'm supposed to be doing. I don't think I'm doing anything special."

Castleford DHL/Argos is a unique site, points out Usdaw Lifelong Learning Project Worker Martyn Warwick. "If we could bottle it and distribute what happens here we would have it cracked!" he says.

"We are really lucky. All the site staff are switched onto learning (the site has offered 1,600 opportunities to 250 staff in the last three years with many coming back time and time again), the learning reps are all very active and Monika is coordinating the activity, managing the team, looking after the reps and making sure they follow up on tasks. And management gives really good support."

All of which means that Monika and her team can offer traditional skills such as maths and literacy; but when the centre is not being used for those courses staff can take paid time off for anything the learning centre wants to run. This has included Spanish as well as a timely winter car maintenance course.

After coordinating the Six Book Challenge in the workplace, Monika oversaw a creative writing workshop where the stories people wrote were turned into a published book *Walk The Talk* (right) presented to all staff as a Christmas gift.



*"If we could bottle it and distribute what happens here we would have it cracked!"*

Monika is now carrying out a study for her union on the link between informal adult learning and progression to functional skills and beyond, which will help inform the content and organisation of courses in the future.

"Monika is approachable. People come in and see a friendly face – see it's someone like them and can see what's on offer with no barriers so that everyone is treated the same way," says Martyn.

Monika moved to the UK from Poland eight years ago and eventually started work in Castleford Home Delivery Store (Argos warehouse) as a picker after moving from another site. Having left school to get a job rather than go to university, the last thing on her mind was learning.

But after returning to work from maternity leave in 2011, she was asked if she'd like to get involved as a ULR and hasn't looked back since. She moved from her ULR role to coordinator in 2012 and now manages the nine-strong learning rep team as well as overseeing the move of the learning zone to

a prime position once occupied by the HR team last year.

"We are very proud of Monika for doing such an incredible job for the members in her workplace," says General Secretary John Hannett.



"Monika makes coming to the learning zone comfortable, fun and accessible, removing any barriers for staff," John says.

"The strength of our union lies in the hard work that reps like Monika do every day to provide first class services for the members. I am delighted that Monika's dedication to her duties has been rewarded at the highest level."

As well as promoting learning to her colleagues, Monika is living proof of the desire to learn at the company, taking course after course herself. She now has her eye on an assessor course starting in the New Year.

"When I came to England I hadn't thought about any kind of learning but now I have done a string of courses: I'm thinking about what else I could sign up to," she says.

"People here are the same. If they do a maths course, when they are finished they want to know what they are doing next – there's always something happening and they get time off from the shop floor so they are coming to work not just to work but have something else to look forward to as well." **LR**

# Use it or lose it!

*Workplaces of all sizes up and down the country have an unprecedented opportunity to access European money to fund functional skills training.*

➡ Martin Moriarty

**U**nionlearn is backing a campaign by some of the country's leading colleges and skills providers to alert British businesses that the European Social Fund has made £50m available to fund basic skills workplace training in English and maths.

The National Consortium of Colleges and Providers (NCCP) got together to launch its campaign, For Business For Life, to alert employers about this opportunity since not enough businesses know that the money is there – and that it has to be spent by the end of July 2015.

"We set up our campaign to tell employers that they must grab this opportunity because this £50m pot of money will only be there until next year," explains NCCP chairman Harvey Young (above).

"It really would be a crime to let this money go to waste, which is why we're so delighted to have the might of the TUC and their dedicated education professionals behind us on this."

For the first time, the funding is available to businesses of all sizes – everything from fledgling enterprises to FTSE100 global corporations.

And small and medium enterprises (SMEs) actually receive £800 per learner for the first three learners that complete Basic Skills English or maths training – £400 at the start of the training and £400 when it is completed, meaning an SME training three or more employees could receive £2,400.

"Workers all over the country no longer have to be dependent on having a generous-spirited boss to fund the training: every single business has access to the funding,



so there's really no excuse," Harvey points out.

"Confident learners are far more likely to seek promotion at work; at home, they help out with the kids' homework; and they know what

*"Workers all over the country no longer have to be dependent on having a generous-spirited boss to fund the training."*

they're doing when it comes to calculating which energy company can give them the best deal." **LR**

➡ [Click here](#) to read the BIS select committee report

➡ [Click here](#) for more information on the campaign

➡ [Click here](#) to follow the campaign on Twitter

## BOOKER WINNER WRITES NEW QUICK READ



Best-selling Irish author Roddy Doyle, whose first novel *The Commitments* became a successful film and

West End musical, is now the first Man Booker Prize-winner to write a Quick Read.

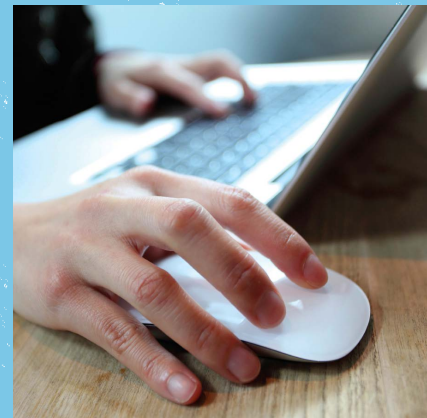
Having won the 1993 award for his Dublin childhood novel *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*, Roddy has written *Dead Man Talking* for the 2015 set of Quick Reads, and he hopes the story will be both frightening and funny.

"I'm delighted to be involved with Quick Reads as they are

all about creating new readers and I've seen at first hand how low levels of literacy have a negative effect on people's lives: literacy is the key to opening doors for everyone," Roddy says.

The other five titles for 2015 are: *Paris For One* by Jojo Moyes; *Pictures Or It Didn't Happen* by Sophie Hannah; *Red For Revenge* by Fanny Blake; *Out Of The Dark* by Adèle Geras; and *Street Cat Bob* by James Bowen.





## MOVING ON WITH MATHS

Citizen Maths is a new, free, open online resource for adults with a good grasp of the basics of numeracy who want to deepen their understanding by working at or around Level 2.

More than 1,000 people have signed up for Citizen Maths since it went live in September, using short videos and small apps that aim to give learners the feel of a one-to-one tutorial with a skilled teacher.

The first phase of Citizen Maths involves five to ten hours of work on the powerful idea of proportion (e.g. mixing recipes, creating pie charts, looking for best buys).

“The quality of the teaching material allowed me to get the concept being taught very quickly,” says one early adopter. “It has replaced my fear of maths with a love of it.”

The Ufl Charitable Trust, which has funded Calderdale College and its partners to develop the first phase of the project, is currently looking into backing a second phase covering four more powerful ideas with between 25 and 50 hours of learning in total.

“Looking at our initial assessment of Citizen Maths’ impact, we are reasonably confident that our approach is suitable for organisations, that want to give people a practical and flexible learning opportunity in maths,” says Project Director Seb Schmoller.

Click here to find out more

Click here to follow Citizen Maths on Twitter to keep up-to-date

# You can count on us

*Unions and ULRs across the country are helping their members overcome mental blocks about maths.*

◆ Martin Moriarty

**M**ore and more union learners and union learning reps (ULRs) are now promoting the National Numeracy Challenge, using unionlearn’s online entry point or links through their own unions.

Finance union Aegis, the Society of Chiropractors and Podiatrists (SCP) and public services union UNISON have all set up their own entry points to make it easier for members to access the challenge; while ATL, BFAWU, CWU, POA, RCN, TSSA and URTU are all working hard to promote the campaign.

The Challenge is also working with the unions with specific needs, such as the Public and Commercial Services union PCS, which is keen to engage its Jobcentre Plus members around everyday maths, so that they can better help the unemployed people they support.

“PCS, which is the main union in JCP, were keen to come onboard so that their members could go through the challenge themselves before helping

their customers,” explains unionlearn Policy Officer Kirsi Kekki.

The National Numeracy Challenge aims to reduce the number of adults in the UK with low levels of numeracy by over one million in the next five years.

Its key tool is the Challenge Online, a user-friendly interactive website designed to assess and improve people’s everyday maths skills in bite-sized steps, building their confidence all along the way.

The Challenge is run by the independent charity National Numeracy, which works in partnership with other organisations, including unions and unionlearn, to challenge negative attitudes to everyday maths and promote effective approaches to improving numeracy. **LR**

Click here to use unionlearn’s dedicated entry point to the National Numeracy Challenge

Click here to order your ULR guide to becoming a Challenge Champion

Click here to follow National Numeracy on Twitter to keep up-to-date

# Take your INDUSTRIAL partners

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**T**he government-led overhaul of the skills funding system has progressed with the launch of eight new Industrial Partnerships, which are designed to promote a strategic approach to skills development in key economic sectors.

The new IPs cover the following sectors: Aerospace, Automotive, Creative Industries, Energy and Efficiency, Nuclear, Science, Tech and Tunnelling.

They will all offer employers the chance to develop sector-specific skills plans in partnership with unions and other key stakeholders, using a combination of government investment and employer contributions.

The IPs have been created as part of a series of skills funding reforms that aim to:

- channel government skills funding through employers, instead of providers, as previously
- strengthen the links between high-quality skills provision and government industrial strategy
- apply lessons from partnership models in other countries.

***“While the TUC has broadly welcomed the creation of the new IPs, it has highlighted the need for some key safeguards.”***

The TUC has consistently highlighted the benefits of the social partnership model in other European countries, notably Germany, where unions and employers work together to develop the high-quality skills business and workers need.

As they establish themselves, the new IPs are setting themselves key skills and development targets to help meet the needs of their sectors over the coming period.

They are all keen to boost the numbers of Apprenticeships and Traineeships in their sectors, with some of them specifically committing to working closely with schools, colleges and universities to create improved pathways.

For example, Energy and Efficiency, the largest of the new IPs, which involves 67 employers in the sector, aims to deliver 70,000 new learning opportunities (including Apprenticeships and Traineeships) and has pledged to “fund increased training to ensure the industry has the right quantity, quality and diversity of new recruits”.

The Energy IP has also set itself some key impact goals over the next five years, aiming to reduce skills gaps by 10 per cent; cut job vacancies by 10 per cent; boost gross added value by 5 per cent; and lower administrative overheads by 15 per cent.

Similarly, the Science IP is committed to creating more than 7,800 education and skills opportunities over the next two years, including 1,360 Apprenticeships and 240 Traineeships.

The government is investing more than £100m in the new IPs, with the employers themselves matching or exceeding that investment with the standard IP mix of cash and ‘in-kind’ contributions (through donation of goods and/or services).

Budgets vary significantly from IP to IP. Of the first five to be launched, the wealthiest, which covers Energy and Efficiency, has £115m to work with, while the Science IP has £83.6m, Tech (Information Technology) £53.8m, Creative Industries £37m and Nuclear IP has just £8m.

While the TUC has broadly welcomed the creation of the new IPs, it has highlighted the need for some key safeguards:

- ensuring a proper voice for unions
- preventing employers using taxpayers’ money to fund what they would have funded themselves
- maintaining a clear focus on prioritising equality and diversity
- guarding against potential destabilisation of colleges and providers. **LR**

➡ [Click here](#) for the TUC's new eNote about Industrial Partnerships

➡ [Click here](#) for the new UKCES report, *Growth Through People*, supported by the TUC and CBI

# Moving on in mid-life

*With the help of unionlearn, union learning project managers and learning reps are working hard to improve the mid-life development reviews they are delivering for their members.*

✦ Martin Moriarty

**B**riefing events delivered by unionlearn staff throughout the autumn have helped a wide range of learning reps from different unions, workplaces and regions conduct better mid-life development reviews.

“Mid-life development is rapidly moving up the agenda for unions,” explains unionlearn Supporting Learners Development Officer Jane Warwick, who helped deliver many of the mid-life events this autumn.

The events have helped participants in two key ways: by setting the review process in the wider context of the workforce needs of the coming decades; and by offering hands-on, interactive help with new resources developed specifically to help ULRs conducting reviews with colleagues in the workplace.

The mid-life development agenda allows people to talk about a number of crucial issues that are often addressed separately in other contexts.

“As well as training and development, people want to talk about keeping their current job, improving their health, flexible working, better work-life balance, financial issues and caring responsibilities,” Jane says.

Alongside unionlearn Service Manager Ian Borkett, Jane helped deliver a number of sessions at

***“The atmosphere and what came out of the event was so positive and productive.”***

UNISON’s Supporting Learners event in London in September, with the help of the union’s own Davinder Sandhu and Emma Lipscombe.

Sessions enabled participants to use the latest unionlearn resources, such as the Value My Skills transferable skills card game, while the Mid-life Career Review Project quiz proved popular too.

Feedback was massively positive. “The atmosphere and what came out of the event was so positive and productive,” says Hyndburn UNISON lead ULR Louise Evans.

In addition, Britannia Staff Union (BSU), public and commercial services PCS, Royal College of Nursing (RCN), Royal College of Midwives (RCM), Unite and road transport union URTU have all organised mid-life briefing events for their ULF project managers and ULRs; while both the Midlands and the Yorkshire and The Humber unionlearn teams organised regional briefings during the autumn. **LR**

## IT PAYS TO UPSKILL

Unions are especially keen to help middle-aged and older workers improve their skills, since people aged 55-plus with skills below Level 2 who lose their jobs are highly unlikely to find new work before they reach retirement age.

And whatever our skills levels, we are all likely to be working longer than previous generations, since only around half of the 13.5 million jobs available in the next 10 years will be filled by school and college leavers.

Supporting increased workforce participation by older workers is not only good for those individuals – it also could significantly boost GDP, according to *The missing million*, a new report by the Prince’s Initiative for Mature Enterprise (PRIME) published in the autumn.

“If the skills of the 50–64 age group were fully utilised and the employment rate matched that of those in their 30s and 40s, UK GDP could be £88.4bn higher in 2014 (equivalent to an uplift of 5.6 per cent of GDP),” the report argues.

✦ [Click here to download the Prime report](#)

*UNISON learning reps get to grips with the new mid-life development materials*



# Liz's first-hand experience prompts new eNote

**A**n operation for her own Work Related Upper Limb Disorder (WRULD) was the catalyst for Liz Salem, ULF Project Manager at the Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists (SCP), to produce an eNote to help others.

WRULD, formerly known as repetitive strain injury, is becoming a significant problem in podiatry, says Liz.

"We had taken action through the Society's Health and Safety Panel through surveys and media and producing guidance highlighting what people can do to prevent it," she explains.

But after many years in podiatry and working for long periods of time at a computer, she developed a WRULD problem in both wrists, which needed surgery.

"The ULF team and I had one of those light bulb moments: an eNote might be the answer. I was able to use a small amount of the ULF budget to fund a WRULD eNote as it would benefit both our members and those of the other health unions and ultimately the wider union community," says Liz.

Along with Graham Pirie, SCP Employment Relations Officer and Health and Safety Panel member,

© Paul Hermann



Liz researched the condition and treatments available, gathered the latest health data and statistics, looked at various assessment tools and contacted colleagues in the SCP and the other health unions for case studies.

"And I asked an occupational therapist friend for information on daily living equipment that can help minimise the incidence of WRULD. We proofread the different versions of the script and eNote in various

stages of development, co-opting colleagues in the process: it really was a team effort!" she adds.

"We hope the incidence of WRULD will fall as a consequence. This is a great online resource for all union members to access not just those in the health sector," Liz says. **LR**

▶ [Click here](#) to register for/access to the WRULD eNote

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE eNOTE

Domestic violence affects one in four women in their lifetime, while two women a week are killed by their partners or former partners because of it.

In 2011–2012, 1.2 million women were estimated to have experienced domestic violence, with 90 per cent of people experiencing four or more incidents of domestic violence being women.

Some 20 per cent of employed women will have to take time off work

due to domestic violence through their lifetime and it's estimated that about 2 per cent of women will actually lose their job as a direct result of the abuse that they receive from a partner or former partner.

Now a new eNote on the issue is helping reps to safeguard colleagues

experiencing such abuse. The eNote looks at why it is a workplace issue and it's hoped it will increase awareness of the issue as well as support a rep if a colleague raises the issue.

▶ [Click here](#) to register/access all TUC Education eNotes

## GOODBYE TO PETE AND PETE



Pete Try (above), REO for the West Midlands Region, has retired after 11 years with TUC Education.

Pete was apprenticed as a tool-maker to Lucas Industries, making machine tools to manufacture components for the car industry. During this time he studied for an OU degree followed by an MA in Industrial Relations at Warwick University.

He took redundancy in the 1980s and volunteered to teach adult literacy. He was appointed as trade union studies tutor at Sandwell College and appointed as Midlands REO in 2003.

Pete underwent a heart bypass in September but is now recovering well and driving again.

"I'll always argue the case that in the representation of working people there isn't more important work than that of the workplace union rep and there isn't a more important task than the education and training of the union rep," Pete says.

North West REO Pete Holland (right) worked for Crawfords Biscuits and Otis Elevators in the 1970s before attending Ruskin College in 1979. He then studied sociology at Liverpool University. He followed this up with a postgraduate teaching certificate and started teaching at Liverpool Community College.

He did some part-time trade union education teaching and eventually headed up the unit at Bolton in the 1990s before becoming REO 13 years ago.



*"In the representation of working people there isn't more important work than that of the workplace union rep."*

## AND HELLO TO ADE AND TONY

New Midlands REO Ade Toomey (right) has been a trade unionist since his first 'proper job' in 1983, as a temp with Reckitt & Colman. "I joined the union from day one, and slowly developed into somebody other temps would come to with issues," he says.

Ade changed jobs in the 1990s and became an active member of UCATT, holding the roles of shop steward, safety rep, ULR and member of the regional JBSO. Following a tribunal finding of unfair dismissal, Ade used the opportunity to access HE as a full-time student and (using credits gained from TUC Education) graduated in 2001.

While at university he maintained close links with the local TU Ed unit that had developed him as a rep. He started as a part-time hourly tutor with East Riding College Trade Union Studies Centre, eventually becoming course coordinator.

New North West REO Tony Saunders (far right) first became involved in trade union education courses in 1992 as a lay tutor delivering North West courses for reps in Nalco (now part of UNISON).

He took up his first part-time role with TUC Education in 1996, delivering an ICT course for the Halton (now Riverside) College TUC Education Unit and moved on to deliver the same programme for Wirral Metropolitan College.

In 1998 he was appointed as a TUC Education lecturer in Wirral Metropolitan College, becoming



## TIME TO GET ON

Getting on at Work provides a framework for learning and accreditation in the workplace, recognising that for many a flexible approach that enables them to undertake meaningful, smaller 'chunks' of learning is most appropriate.

Materials have been developed by unionlearn and its partners with a focus on helping adults back into work. The units have been used in projects working with unemployed adults and in courses that support learners who are returning to the work environment.

The qualifications can support the needs of a range of learners, including those who want to develop skills for progressing at work, people facing change at work including redeployment and learners who want to get back into work.

Getting on at Work supports learners through a number of pathways, including units on adapting to change, equality and diversity, financial capability at work and progressing at work.

[Click here](#) to find out more and download the materials

Regional Union Development Coordinator with unionlearn in the North West eight years ago.

"I am looking forward to taking up the role of REO for the North West. There are challenging times ahead but with the team of excellent and highly committed tutors and coordinators across the region I am sure we will continue to deliver a brilliant service, providing high-quality training to reps from all unions across the region," he says. **LR**



# Courses for horses

*Established stable staff are supporting young people on Traineeships with the help of their union and unionlearn.*

♦ Martin Moriarty

**T**he National Association of Stable Staff (NASS) is extending its Union Learning Fund (ULF) project by offering mentoring and team leading qualifications to members supporting young people on Traineeships.

"This is very good for the NASS, because their ULF project has been looking to create a progression route for members who have taken the functional skills courses they have been concentrating on up to now," explains unionlearn officer Graham Randle.

"This is an ideal fit for people who have already taken courses in English, maths and basic IT, and they will come out of the courses with an NCFE qualification in mentoring and an ILM qualification in team leading."

The new qualifications will be of huge benefit to NASS members, especially because many of them struggle to find work when they leave the industry after a career that typically lasts 15–20 years.

"The people who come forward to become mentors will give them a transferable qualification that will help them if and when they leave the industry," Graham explains.

The qualifications will be launched

*"This is an ideal fit for people who have already taken courses in English, maths and basic IT."*

at a special event in the new year at Malton, North Yorkshire, when the union and employers hope to identify potential mentors in as many yards as possible: the aim is to ensure each yard has a nominated person who will oversee the Traineeship and help each learner progress through the programme.

But the professional development on offer through the new qualifications will also significantly benefit the young trainees who are supported by the new mentors.

For some time, the Northern Racing College (NRC) has been offering a diploma in work-based race horse care for young people interested in becoming apprentices; when they complete the 12-week programme, they start an intermediate Apprenticeship at a stable, which also provides them with bed and board.

However, both the NRC and the

employers were concerned at the high drop-out rate on the Apprenticeship – which is why NASS and unionlearn got together to design a six-week Traineeship programme to help the young people cross the bridge between the diploma and the Apprenticeship.

"The Traineeship will give the young people the chance to undertake work experience at a stables, living in and getting a feel for the work before they commit to the Apprenticeship," Graham explains.

With data from the British Horse Racing Authority showing fewer young people entering the industry, NASS believes that by working with young people and the employers it can help train and then retain people within the racing industry.

"We are very excited at the prospect of linking up with the Northern Racing College to provide a coordinated approach to the Traineeships of the young recruits to British racing," says NASS Chief Executive George McGrath.

Racehorse Trainer Malcolm Jefferson also supports the new programme. "As employers, we appreciate that people progress at different rates and feel that the Traineeships will enable young people to develop at their own pace and become valued employees." **LR**