



# Learning for everyone

Tutor notes

Photograph: Jess Hurd/reportdigital.co.uk

## Human Library

UNISON's Human Library provides opportunities for people to learn a little more about equality issues through one-to-one conversations with UNISON members about the prejudice and discrimination they have faced and the cultural backgrounds they come from.

The project aims to contribute to social cohesion by staging events at which members the union has trained to be 'books' that can be 'borrowed' for a short period by a 'reader' who wants to learn about their experience by listening to their story and asking questions they might never have been able to before.

The course has been designed to help people interested in becoming part of UNISON's Human Library to:

- establish their storyline;
- practise telling their story;
- understand their role at a UNISON Human Library event.

Once you have recruited members who want to tell their stories, give them all a copy of the first handout, Before you come on the Human Library the course, and ask them to think about the questions before they arrive.

Once a person has completed this course, their story will enter UNISON's Human Library catalogue (which lists all stories in summary form) and their 'book' may be chosen to be read at a UNISON Human Library event.

**Who's the target audience?** UNISON members with a story to tell that could promote tolerance and understanding.

**How long do you need?** The Human Library training course usually lasts two days.

**How many people take part?** Ideally, you should aim to recruit and train at least eight 'books' to ensure there are a variety of stories available.

What sort of venue do you need? A training room.

**What special materials will you need?** Flipchart, pens and paper, large Post-It notes, a selection of books.

### SUGGESTED TIMETABLE

#### Day 1

**9.30am** Welcome/course outline/  
learning outcomes

**9.45** Activity 1

**10.30** Break

**10.45** Activity 2

**11.45** Activity 3

**1pm** Lunch

**2** Activity 4

**2.45** Break

**3** Activity 5

**4** Review of day 1

#### Day 2

**9.30am** Recap of day 1

**9.45** Activity 6

**10.30** Break

**10.45** Activity 7

**11.45** Activity 8

**12.30** Lunch

**1.30pm** Activity 9

**2.45** Break

**3** Activity 10

**3.45** Review of day 2 and close

## Activity 1: Initial thoughts

**Aim:** Participants get to know each other and discuss ideas about Living Books.

**Timing:** approx. 45 minutes

- 1** Divide the participants into small groups and ask them to interview one another to find out names, UNISON roles and job titles.
- 2** The ask them to discuss their ideas for what their Living Books could be, making sure they're ready to feedback to the full group.

## Activity 2: Warm-up

**Aim:** Participants get to know more about each other, practise speaking and generate more ideas for stories.

**Timing:** approx. 60 minutes

**1** Ask participants to sit facing each other so they can talk for two about one of the themes which have shaped their identity from the list below.

**Themes:**

- Places I have lived.
- My favourite painting.
- People who have influenced me.
- My cultural heritage.
- Music I like.
- Beliefs I hold dear.
- Union life.
- My ethnicity or racial heritage.
- How I got my name and what I like/ don't like about it.
- Major events in my life.

**2** Give everyone a couple of minutes to collect their thoughts and make notes/draw pictures about the theme before starting their discussion.

**3** Once they've collected their thoughts, ask participants to talk about the theme with each other for a couple of minutes.

**4** When they've finished, give everyone a minute to note down any ideas they've had during the discussion.

**5** Ask participants to pair up with someone else and repeat the process on a different theme.

**6** Aim to cover three or four themes in the time available.

## Activity 3: Elements in the mix

**Aim:** Participants analyse how books are put together and begin thinking about what this means for UNISON's Living Books.

**Timing:** approx. 75 minutes

- 1** Divide the participants into small groups and ask them to look at some sample books and make a note of all the different categories of information contained on the cover and inside the book.
- 2** Based on their notes, ask the groups to think about what information their books would need when they appear in UNISON's catalogue of Living Books.

## Activity 4: First readings

**Aim:** Participants practise telling their stories and handling questions.

**Timing:** approx. 45 minutes

- 1** Divide the group into pairs. Ask each participant to tell their story to their partner and then discuss together how much more work their stories need to become the finished article.
- 2** Before the pairs finish, ask them to discuss how it felt to be a 'book' and a 'reader' and list any issues that arise that they could contribute to a whole group discussion.

## Activity 5: Storyboarding and the catalogue

**Aim:** Participants break down their stories into episodes and characters and draft their catalogue entries.

**Timing:** approx. 60 minutes

- 1** Ask participants to begin working by themselves, dividing their story into three or four episodes, and then writing a short one-paragraph sketch of each episode on a large Post-It note.
- 2** Once they've done that, ask participants to write a first draft of their catalogue entry (name, title and blurb).
- 3** When they've completed their drafts, ask participants to pair up to discuss their catalogue entries.
- 4** When they've finished, ask participants to return to working individually in order to compose their final draft on a large Post-It note, using any suggestions or feedback from the pairs work.

## Activity 6: Event management

**Aim:** Participants consider arrangements for UNISON Human Library events

**Timing:** approx. 45 minutes

- 1** Arrange four flipcharts around the room, heading each one with the name of a different type of venue for a possible Human Library event:
  - local library;
  - local branch;
  - museum;
  - the workplace.
- 2** Divide the participants into four groups corresponding to the four flipcharts to discuss the format a UNISON Human Library event might have in each venue. Give each group 10 minutes to discuss each venue, and ask them to write their ideas on the flipchart allocated to each venue type.
- 3** After 10 minutes, ask the groups to move on to a different flipchart to discuss a different venue, and repeat until all the groups have discussed all the venues.
- 4** Discuss the results in a short plenary session.

## Activity 7: Different situations

**Aim:** Participants identify difficult situations for ‘books’ and ‘readers’ and look at options for avoiding problems and handling situations as they arise.

**Timing:** approx. 60 minutes

- 1** Arrange three flipcharts, heading each one with a different type of audience for a possible Human Library event:
  - members of the public;
  - workers and employers;
  - UNISON members.
- 2** Divide the participants into three groups and allocate them each one of the flipcharts to discuss the problems that might occur with that type of audience and ask them to make a list of the problems and possible solutions.
- 3** After 10 minutes, ask participants to move to a different flipchart and repeat the process, until all three groups have completed all three flipcharts.
- 4** Discuss the problems and possible solutions in a plenary session.

## Activity 8: Essential toolkit

**Aim:** Participants identify items ‘books’ would need at a UNISON Human Library event.

**Timing:** approx. 45 minutes

- 1** Divide the participants into small groups and give them large Post-It notes on which to write their ideas about the following three aspects of running a Human Library event:
  - what ‘books’ would need to ensure the event runs smoothly;
  - how ‘books’ can maximise the organising potential of a Human Library event;
  - who would be key allies at the event.
- 2** After 30 minutes, collect all the Post-It notes and cluster them together to highlight themes that emerge in a plenary discussion.

## Activity 9: Second readings

**Aim:** Participants practise telling their stories and handling responses from ‘readers’; identify issues with one-to-one readings and one-to-several readings; and develop ideas about their comfort zone.

**Timing:** approx. 75 minutes

- 1** Ask participants who wish to concentrate on one-to-one readings to pair up and practise being a ‘book’ and a ‘reader’, and people who wish to concentrate on one-to-several readings to form a group(s) to practice being ‘books’ and ‘readers’.
- 2** Ask all the ‘readers’ to feedback ideas to the ‘books’ to improve either the content or the delivery of the stories.
- 3** Bring everyone back into a final plenary to discuss key points from the feedback ‘readers’ raised.

## Activity 10: Action plans

**Aim:** Participants identify how they can be involved in the UNISON Human Library in the immediate future.

**Timing:** approx. 45 minutes

- 1** Display your calendar of upcoming events on a flipchart/whiteboard/screen, and divide the participants into pairs identify what they would like to do (taking into account their work and home commitments):
  - taking part in scheduled events;
  - making arrangements for new events.
- 2** Issue each participant with a sheet of A4 paper and an envelope and ask them to write down their ideas about participation in a letter to themselves.
- 3** When they're finished, ask the participants to seal their letters in their envelope, and then write their name and address on the envelope so that you can post it to them after the end of the course.

## Before you come to the **Human Library** course

Thank you for putting yourself forward for UNISON's Human Library programme. The training course you will give an understanding of:

- the purpose of the programme;
- what's expected from a UNISON Human Book.

You will practise out ideas for your own story that should be loosely based on your own experiences, such as:

- your cultural heritage;
- your race, disability, sexuality, gender;
- incidents when you have experienced prejudice and/or discrimination;
- your convictions about what's shaped your life and your beliefs;

You will understand the nature of the events UNISON's Human Library will stage and practise your role at these events.

Before you come to the course:

- Think about the content of the story you may wish to tell.
- Think of short episodes within the main story.
- Make notes, draw pictures, take photographs – and bring them with you to the course.

Remember: you will not be required to reveal any parts of your life that you want to keep private (eg, you could fictionalise some real events to protect your privacy).