The learning agenda is helping UNISON offer new opportunities to our members, organise around key issues like lack of access to training, and recruit new members and activists around a positive agenda. So far over 3,360 union learning reps have been trained in over 756 branches, and as a union we are committed to continuing to support this work.

UNISON’s unique approach to learning - offering courses direct to our members, in partnership with employers, and working directly with branches to build a learning culture - is helping us to build a union fit for the 21st century. This guide will help you to get started.
OVERVIEW OF STEPS

The main steps you’ll need to take to get organised around learning in the branch are set out below. This isn’t a strict step-by-step guide – the steps will overlap – but it does set out the basics to help you tackle inequality, build your members’ confidence and skills, and build your branch in the process.

Step 1  **Raise awareness**
- Organising around learning – what’s in it for a UNISON branch?
- What branches who are already involved say about organising around learning

Step 2  **Getting organised in the branch**
- Find out more about UNISON’s learning initiatives
- Start to develop a branch education team
- What do union learning reps actually do?
- Training for union learning reps
- How do you become a union learning rep?
- The branch lifelong learning co-ordinator
- Why a team approach?

Step 3  **Practical initiatives to promote learning**
- Surveys and questionnaires
- Noticeboards
- Open day or drop in
- Gather your information
- Publicise specific courses
- UNISON member and development and workplace development courses

Step 4  **Talk to your employer**
- Do some fact finding
- Decide what you want to negotiate on
- Negotiating checklist
- Plan your negotiation

Step 5  **Systems and procedures**
- The union learning reps handbook
- Procedure for accrediting union learning reps

**USEFUL INFORMATION**

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RAISE AWARENESS
Organising around learning - what’s in it for a UNISON branch?

Many thousands of UNISON members have benefited from access to free education courses ever since the introduction of Return to Learn in 1988.

With the introduction of rights to time off for union learning reps, UNISON is now going a step further and encouraging branches to engage positively around the learning agenda. So, what’s in it for hard pressed UNISON branches?

Regions have been working with target branches since 2002 to promote learning and to make the link between learning and organising. Here is what they say.

Organising around learning helps UNISON to campaign on key workplace issues

Time off for training, access to a computer, opportunities to have a development review, support for personal development in the workplace, rights to training for part time, shift and night workers, support for workers with dyslexia, negotiating training to meet the skills for life (literacy, numeracy and IT) needs of UNISON members: these are just some of the workplace issues which union learning reps are taking up with members in branches which are already organising around learning.

Organising around learning helps recruit

‘Through gaining a good understanding of the impact of the Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF) on members and tackling issues that arise, our branch has gained 10 new activists and seen membership increase 7.32% over the past year’ – Ian Kelly, branch education co-ordinator, Kettering Healthcare branch.

North Wiltshire Local Government branch reports a similar story. ‘Since I trained as a union learning rep three years ago, the branch has seen membership increase by 15%, a new branch education team has been established with seven union learning reps recruited’ – Irene Docherty, branch education co-ordinator, North Wiltshire Local Government branch.

‘I’ve always encouraged people to join the union but they often question what they’ll get for their money. The union is a good way to reach people who’d never think of getting into learning otherwise. Now that’s value for money’ – Robert Peters, UNISON member.
Organising around learning helps develop members’ skills and confidence

‘The difference it makes for the branch is that it lets all our members know we care about them and shows we’re all part of the union. People who’ve been involved in learning are often more able to raise issues and get their voices heard’ - Eve Cole, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council.

‘When I joined UNISON I thought the union was more about helping with grievances. Now what I see is that education brings change and activates people to get involved so they can make a difference. Like me, people are realising the union is them and not from outside’ - Irene Docherty, branch education co-ordinator, North Wiltshire Local Government branch.

Organising around learning brings in new activists

Getting involved in learning encourages members to get involved in other ways, too. UNISON’s learning programmes are targeted at non-traditional learners – those who have been traditionally excluded from learning and who don’t get easy access to training at work.

So far:

- 69% of union learning reps are women, as opposed to around 45% of stewards
- 51% of UNISON’s union learning reps have never been trained for any other role in the union and 58% of that group have progressed to take on other union roles as well.

Evidence shows that learning initiatives are also attracting black and ethnic minority members into union activity too.

‘A year ago the branch set out to turn learning into a collective matter. So far we have recruited nine new union learning reps, seven stewards, a health and safety rep, three branch officers, a lifelong learning co-ordinator and approximately 100 new members. In addition I am involved in negotiating a national learning agreement with British Gas’ - Margaret Atkin, national negotiating rep, Yorkshire and Humberside Gas branch.

‘We now have 23 trained union learning reps within Lambeth Local Government branch. 19 of the 23 are black and 14 are women. The learning agenda offers a potent mixture of personal development and peer group empowerment, well demonstrated by the large number of black women who are now active within Lambeth UNISON’ - Sheila Simpson, branch lifelong learning co-ordinator.

Organising around learning helps with the bargaining agenda

Working together around learning can be beneficial both to the union and to employers. UNISON has worked with more than 700 employers in recent years, negotiating agreements that include time off for learning and for union learning reps (URLs).
‘Industrial relations have really improved’ - Birmingham Women’s Hospital.

‘Working in partnership with union learning reps is a positive way of ensuring staff development needs are met. The relationship thus far has been very positive and we have plans for more joint projects in the future’ - John Williams, leader of Derbyshire County Council.

‘We all got a very strong sense of collective ownership of the programme and improved staff manager relations along the way. Turnover is down. Loyalty is up. The change is tangible, some of our staff can hardly believe what they have achieved. It’s wonderful seeing the transformation.’ Geraldine Opreshko, head of learning and development, Brighton and Hove City Council.

**Organising around learning creates opportunities for personal and career development**

Being able to access courses such as Return to Learn and Communication Skills through UNISON is a big plus for our members. Many UNISON courses offer access to higher education - we work with the Workers’ Education Association and the Open University to develop the courses that meet the needs of UNISON members across all our service groups and sectors.

‘It’s changed my life doing further education. Now I’m confident with computers and do more at work’ - Robert Peters, UNISON member

**Organising around learning =**

Life chances for our members + The opportunity to recruit and organise around a positive agenda to build a stronger union
GETTING ORGANISED IN THE BRANCH

Interested in finding out more? Here are some first steps

Find out a bit more about UNISON’s approach to learning.

Read through this guide - it’ll give you a good start.

Talk to your UNISON region - key contacts are in the back of this book (see page 30).

Your regional education officer, regional learning development or area organiser will be able to tell you about what is happening in your region and be able to put you in touch with branches who are already organising around learning.

Have a look at the UNISON publications on learning

These are available on the UNISON website to download or can be ordered directly from UNISON Learning and Organising Services and from Communications. A full list is on page 31.

Start to develop a branch education team

What is a branch education team?

Union learning reps and other active members interested in learning, led by an elected branch officer, usually the branch education or lifelong learning co-ordinator, who meet regularly to plan activity around learning.

What are the first steps?

- raise the idea of organising around learning at a branch meeting and with colleagues, and invite the regional education officer or regional learning development organiser to a branch meeting
- get together a few interested members and activists - your branch education co-ordinator is likely to be a key person
- have a stall on learning at a UNISON or an employer event
- circulate information about training as a union learning rep around the branch and invite everyone interested in learning to a meeting
- start to build up the team. Obviously you won’t do this overnight, but the branch will probably already have an education co-ordinator, and as interest in learning grows so will interest in training as a ULR.

What do union learning reps actually do?

Union learning reps are enthusiasts and advocates for learning. Their precise role will vary according to their own circumstances. It can include:
● raising awareness of lifelong learning issues in the workplace, especially for non-traditional learners  
● finding out more about learning needs in the workplace and making sure they get raised in the branch  
● with branch officers, talking to your employer about lifelong learning workplace  
● recruiting new members into the branch and encouraging existing members to get more involved through their interest in learning  
● contacting and talking to members and potential members about how UNISON can assist them in their development  
● supporting members who are on a learning programme  
● helping members interested in learning find out which course is right for them  
● representing and negotiating on behalf of members on issues around learning.

**Training for union learning reps**

UNISON has developed a training programme to equip union learning reps with the skills and knowledge that they need to do the job. The first stage course looks at issues for non-traditional learners, skills for life, working with the branch and the employer. Second stage courses include Skills for Life, Dyslexia in the Workplace, Information Advice and Guidance and sector specific training on issues relevant to different service groups. All training is accredited by the Open College Network.

**How do you become a union learning rep?**

If you are interested, contact your branch secretary or education co-ordinator to find out more. They can put you in touch with other learning reps and with the regional organiser who supports learning. You will need to attend training, which your employer should give you time off for. Your branch will officially endorse you as a union learning rep - you don’t have to be elected, but the branch will formally ratify all the ULRs each year.

**Branch lifelong learning co-ordinator**

The UNISON rule book now includes the role of lifelong learning co-ordinator. This new role would be ideal for a union learning rep elected by branch members to lead on developing lifelong learning in the branch. The lifelong learning co-ordinator will:

● work closely with the branch education co-ordinator - the same person may take on both roles  
● co-ordinate the activity of union learning reps in the branch education team  
● work with colleagues to recruit new union learning reps  
● be closely involved in negotiating around learning with the employer  
● co-ordinate information on learning opportunities for the branch  
● ensure that the work of union learning reps is fully integrated into the branch, so that for example the opportunities to recruit new members and new activists around learning is taken up fully.
**Why a team approach?**

Working in a team means that the branch can help make sure that:

- union learning reps are supported and involved in the branch
- recruiting and organising around learning is easier
- learning issues such as time off for learning and access to personal development are not sidelined, but are high on the bargaining agenda
- the link between learning and the equalities agenda is highlighted - those groups excluded from learning are also often discriminated against in society and underrepresented in UNISON
- the recruitment and development of union learning reps can become part of the normal branch development process
- there is a clear progression route for union learning reps who want to get involved in other aspects of the branch.
PRACTICAL INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE LEARNING

So, you’ve found out some more about UNISON’s approach to learning and you’ve found a few people who are interested in getting more involved. What next? This section includes some practical suggestions for initiatives and some examples of resources which you can use in your branch.

Surveys and questionnaires
A good way to start to raise awareness is to circulate a questionnaire to members. You can target this at particular workplaces where there are specific learning needs or you could use it as part of a recruitment initiative to raise awareness. An example from Sheffield Hallam University branch in Yorkshire and Humberside region is included in this guide on page 34.

Surveys are also a useful tool for union learning reps to use when they are introducing themselves to members - it may be easier to go and talk to people if you have something specific to ask them about.

Noticeboards
Most workplaces where UNISON is recognised will either have noticeboards or will have the employer’s agreement in principle to have a noticeboard. Make the best use of them - UNISON produces a number of different leaflets and posters promoting different learning opportunities.

Open day or drop in?
Many branches have successfully tried out learning open days - often during Adult Learners Week in May. Activities can include setting up a stall with information on training opportunities, UNISON recruitment literature, lifelong learning branded goodies. (All available via your regional learning development organiser or education officer).

This has benefits all round - in 2003, Portsmouth Health branch reported ‘unprecedented’ interest over adult learner week, recruiting 82 people to learning courses, 20 new members, two new health and safety reps and three workplace contacts.

Get together all the information you can on learning and training opportunities
It will be extremely helpful for the branch to have a central store of information about learning opportunities so that when members or potential members express an interest in a particular kind of course, you have suggestions at hand.
Here are some good places to start:

- the employer’s training programme
- UNISON’s regional education programme for activists and members
- regional TUC education programme
- prospectus from your local college(s) of further education
- UNISON leaflet ‘Realise your potential’
- information from the local Learning and Skills Council
- providers of training in your sector – in health, for example, courses provided by your strategic health authority.

**Publicise specific courses**

Once you’ve identified a training need - computer courses, for example- the next step will be to find out about courses that are available. The information you have gathered above should give you plenty of ideas.

**UNISON LAOS member development and workforce development courses**

To maximise the recruitment and organising potential of your courses find out more about UNISON’s member development and workforce development courses. Think about approaching your employer to run training as part of a workplace partnership. That way courses will be available to potential members, providing an excellent recruitment opportunity.

The courses are targeted at people without qualifications and concentrate on key communication and study skills (including IT), and confidence building. Delivery is through tutor-led group study and self-study.

The membership development, or “internal” programme, is aimed at branches who can recruit students for the Return to Learn, Women’s Lives and English for You courses. The courses are run for your branch, or more often a group of branches, and can be publicised alongside the LAOS course discounts so that members and potential members can be offered a range of UNISON-supported learning opportunities.

Employer partnerships and learning agreements are arranged in conjunction with the employer so that the employer provides time off or protected time for learning while UNISON arranges the delivery of the accredited programme.

**UNISON/WEA Learning at Work programme**

**Membership Development (“Internal”) Programme**

These courses are provided free to members. They are organised at regional level and delivered by the WEA to students from one or more branches on a geographical basis. Members attend evening study groups and one residential weekend.

**Return to Learn**

This course is designed for those with few or no qualifications and provides an effective stepping stone into vocational and professional training or for learners considering going back into education.
Women’s Lives
Women’s Lives is for women who have experienced little, if any, recent education. It aims to build confidence and develop study skills in reading and comprehension, note taking, writing, analysing and basic research.

English for You
This course is for UNISON members whose main language is not English. It will help develop self-confidence and communication skills at work and understand workplace health and safety issues.

Employer partnership programme
These courses are provided in workplaces by the WEA under arrangements agreed between UNISON and the employer. Employees have paid time off to attend and the employer meets the full cost of the course.

The following are examples taken from a range of available courses

Communication at Work
Develops practical and relevant skills in written and verbal communication.

Improve your Study Skills
Brush up academic study skills for those who want to study for a qualification.

Learning for You
An alternative shorter course for those returning to education with similar aims to Return to Learn.

Development Review Workshop
Introduces employees to the development review process and builds confidence to help them get the most out of it.

UNISON/Open University (OU) Partnership
UNISON has an agreement with the Open University to provide access to a range of courses at higher education level.

Openings Programme
Short introductory courses that offer an accessible start to higher education learning. Also available through employer partnership arrangements.

K101 Understanding Health and Social Care
A vocationally relevant qualification for learners with few or no qualifications that provides the knowledge, values and skills needed in care work of all kinds. Available through employer partnership arrangements.

Discounts
UNISON members are entitled to a discount on all OU Level 1 courses, on all health and social care courses, and on all business school courses.

Careconnect Learning
Through Careconnect Learning, the UNISON health and social care hub of Lendirect, UNISON also offers access to extensive IT training courses and courses for learners in the health and social care sectors.

National Extension College (NEC)
The NEC offers UNISON members a discount on a wide range of courses.

For more information on LAOS support for member and workforce development, see our website.
TALK TO YOUR EMPLOYER

Do some fact finding

Now that you’ve got some interest in learning in the branch, you should start making a plan about how best to work with your employer. It’s up to you when you start to do this - you need to make sure you’ve got support in the branch for organising around learning, but having a learning agreement and some partnership courses running is also a really good way of recruiting learning reps and members.

Before you do anything, find out what you can about existing agreements. You’ll need to explore the following:

- your existing facilities agreement - does it say anything about union learning reps? When will it next be reviewed?
- any previous learning agreements
- whether there are key people who might be interested in the learning agenda – the training manager for example?
- what is the employer’s current provision of training? Which groups currently access it?
- the stance of any other unions who are recognised in the workplace.

Decide what you want to negotiate on

You need to agree what your priorities are. Some of the main issues you will want to address are set out in the checklist below. Many of these negotiating issues may be included within a workplace learning agreement. These agreements will differ from employer to employer. Some will relate to the delivery of a particular set of courses. Others will be a broader statement of principle committing the employer and the union to build a learning workplace.

A model learning agreement with explanatory notes is included in this guide on page 19.
Checklist for negotiating around learning

Some key points are included here. Please see the model learning agreement for additional points and explanations.

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<tr>
<td>Time off and facilities for union learning reps to carry out their work – this should be part of your recognition agreement and facilities agreement, since the union learning rep should be attracting time off in the same way as any other workplace rep. Note that you should be asking for extra time, not a re-allocation of time from other recognised reps.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions of what you mean by learning – it should be broader than just the skills you need to do your job.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time off for learning or protected time for learning for all staff, including backfill or other arrangements for line managers in order to cover staff absence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commitment to equalities, to include regular audits to ensure that access to training is not limited to certain groups and to ensure that issues around time off are being dealt with.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The establishment of a learning committee which meets regularly.</td>
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<td>Agreement about running specific courses eg from the UNISON Learning at Work programme.</td>
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Plan your negotiation

Work with the branch education team and the branch committee to plan the steps of your negotiation. Use the action planning sheets from the Branch Development and Organising Toolkit (available from the UNISON website activist zone or from your regional organiser) to help plan your strategy. You will need to think about:

- what are the big issues around learning and training facing your members
- what’s in it for the employer
- how you can recruit new members around the campaign
- how you can encourage members to get more involved and train as union learning reps
- how to build in regular monitoring and evaluation.
SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES

Now you have put your team together and generated some interest in learning, it is time to make sure that the branch and the employer’s procedures are all up to date.

UNISON Union Learning Reps Handbook
All union learning reps should have a copy of the handbook and the postcards and record sheets which accompany it. These help record the members and potential members union learning reps have had contact with – crucial so that the branch can organise targeted recruitment. The record sheets can also be used as a way of tracking learning needs in the workplace, which should be fed into the bargaining agenda.

It is important that the branch education/lifelong learning co-ordinator keeps record sheets and other information about learners securely in order to comply with the Data Protection Act.

UNISON procedures for accrediting union learning reps
When a new union learning rep is appointed the regional education officer and regional RMS contact should be informed so that procedures for training them and notifying your employer of their appointment can be put in hand. The new rep’s details should be submitted on the activist update form.

Employers should be notified in advance of the union learning rep seeking time off for training. Once notification is issued, the rep has six months to attend training. If this deadline is missed your employer has the right to withdraw recognition from them and refuse to accept a new notification of their appointment.

Once the notification is received by your region, training will be offered to the union learning rep and once a definite training course is accepted by them either:

Your employer will be notified of the union learning rep’s appointment and the date of the training course,

Or

If your branch notifies the employer of newly appointed representatives, you will be sent the details of the training course that the union learning rep has accepted and you can then notify the employer yourself.
Appendix 1

MODEL WORKPLACE LEARNING AGREEMENT

In this section you will find an outline of a model workplace learning agreement. This model includes all of the sections that UNISON thinks should be in an agreement, but does not go into detail about how each section should be worded.

Agreements are normally worked out in detail between the employer and UNISON locally, and their exact shape will reflect local circumstances as well as the existing consultative mechanisms. There may also be a need for the inclusion of reference to other unions if your local joint consultative arrangements are channelled through a joint staff side. The following model agreement is included as a resource for branch use at local level and includes some general ideas and ground rules that branches can adapt to suit local circumstances.

You will find a general guide to what needs to be in an agreement with guidance notes in italics below each section.

SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Who is involved

This agreement covers the following parties:

Union

Employer

If you are negotiating a multi-union agreement each union will need to be included here. The agreement may cover an entire employer or it may be restricted to certain departments. This should be reflected in this section. It would not normally be the case that the learning provider will be included at this formal point of the agreement.

1.2 Links to external organisations

The employer and trade union will liaise jointly with external learning providers and other bodies as appropriate to meet the need of learners.

In UNISON’s case this may be Careconnect Learning, the Worker’s Education Association (WEA), Open University, National Extension College.

Employers and unions may also have relationships with other potential funding bodies including learning and skills councils, sector skills councils and, in the NHS, strategic health authorities.

1.3 Statement of intent

The .. policy has been drawn up to reinforce the importance of workplace learning to ...(employer) and union. It is designed as an overarching policy statement which will deliver effective learning for employees of (employer)

Even if the agreement is relatively narrow in scope try to include a statement demonstrating UNISON’s commitment to learning which is focused on non-traditional learners, which aims to benefit not just the employer but also the learner outside work and as a member of the community.

A BRANCH GUIDE 19
SECTION 2. PRINCIPLES

2.1 Principles

This policy is based on the fundamental principle that learning should develop the confidence and the skills of the individual, which will benefit them at work, at home and as citizens.

2.2 Definitions

Learning in this document refers to learning which is accessible to everyone, for life and for work, and especially for those who have been traditionally excluded from learning. Learning should be flexible and responsive to the needs of learners. Learning is about individual self development but it is also about working together to meet a collective need – be it in the workplace, in the union or in society.

Partnership A partnership is one in which both sides have a contribution to make, and in which all partners recognise the strengths of each partner. The partnership has to be embedded throughout the structures of each partner organisation. An effective partnership is one which has at its centre the needs of learners and which is flexible and dynamic.

SECTION 3. STATEMENT OF INTENT

3.1 Commitments

Employer

It is the responsibility and aim of (employer) to raise educational achievement and develop lifelong learning so that every individual whatever their age or starting point can realise their full potential in learning, work and within the community. The (employer) commits to implementing the learning strategy from the highest level, to raising awareness and support for the strategy through all levels of the organisation, and to providing the necessary resources to enable this to happen.

UNISON

Trade unions are crucial to the success of encouraging non-traditional learners back into learning. UNISON is committed to working with its members and activists to support learning initiatives and to developing union learning reps to encourage and support learners and to enthuse about the benefits of learning.

The union brings to the partnership its experience of championing learning with non-traditional learners, its national Learning at Work programme, and its branch organisation.

The union has/will developed a network of union learning reps whose role is set out below.

Union learning reps are an integral part of the UNISON branch structure and as such will be supported by the branch committee and will work closely with the branch education co-ordinator as part of the branch education team. The union’s network of stewards and workplace contacts are also points of contact for potential learners who can then be channelled to the union learning reps for appropriate support and signposting.
The union provides two stages of training for union learning reps, all of which is accredited by the Open College Network.

A learning agreement with an employer involves more than union learning reps. This section sets out the central function of the branch and its education or lifelong learning co-ordinator and team. Any learning agreement should be negotiated by or with the close involvement of the branch secretary and relevant lead officers.

3.2 A learning audit

(Employer) will carry out an audit of learning across the organisation on an annual basis to identify who is currently accessing learning, and the nature and level of learning taking place, and will monitor regularly access to learning.

It is important not to confuse this with a skills audit – the focus should be on how the employer is currently providing for its staff, and on what percentage of training budget and support goes to different groups of staff and on who has personal development plans.

3.3 Combating inequality

(Employer) will work to tackle the barriers to learning to ensure that all staff can access learning which meets their needs and the needs of the organisation. (Employer) resolves to work with (union) and the learning provider to identify and address barriers to equality in access to learning including access, and flexibility in learning materials and delivery.

A specific further point to include here should cover how the employer will tackle access – eg ensuring flexibility of delivery to meet the needs of part-time workers and shift workers.

3.4 Time for learning and other resources

(Employer) commits to resourcing fully the learning agreement in order to meet the needs of learners, which may include protected learning time, paid time off, physical space in which to learn or other support.

(Employer) commits to providing physical space and time off and appropriate back fill to enable the running of (specific courses) each year (to be reviewed as appropriate).

Different learners will have different support needs. While many learners will want to take advantage of paid time off to learn, others may wish to learn with a group of their colleagues outside of their work hours, or they may wish to take advantage of protected time for learning in the workplace. The agreement needs to acknowledge that learners’ needs will vary and that the approach of the employer, union and learning provider should be flexible.

This section of the agreement should include the specific commitments of the union to identify and develop union learning reps and recruit learners.

3.5 Facilities and time off for union learning reps

Note: this should be in line with existing arrangements for other workplace representatives, and time agreed should be in addition to existing facility time. This section should formally update the recognition and facilities agreement.
SECTION 4. MECHANISMS AND ROLES

4.1 General statement

This statement recognises the commitment of the (employer) to an employee learning programme that will help staff pursue learning and development opportunities with support from (employer). It is recognised that in order to support staff in developing their skills and abilities, a range of support mechanisms will need to be put in place as follows.

This includes:

An annual development assessment review with their line manager to set out a plan for development opportunities for the year ahead. The plan should be reviewed and updated by mutual agreement at least once during the course of the year. This is consistent with good Investors in People (IIP) practice.

A clear entitlement to learning and development which is appropriately resourced and supported each year.

An employee assistance programme which will provide information and support for staff who wish to take part in wider learning opportunities.

All staff will have the opportunity for training and learning which meets their own development needs.

The entitlement to access learning may be linked to a specific joint union/employer training programme.

4.2 Roles and responsibilities

Employer

(Name of employer) has a clear responsibility to all employees in relation to their learning, training and development in line with the commitment stated above.

Chief officer and senior management team. It is the duty of the chief officer and the senior management team to ensure that all their employees have their right to learning upheld. This reflects an equal entitlement to learning for all staff.

Managers and supervisors. Managers have responsibility for ensuring that all staff have access to learning and training opportunities, can get the necessary time off and that their work is properly covered while they are attending courses or other learning opportunities. All managers and supervisors have a central responsibility for the training and development of employees reporting to them. They are also responsible for ensuring that each employee is made aware of the workplace learning policy and the learning opportunities available to them.

Organisational development/training specialist. All officers with specific responsibilities for the co-ordination, management and/or delivery of learning and development must comply with the workplace learning policy.
Employees. Employees should think creatively about their own development needs and be prepared to make suggestions to their managers.

Trade unions. Trade unions are crucial to the success of encouraging non-traditional learners back to learning. They need to help enthuse workers of the opportunities learning creates, and offer support and encouragement to union learning representatives.

Union learning representatives. Union learning representatives will work with members of staff in accordance with the duties and responsibilities outlined in the relevant ACAS Code of Practice. You will find details of their role on page 10 - 11 of this handbook.

4.3 A learning committee

A learning committee will be established comprising representatives of UNISON/ the joint unions, including representatives of learners, and senior management, where the arrangements for and monitoring of the success of the learning agreement will be the subject of joint discussion between (employer) and (UNISON/ the joint unions).

There are different approaches to the learning committee: one option is to see it as a negotiating committee which should be a sub committee of the joint consultative committee, another is to see it as a consultative committee on which learners can also sit.

If you adopt the learning committee approach you will need to include some reference to important matters including:

- who will sit on the committee
- what will be its functions and remit – eg will it be advisory or will it be a negotiating committee?

Some issues it may discuss:

- setting up courses
- reviewing learning audits and acting on its their findings
- how it will address equalities issues
- how the committee will fit in to the existing negotiating and consultative arrangements
- how the views of learners and union learning reps will be represented on the committee
- how often it will meet.

The committee’s membership should reflect the interests and needs of learners who should, along with union learning reps, be represented on the committee.

4.4 Communications strategy

Matters referred to in this policy will be communicated to staff through inclusion in team briefing sessions, notice boards, staff bulletins and via jointly agreed statements from the learning committee.
Meetings of learners engaged in learning programmes and meetings of the branch education team should be facilitated, and their views fed into the learning committee.

The agreement will need to define how these issues will be communicated to staff, how any new learning initiatives will be advertised to staff and how staff will have the opportunity to have some input in terms of raising issues or suggesting how learning needs can be met.

4.5 Representation and recognition

(The employer) and (UNISON/the joint unions) recognise the key role of union workplace reps in the successful realisation of lifelong learning.

The union will appoint union learning representatives in accordance with its rules. These will be notified to the employer by the union.

The employer will normally allow time off for training within six months of notification of appointment by the union. Union learning representatives will be afforded time off to perform their duties in accordance with the relevant ACAS code of practice.

UNISON will provide appropriate training for union learning representatives.

Note that if you are negotiating a multi union agreement it should be made clear that each union will have the right to train its own union learning reps.

The agreement needs to spell out the fact that communication is a two way process and that communications going out from the learning committee need to be jointly owned, clear and accessible for all members of staff and preferably use different methods to ensure that the message gets across.

The inclusion of paid time off for regular meetings of learners and union learning reps is also important, in order to ensure that their issues are heard and addressed and that the quality and effectiveness of the programme is monitored.

SECTION 5. RESOLVING DISAGREEMENTS

Should disagreements arise between (the employer) and (UNISON/the joint unions) about any matters covered by this agreement, they will, in the first instance be discussed at the learning committee. Should resolution not be reached at the learning committee, (the employer’s) normal dispute resolution procedure shall be applied.

This could be by joint agreement of the learning committee or through the operation of your employer’s grievance or disputes procedure if all else fails. You should try to specify different levels for airing such disagreements so that both sides have the chance to resolve them at the lowest level possible.
SECTION 6. REVIEW AND MONITORING

It is recognised that changes sometimes occur which may affect any of the parties to this agreement. Therefore any such changes may need to be considered through joint consultation in the learning committee.

If necessary this agreement may be amended through the normal joint consultative arrangements that exist between (the employer) and (UNISON/the joint unions).

A minimum of three months notice will be given for proposed changes to this agreement, unless both parties jointly agree to a lesser notice period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You will need to include details of:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● how the agreement (and the workplace learning that it supports) will be monitored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● who will collect and distribute the information to enable you to do this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● how often the information will be provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● what sort of information you will require</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● what the learning committee will do with the information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qualitative information about learners’ reactions to learning, for example, as well information about numbers accessing training, is important.

Finally in this section you may want to add a section that gives you the right to review the agreement as a whole after a defined period. This will give you the opportunity to amend it if that is necessary.
Appendix 2

ACAS CODE – GUIDANCE ON UNION LEARNING REPS

The Employment Act 2002 gave union learning reps the same statutory rights as other union representatives. These rights came into force in April 2003 and are set out in the revised ACAS Code of Practice published in February 2003.

Section 1: time off for trade union duties

1.3 Union learning representatives: employees who are members of an independent trade union recognised by the employer can take reasonable time off to undertake the duties of a union learning representative, provided that the union has given notice in writing that the employee is a learning representative of the trade union and the training condition is met.

The functions for which time off as a union learning representative is allowed are:
- analysing learning or training needs
- providing information and advice about learning or training matters
- arranging learning or training
- promoting the value of learning or training
- consulting the employer about carrying on any such activities
- preparation to carry out any of the above
- undergoing relevant training.

Section 2: training of officials in aspects of employment relations and employee development

2.2 Training for union learning representatives: Employees who are members of an independent trade union recognised by the employer are entitled to reasonable paid time off to undertake the functions of a union learning representative. To qualify for paid time off the member must be sufficiently trained to carry out duties as a learning representative:

either at the time when their trade union gives notice to their employer in writing that they are a learning representative of the trade union

or

within six months of that date.

All Information taken from ACAS Code of Practice 3: Time off for Trade Union Duties and Activities. For a copy please contact your branch secretary or see

www.thompsons.law.co.uk/ltxt/dload/tiofguid.pdf
Appendix 3

LEARNING IN SERVICE GROUPS AND SECTORS

UNISON activity at local level is supported by national framework agreements around learning for sectors and service groups where possible, and by working with the sector skills councils to ensure the interests of UNISON members are taken into account.

UNISON and sector skills councils (SSCs)

25* Sector Skills Councils cover 85% of UK workforce. There is a legal requirement for a union place on the board. SSCs offer unions:

- labour market information
- opportunities to influence content and quality of qualifications
- access to employers
- added creditability for campaigns around learning and skills.

UNISON has representation on the majority of SCCs.

The representatives are able to identify opportunities to shape national and regional skills agendas and machinery. If successful, they can influence the content of sector skills agreements (SSAs), action plans and regional and devolved administrations’ skills strategies so these provide a supportive framework for branches to maximise benefits for members, our union and the wider workforce.

As a UNISON representative on a SSC they can play a strategic role in influencing these bodies to:

- fully recognise existing good practice within public sector organisations, and promote the diverse training and workforce development priorities of the public service workforce
- acknowledge the important contribution that unions and ULRs make to achieving national skills objectives, and recognise unions as full partners in promoting training at all levels
- ensure there is access to qualifications, and progression and career pathways for workers in lower skilled occupations, as well as for those in higher level jobs
- do everything they can within their remit to promote equality of opportunity.

*This number is likely to be reduced by 2012 following the publication of Skills for Growth – the National Skills Strategy November 2009

Local Government Service Group

A Branch Guide to Lifelong Learning in Local Government (stock No. 2466) has been written to provide guidance to branches on how best to create a framework to pursue policies on lifelong learning in the branch. The key points of the national agreement (green book) on training and development, part 2, paragraph 3 and part 4, paragraph 8, are set out below:
Part 2
(Part 2.3, from paragraphs 3.1 – 3.3)

3.1 Authorities will develop local ‘workforce development plans’. Staff training and development should meet both corporate and service needs of authorities and the individual needs of employees. It should enable access to learning for all employees, including part-time and shift workers and it should include the full range of learning methods.

3.2 Employees undertaking required training are entitled to payment of normal earnings and relevant expenses. They are also entitled to paid leave when sitting required examinations. When attending training courses outside contracted daily hours, part-time employees should be paid on the same basis as full-time employees. (Assistance for other forms of learning, for example that directed at individual development, will be locally determined). Some training can be very expensive and authorities may require repayment of all or part of the costs incurred should an employee leave the authority before a reasonable time period has expired. The authority’s policy in this regard should be made explicit.

3.3 Objectives for training and development programmes should:
  - enable councils to attain their strategic objectives via investment in their employees
  - promote equity of access to learning
  - encourage employees to develop their skills and level of responsibility to the maximum of their individual potential
  - widen and modernise the skills profile of employees to maximise their versatility, employability and so, job security
  - enable employees to raise productivity, quality and customer service in pursuit of sustainable improvement.

3.4 Authorities should establish local partnership arrangements, to include recognised trade unions, to develop their local workforce development plans.

3.5 The NJC endorses partnership provision such as the “Return to Learn” scheme. Authorities and the recognised trade unions shall encourage and support employees taking on the statutory union learning representative (ULR) role. This will include agreeing facilities and paid release in accordance with statutory provisions.

Part 4.8: (Guidance)
Workforce Development Plan Guidelines

2.1 The NJC recommends that plans include:
  - targets and commitments on access to learning
  - the approach to developing Learning Partnerships including any delivery of programmes jointly with the trade unions
  - provisions for ensuring that managers and trade union representatives are jointly trained to deliver the plan
the approach expected of contractors in relation to workforce training and development.

2.2 The plan should also cover the role of union learning representatives and specify the following in detail:

- paid time off to attend union learning representative training and accreditation
- paid time off to attend joint training with managers in connection with developing and implementing the agreement
- paid time off and facilities to carry out union learning representative duties
- any paid time off arrangement for employees to consult union learning representatives.

Section 2.3 contains further guidance and action points on corporate strategy, investing in the current and future workforce, implementation and general information and advice.

360 local authority branches already have ULRs active around learning and getting involved in workforce development plans provides an ideal opportunity to expand that work and for branches new to the learning agenda to get on board.

The Get on in Local Government Awards (GO Awards), which an increasing number of authorities have signed up to, gives an ongoing commitment to encourage all staff to gain an up-to-date Skills for Life qualification in literacy and/or numeracy with the support of union learning reps. The GO Fire Award is replicating this work in fire and rescue authorities. A number of branches are using this as part of their strategy around workforce development plans and to engage employers around Skills for Life.

Health Care Service Group

Within the NHS there is a strong commitment to extend learning opportunities to all grades of health service staff. It is recognised that for too long training resources have gravitated towards those with professional qualifications at the exclusion of support staff within the health team.

The government’s plan to modernise health services included a commitment to provide all NHS staff with opportunities to develop their careers, to encourage a culture of lifelong learning and to enable staff to renew and extend their skills and knowledge. With the introduction of the Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF) every member of staff employed on Agenda for Change terms and conditions now has a contractual right to learning and development opportunities. The KSF is now being embedded across the health service. It represents the largest commitment to training and development ever seen in the UK.

Agenda for Change and the KSF (or its equivalent) also applies to private contractor staff in soft facilities management (catering, cleaning domestic, portering, linen and laundry and other related services). These staff are employed on terms and conditions ‘no less favourable’ than those applying to directly employed staff.
UNISON has worked closely with hundreds of NHS trusts to enrich their training programmes with a unique range of courses available through UNISON - employer learning partnerships. These courses, encouraging staff to get back into learning and progression, are now mapped back against the Knowledge and Skills Framework dimensions thus making them indispensable in the success of Agenda for Change.

A Professional Portfolio has been developed to help health care assistants identify their skills and knowledge and to enable them to use this information to create new career and learning opportunities for themselves. The portfolio includes advice on writing a curriculum vitae, applying for jobs and improving writing and study skills. This will also support their professional development under the Knowledge and Skills Framework.

Progress has therefore been made in promoting the learning needs of support staff in health but much still needs to be done if the commitment to an ‘entitlement’ is to be made a reality.

**Other sectors and service groups:**

**Joint learning agreements with employers**

Learning is providing a useful organising tool in some sectors where employers are keen to work with UNISON around development opportunities.

For example, at the energy company E.ON uk, the UNISON Power branch, which operates nationally, organised around learning to gain 500 new members in 2009 and exceeded its recruitment target by 360%. New members signed up for the learning opportunities negotiated by UNISON union learning reps and an employer/union joint national learning agreement will be signed shortly to formalise and support the work going on across the company with ULRs.

Knowledge of other learning agreements that have been reached can help when negotiating with employers. To find out about learning agreements in your sector or service group, contact your area organiser or your bargaining information service contact within your region.

UNISON’s learning and organising services also produces a number of specific learning offers for members in different services groups and sectors, including the police support staff, fire services staff, cleaners and admin workers.
Appendix 4

SOME USEFUL CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

Regional education officers [REOS] regional learning development organisers [RLDOs] and area organisers with learning development responsibility [AOSs]

EASTERN
REO Jane Rudd / RLDO Philip Kemp
Tel No: 01245 608905 E Mail p.kemp@unison.co.uk

EAST MIDLANDS
REO Janet Guest and Angela Gerrard / RLDO Gavin McCann
Tel No: 0115 847 5457 E Mail: g.j.mccann@unison.co.uk

LONDON
REO Les Perkins / RLDO Richard Soer
Tel No: 0207 535 6645 E Mail: r.soer@unison.co.uk

NORTHERN
REO Keith Hodgson / AO Dawn Nicholson
Tel No: 0191 245 0802

NORTHERN IRELAND
REO Cath Friel and REO (Learning) Fidelma Carolan
Tel No: 02890 270190 E Mail: f.carolan@unison.co.uk

NORTH WEST
REO Helen Titherington / RLDO Cleve Tait
Tel No: 0161 661 6777 E Mail: c.tait@unison.co.uk

SCOTLAND
REO Anne Cascarino
Tel No: 0141 3422833 E Mail: a.cascarino@unison.co.uk

SOUTH EAST
REO Sam Wines
Tel No: 01483 406533

SOUTH WEST
REO Kay Mackenzie / RLDO Edna Warwick
Tel No: 01823 285 335 E Mail: e.warwick@unison.co.uk

CYMRU/WALES
REO Gareth John / RLDO Helen Huelin
Tel No: 02920 729414 E Mail: h.huelin@unison.co.uk

WEST MIDLANDS
REO Fred Cattle / RLDO Gurdeep Singh
Tel No: 0121 685 3122 E Mail: g.singh@unison.co.uk

YORKSHIRE & HUMBERSIDE
REO Sue Cookman / RLDO Sultan Mahmood
Tel No: 0113 2182626 E Mail: s.mahmood@unison.co.uk
Publications

10 things you need to know about UNISON and learning - member recruitment leaflet promoting learning. Available from UNISON Communications Unit – Stock No. 2373

U-Train – a map of UNISON routes to learning for representatives and members. Available from UNISON Communications Unit – Stock No. 2370

Spread the Word - a leaflet explaining and recruiting union learning reps. Available from UNISON Communications Unit, stock number 1893


Union learning rep – poster with blank space for ULRs to advertise contact details and events. Available from UNISON Communications Unit – Stock No. 2165

Branch guide to lifelong learning in local government available from UNISON Communications Unit – Stock No. 2466

Skills at work – UNISON’s workplace learning partnerships: a guide for employers. Available from UNISON Learning and Organising Services, 1 Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9AJ or email Learning&OrganisingEnquiries@unison.co.uk

Agenda for change: a UNISON guide to the Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF) - available to download from unison.org.uk/healthcare/a4c/ksf

Skills for Work in the NHS – introducing the NHS Skills Essentials one-day courses. Available from UNISON Learning and Organising Services, 1 Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9AJ or email Learning&OrganisingEnquiries@unison.co.uk

UNISON – your passport to learning in the Police Service - member recruitment leaflet for police staff promoting learning. Available from UNISON Communications Unit – Stock No. 2587

Fire and rescue staff: improve your skills with UNISON - leaflet for fire and rescue staff promoting learning. Available from UNISON Communications Unit – Stock No. 2577

The Learning Rep - available from TUC learning Services Tel 0207 079 6920 or order online http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications

Other publications may be available from your Regional Education Officer.
**Websites**

For more information about the lifelong learning agenda the following websites may be useful:

UNISON – [unison.org.uk](http://unison.org.uk)

UNISON Learning and Organising Services – [unison.org.uk/laos](http://unison.org.uk/laos)

Unionlearn - [unionlearn.org.uk](http://unionlearn.org.uk)

Workers Education Association – [wea.org.uk](http://wea.org.uk)

National Institution for Adult and Continuing Education – [niace.org.uk](http://niace.org.uk)

Campaign for Learning – [campaign-for-learning.org.uk](http://campaign-for-learning.org.uk)

Learning and Skills Council – [lsc.gov.uk](http://lsc.gov.uk)

Lifelong Learning – [lifelonglearning.co.uk](http://lifelonglearning.co.uk)

Directgov - Adult Learning and Skills – A portal for those looking for advice or wishing to find out about government policy on adult learning. - [direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/AdultLearning/](http://direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/AdultLearning/)

Move On - [move-on.org.uk](http://move-on.org.uk)

Train to Gain - [traintogain.gov.uk](http://traintogain.gov.uk)

Open University – [open.ac.uk](http://open.ac.uk)

UK Commission for Employment and Skills - [ukces.org.uk](http://ukces.org.uk)

Skills for Schools - [skills4schools.org.uk](http://skills4schools.org.uk)

Department for Business Innovation and Skills - [bis.gov.uk](http://bis.gov.uk)
Learning and skills survey

We are trying to find out from YOU what you need to help improve yourself or your career prospects. Please return this form in confidence and we will use the information to provide training to meet your needs.

Please return your completed questionnaire to:
A BRANCH GUIDE

18677-Lifelong_adviser.indd   35
01/12/2009   15:23

Name ........................................................................................................................................

Department .................................................................................................................................

Job Title ........................................................................................................................................

How can we get in contact with you? (home or work contact details please)
............................................................................................................................................................

............................................................................................................................................................

If you would like help or support in filling in this questionnaire please send your name and contact details (as above) to the Freepost address overleaf and we will contact you.

1. Are you interested in a learning opportunity?
   YES ☐ NO ☐

2. How will this help you?
   Increase your confidence! ☐ Promotion! ☐
   Enjoyment! ☐ Qualifications! ☐
   Develop New Skills! ☐
   Help your children/ grandchildren with school work? ☐
   Other? ☐

3. What, if any of these below would prevent you from learning at work?
   Not getting paid time off ☐ Age ☐
   Lack of confidence ☐ Other ☐
   Shift Patterns ☐
   Fear of exams ☐

4. Are you studying or learning at the moment?
   eg NVQ level college evening class etc
   YES ☐ NO ☐
   If so, please tell us what ......................................................................................................................

5. If you have answered NO to Question 4:-
   How long ago (in years) did you last do any studying or learning? ____________ (years)

6. What are your learning needs?
   Please ✓ each relevant box to show us what your learning needs are.
   Would you like to brush up your:-
   Writing skills ☐
   Number skills ☐
   Confidence ☐
   Communicating skills ☐
   Would you like to know how to:-
   Write reports ☐
   Use a computer ☐
   Word-process ☐
   Do spreadsheets ☐
   Create a database ☐
   Surf on the internet ☐

   Would you like to improve your study skills and prepare yourself for formal study?
   YES ☐ NO ☐

   Would you like help with your English if English is your second language?
   YES ☐ NO ☐

10. If you have any comments you wish to make, please add them here and they will be taken into account.
...........................................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................

11. Would you like advice and guidance? ☐
   Advice and guidance will be given by independent advisors to help you find the right course for you.
UNISON has more than a million members delivering essential services to the public. Services that protect, enrich and change lives. We want to see changes that put people before profit and public interest before private greed.

Add your voice to our campaign to create a fairer society.

To find out more or add your voice to our million voices for public services go to unison.org.uk/million

To join UNISON today, go to unison.org.uk/join or call 0834 355 0845