Branch guide to lifelong learning
WELCOME

Building our 21st century trade union

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. Currently we have more than 2,600 trained union learning reps in 325 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.

Dave Prentis
UNISON General Secretary
INTRODUCTION

How learning pays off for your branch

Regions that have been working with branches to promote learning have identified six key benefits to organising around learning.

■ Learning supports branch campaigning
  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, meeting the literacy, numeracy and IT needs of UNISON members: these are just some of the workplace issues that ULRs are taking up with members in branches that are already organising around learning.

■ Learning boosts recruitment
  “Through our joint work with UNISON Learning and Organising Services since the start of 2018, our branch has trained 13 ULRs, held an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) course for 15 learners and recruited over 50 new members.”
  West London Mental Health Trust Branch Secretary Khaled Kiswani
  The organising payoff from learning can be huge – as demonstrated by
the Middlesex University Branch’s organisation of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes for outsourced cleaners on the campus. “We had to start because nearly every single cleaner speaks Spanish or Portuguese,” explains UNISON member Consuela Ospina, who works as a supervisor for contract cleaning firm ISS.

Branch Secretary Claire Mitham persuaded ISS to release cleaners from their duties to attend the classes and secured a room on site for the course. More than a dozen cleaners attended the course. Those who were not already members were recruited on the first day.

“Our membership has increased because lots of people are joining the union to attend these courses; their confidence is growing – they’re able to speak to us about their issues; and they’re able to speak to their managers about the problems they have, so it’s definitely helped a lot,” says Claire.

Learning develops members’ skills and confidence

“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.”

North Wiltshire Local Government Branch Education Co-ordinator Irene Docherty

A group of women members in Lincolnshire who have continued to support each other since meeting on UNISON’s Power to be You course shows how learning together can help members change their lives for the better.

“There was a really supportive environment on the course, so I suggested we all meet up afterwards and now a few of us continue to meet every six weeks or so,” explains Helena Mair. Helena was working for the British Heart Foundation (BHF) at the time but attending the regular meetings since the course has helped her gain the confidence to take the risk of leaving her BHF job to become office manager for local MP (and former UNISON ULR) Karen Lee.

“I was a bit stuck in my previous job because I’d been doing it for 16 years. But now I have surrounded myself with people who are really supportive and being in that environment has made me much more confident. So when this opportunity came up to work for Karen – although it’s a really big risk to work for any MP – I’m really glad that I made the leap.”

Learning helps identify and develop new activists

“I became a steward after going on the Pathways into UNISON course. The course really signposted what was available in UNISON to take part in. They said there wasn’t a need for it at work but all of a sudden there was this wave – that people did actually need it and they’d not actually been asking because nobody was in the workplace available. Just little bits of help that people need. After becoming a rep, I have now been nominated to become assistant branch treasurer.”

Lauramay Beynon
Branch Steward, Barnsley Branch UNISON

Getting involved in learning encourages members to get involved in other ways, too. UNISON’s learning programmes are targeted at those who have been traditionally excluded from learning and who don’t get easy access to training at work.
“A year ago the branch set out to turn learning into a collective matter. So far, we have recruited nine new ULRs, 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
Yorkshire and Humberside Gas
Branch National Negotiating Rep

The evidence shows that learning is another route through which to engage Black members. For example, 22 Black members in the South West are implementing action plans in their branches across the region after a successful brand new leadership course in Bristol. The course was designed to engage Black members across the region from both urban and rural communities.

“Overall the weekend was worthwhile. It was a great experience – a great way of networking, sharing ideas and knowledge and meeting new people.”

Mamata Rai
Wiltshire Police Black Members’ Rep

■ Learning helps branches develop their bargaining agenda

“Industrial relations have really improved.”

Birmingham Women’s Hospital

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 ULRs.

For example, staff at Bradford City Council have gained paid release for learning at work since Bradford Local Government Branch signed a learning agreement with the local authority.

“We have a dedicated area on the council’s learner management system and a dedicated area on a more general workforce development website they use for members in the private sector. We will put any training we run on the Bradford Council system and if members are interested in going on that training and it’s relevant to their work or beneficial for their work they will get paid release,” says Lifelong Learning Coordinator David Wright.

■ Learning creates opportunities for personal and career development

“I’ve decided that I want to go into teaching. I’m looking at going through The Open University and starting that journey. It’s going to be part-time and it will take a while but it should be worthwhile and the skills I’ve got from this course will really help.”

Women’s Lives participant Karly

Being able to access courses such as Return to Learn and one-day workshops through UNISON is a big plus for our members. Many UNISON courses offer access to higher education: we work with the Workers’ Educational Association (WEA) and The Open University (OU) to develop the courses that meet the needs of UNISON members across all our service groups and sectors.

Organising around learning = Life chances for our members
+ The opportunity to recruit and organise around a positive agenda to build a stronger union
STEP 1
Getting organised in your branch

Setting up a branch education team is a great way to start promoting learning in your branch: it helps keep learning high on your branch agenda and offers learning reps a clear route into other branch activity.

■ **Start to develop a branch education team**

A branch education team is a group of union learning reps (ULRs) and other active members interested in learning, who meet regularly to plan activity around learning. The team is led by an elected branch officer, usually the branch education or lifelong learning co-ordinator.

To set up an education team in your branch:
■ raise the idea of organising around learning at a branch meeting with colleagues and invite the regional education officer or regional learning and 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
■ run a stall on learning at a UNISON or an employer event
■ circulate information about training around the branch and invite everyone interested in learning to a meeting.

Building the team won’t happen overnight but the branch will probably already have an education co-ordinator and more people are likely to be interested in training as ULRs as interest in learning grows.

■ **The benefits of team work**

Working in a team means that the branch can help make sure that:
■ ULRs 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 placed 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 under-represented in UNISON
■ the recruitment and development of ULRs can become part of the normal branch development process
■ there is a clear progression route
for ULRs who want to get involved in other aspects of the branch.

What do ULRs actually do?
ULRs are enthusiasts and advocates for learning. Their precise role will vary according to their own circumstances but can include:

- raising awareness of lifelong learning issues in the workplace, especially for those who haven’t usually participated in learning
- finding out more about learning needs in the workplace and making sure they get raised in the branch
- working with branch officers to discuss lifelong learning needs in the 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.

If you are interested in becoming a ULR, 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 ULR; you don’t have to be elected but the branch will formally ratify all the ULRs each year.

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 barriers to learning, literacy, numeracy and digital skills, working with the branch and the employer. Second stage courses include discussion leaders and dyslexia in the workplace.

What is a 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 ULR 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 are taken up fully.

Interested in finding out more?
- Find out a bit more about UNISON’s approach to learning: reading through this guide will give you a good start.
- Talk to your UNISON region: you can find the key contacts on the learning. UNISON website at https://learning.unison.org.uk/regional-education-teams/. Your regional education officer, regional learning and 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 that are already organising around learning.
- Have a look at the UNISON publications on learning: they are available for download on the UNISON website or you can order printed copies directly from Learning and Organising Services or Communications.
STEP 2

Practical initiatives to promote learning

Once you have identified people who are interested in getting more involved in organising around learning you can follow some of these practical suggestions for initiatives and use some of these resources in your branch.

Talk to your members

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. You can start by asking if members would be interested in our one-day workshops, which include continuing professional development (CPD) courses delivered by The Open University (OU) and workshops run by the Workers’ Educational Association (WEA) that are designed to build participants’ confidence and explore their skills.

Find out more online at: https://learning.unison.org.uk/member-learning
Or order our member learning leaflet ACT 280.
Surveys are also a useful tool for ULRs to use when they are introducing
themselves to members: it’s always easier to talk to people when you have something specific to ask them about.

There are further examples of learning surveys on the UNISON Organising Space: https://organisingspace.unison.org.uk/OS

Once you have registered, you can find them in the ‘learning resources’ area under the ‘learning and development’ section.

■ Make the most of 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. You can personalise one of our posters with your details. Order your posters using ACT 265

■ Run open days and drop-ins
Many branches have successfully tried out learning open days, often during Learning at Work Week (LAWW) in May or Festival of Learning in June. Activities can include setting up a stall with information on training opportunities, UNISON recruitment literature and lifelong learning branded promotional materials.

Taking advantage of the higher profile of learning during these initiatives has benefits all round. When East Midlands region undertook a survey during LAWW in 2018, it found that nearly 300 respondents were interested in finding out more about the ULR role.

You could also link an open day to a national initiative like International Women’s Day in March, Dyslexia Awareness Week (DAW) in October or Black History Month, which runs throughout October. (Speak to your regional learning and development organiser (RLDO) or education officer for support or information.)

■ Build a database of 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:
■ your employer’s training programme
■ UNISON’s regional education programme for activists and members
■ regional TUC education programme
■ prospectuses from your local further education (FE) colleges
■ UNISON member learning leaflet
■ training providers in your sector
■ the register of apprenticeship training providers at www.gov.uk/guidance/register-of-apprenticeship-training-providers

■ Publicise specific courses
Once you’ve identified a training need – for example, computer courses – the next step will be to find out what courses are available. The information you have gathered in your branch database should give you plenty of ideas.
STEP 3

Talk to your employer

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 ULRs and members.

- **Track down existing agreements**
Before you do anything, find out what you can about existing agreements. You’ll need to explore the following:
- Does your existing facilities agreement say anything about ULRs? If not, when will it next be reviewed?
- Are there any previous learning agreements on record?
- Are there any key people (e.g., the training manager) who might be interested in the learning agenda?
- What is your employer’s current provision of training? Which groups currently access it?
- Are any other unions that are recognised in the workplace interested in cooperating on the learning agenda?

- **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.
### Checklist for negotiating around learning

Some key points are included here. There are additional points and explanations in the model learning agreement section on pp16&17.

### Plan your negotiation

Work with the branch education team and the branch committee to plan the steps of your negotiation. Use the guide from the final activity in the UNISON Learning Representative course 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 your employer?
- how can you recruit new members around the campaign?
- how can you encourage members to get more involved and train as ULRs?
- how can you build in regular monitoring and evaluation?

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<th>Issues</th>
<th>Is this covered? If so, where?</th>
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<td><strong>Time off and facilities for union learning reps to carry out their work</strong> should be part of your recognition agreement and facilities agreement, since the ULR should be securing 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>
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<td><strong>Definitions of what you mean by learning</strong> should be broader than just the skills people need to do their job.</td>
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<td><strong>Time off for learning</strong> 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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<td><strong>Commitment to equalities</strong>, 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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<td><strong>Setting up a learning committee</strong> that meets regularly.</td>
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<td><strong>Agreement about running specific courses</strong> e.g., from the UNISON member learning programme.</td>
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STEP 4

Systems and procedures

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

■ UNISON Union Learning Reps Handbook

All ULRs should have a copy of the handbook and the postcards and record sheets that accompany it. The record sheets are particularly important: first, because they enable you to record the members and potential members you have had contact with – which provides vital information that helps the branch organise targeted recruitment; and secondly, because they 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 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

■ Accrediting new ULRs

When a new ULR is appointed, your branch should inform your regional education officer and regional RMS contact 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 Notification of UNISON Workplace Representative form.

Employers should be notified in advance of the ULR 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 your region receives the notification, they will offer training to the ULR and once a definite training course is accepted by them:

■ either your employer will be notified of the ULR’s appointment and the date of the training course
■ or, if your branch notifies your employer about newly appointed representatives, your region will send you the details of the training course that the ULR has accepted and you can then notify the employer yourself.
UNISON’s member learning programme

LAOS has developed a range of workshops and courses for our members that are designed to be enjoyable, interactive and informative. To set up a course, talk to your ULR, Branch Education Coordinator (BEC) or Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator (LLC) in the first instance, or contact your regional education team for further information.

- **Member learning programme**
  These courses are free to members only and are designed to provide a welcoming and supportive route back into learning and education. They are organised at regional level and delivered by a tutor from the WEA to learners from one or more branches on a geographical basis.
  - **Return to Learn**: This 10-week course is designed for people who have been out of studying for some time and provides an effective stepping stone into personal or vocational training. It develops writing, research, reading and analysing skills and increases confidence.
  - **Women’s Lives**: This 10-week course is for women who have experienced little, if any, recent education. It aims to build confidence in speaking and writing skills while discussing issues that are important to women. Members on both these courses attend evening study and one residential weekend.

- **Personal development one-day workshops**
  These one-day workshops are delivered by a WEA tutor or tutor-trained UNISON organiser or ULR and held in the workplace or at a community venue. They are designed to help individuals improve their confidence and recognise their skills and strengths and can be offered to both members and non-members. The course materials can be accessed by your UNISON regional team. Financial support for venue costs and refreshments is available through the LAOS Kickstart fund.
  - **Power to be you** is a confidence-building workshop to help improve self-esteem, confidence and give practice and tips on speaking in public.
  - **Your Skills, Your Future** is a workshop to identify skills and values and how participants could use them for personal development.
  - **Get that Job** looks at the job application process. It helps individuals to identify their strengths and skills and how to demonstrate them on job application forms.
  - **Introduction to Family History** is designed for people interested in their own family histories or genealogy in general, offering discussion and research tips.
  - **Be Safe Online** is designed to help people to stay safe online.
  - **Study Skills** is a short workshop offering useful strategies for individuals to be more effective in their studies, giving help and advice on note-taking, for example, and an organised approach to studying.
Supporting Cancer in the Workplace is a workshop offering guidance on supporting someone with cancer.

Professional development Open University (OU) workshops These are one-day workshops, led by an OU tutor, for the professional development of both members and non-members. They are ideal for employees working in a school or care setting but some may also be of interest to others working in frontline roles. They can be arranged by contacting your regional education team.

Autism Awareness is aimed at school support staff and covers the characteristics of autism, areas of difficulty and challenge and how to support children with autism.

Dementia Awareness is designed to help members understand what is meant by the term dementia – the different types, the causes of the condition and how having dementia affects the way people behave and function – and how to support them.

Challenging behaviour in the classroom is aimed at school support staff and looks at reasons for difficult behaviour and how to address them in the classroom.

Mental Health Awareness helps members develop a greater awareness of mental health by understanding a range of mental health problems people face and exploring strategies for promoting good mental health.

Other learning opportunities Other learning opportunities may be available through your regional education team: take a look at their website and see what is available for your members. LAOS has a number of partnerships with learning providers that benefit members, including with the National Extension College (NEC).

The NEC offers educational opportunities and second-chance learning for people for whom attending regular classes at a school or college would not be possible. It provides distance learning courses, including GCSEs and A levels, and qualifications in childcare and early years. The NEC offers a 10 per cent discount to UNISON members on all its courses.

UNISON Inclusive Learning Project UNISON has received support from the Union Learning Fund in England to embed learning in the workplace. The project’s key priorities are currently:

- recruiting ULRs
- supporting apprenticeships, young people, and their progression
- engaging learners: promoting ICT skills, maths and English learning
- developing skills for the workplace, especially for those who have least access to training
- tackling barriers to equality and diversity.

The Inclusive Learning Project can support learning activities in branches and regions with funding that can be used to pay for venue and catering costs, learning equipment or resources (but not tutor costs or activist training). UNISON learning reps, lifelong learning coordinators, organisers and education officers can all apply for help. There are two levels of funding available:

- **Kickstart**: to support learning events and engage existing and potential members (for example, paying for refreshments at a workshop or buying a bookcase for a workplace reading group)
- **Moving On**: to help put sustainable learning in place (for example, buying IT equipment for a learning centre)

To apply for funding, download and complete the appropriate application form, returning it to kickstart@unison.co.uk. If you would like to discuss how to use funding, contact Learning and Organising Services on 020 7121 5116.
Model learning agreement

These are key points that form our model workplace learning agreement. 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.

■ Section 1: Introduction
This should set out:
■ who is involved – employer, UNISON / joint trade unions
■ links to external learning providers and other bodies
■ statement of intent behind the agreement.

■ Section 2: Principles
This should set out:
■ 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
■ a definition of learning that is accessible to everyone (especially for those who have been traditionally excluded from learning) and is flexible and responsive to the needs of learners
■ the benefits of effective partnership working that is focused on the needs of learners.

■ Section 3: Statement of intent
This should set out:
■ employer commitments to implementing the learning strategy from the highest level; raising awareness and support for the strategy through all levels of the organisation; and to providing the necessary resources
■ UNISON commitments to working with its members and activists to support learning initiatives and to developing union learning reps (ULRs) to encourage and support learners
■ an audit of learning across the organisation by the employer on an annual basis
■ how the employer will tackle the barriers to learning to ensure that all staff can access learning that meets their needs and the needs of the organisation by working with the union(s) and the learning provider
■ employer commitments to fully resourcing 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
■ facilities and time off for ULRs in line with existing arrangements for other workplace representatives and time agreed should be in addition to existing facility time.
■ **Section 4: Mechanisms and roles**
This should include:
■ a general statement recognising the commitment of the employer to an employee learning programme that will help staff pursue learning and development opportunities with the employer’s support including: annual development assessment reviews; a clear entitlement to learning and development that is appropriately resourced and supported; an employee assistance programme that will provide information and support for staff who wish to take part in wider learning opportunities; the opportunity for training and learning that meets the development needs of each individual member of staff
■ the role and responsibilities of the employer, including the chief officer and senior management team; managers and supervisors; and organisational development / training specialists
■ the role and responsibilities of the employees; trade unions; ULRs
■ establishment of a learning committee comprising representatives of UNISON / the joint unions, including representatives of learners, and senior management, to monitor implementation of the learning agreement
■ a communications strategy for communicating to staff through inclusion in team briefing sessions, noticeboards, staff bulletins and via jointly agreed statements from the learning committee
■ recognition of the key role of union workplace reps in the successful realisation of lifelong learning, with the union appointing ULRs in accordance to its rules and the employer normally allowing time off for training within six months of notification of a ULR’s appointment.

■ **Section 5: Resolving disagreements**
This should set out how any disagreements that arise between the employer and UNISON / the joint unions about any matters covered by the agreement will be discussed at the learning committee in the first instance. Should resolution not be reached at the learning committee, the employer’s normal dispute resolution procedure shall be applied.

■ **Section 6: Review and monitoring**
This should set out the recognition by both sides that any changes that occur that may affect any of the parties to the agreement may need to be considered through joint consultation in the learning committee. If necessary, the agreement may be amended through the normal joint consultative arrangements that exist between the employer and UNISON / the joint unions.

■ You can find a fuller outline model learning agreement, with extensive notes about drafting of key sections, on the Organising Space.
Section 1: time off for trade union duties

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 (see paras 28-33 of the code of practice for further information on the training condition).

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 activities
- undergoing relevant training.

In practice, the roles and responsibilities of union learning representatives will often vary by union and by workplace but must include one or more of these functions. In some cases it may be helpful if union learning representatives attend meetings concerned with agreeing and promoting learning agreements. Employers may also see it in their interests to grant paid time off for these representatives to attend meetings with external partners concerned with the development and provision of workforce training.

Recognition needs to be given to the varying roles of union learning representatives where the post-holder also undertakes additional duties as a union representative.

Many employers have in place well established training and development programmes for their employees. Union learning representatives should liaise with their employers to ensure that their respective training activities complement one another and that the scope for duplication is minimised.

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

Training for union learning representatives: Employees who are trade union learning representatives are also permitted reasonable time off during working hours to undergo training relevant to their functions as a union learning representative.
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.


Further resources

- Become a ULR: what’s not to like? – leaflet outlining the role of the Union Learning Representative. Stock no: ACT 226

- UNISON Inclusive Learning e-bulletin – monthly bulletin outlining the work of UNISON activists around learning. Subscribe via eBulletin@unison.co.uk

- Union learning rep – poster with blank space for ULRs to advertise contact details and events. Available from LAOS. Stock no: ACT 265

- Member Learning Leaflet Stock no: 280

- UNISON Organising Space – organisingspace.unison.org.uk

- UNISON Learning website learning.unison.org.uk – for more information about all UNISON learning and training opportunities

- UNISON e-learning site e-learning.unison.org.uk – this site includes access to UNISON learning e-notes


- Unionlearn – www.unionlearn.org.uk – includes access to SkillCheck on-line learning tool

- Learning Rep – quarterly on-line magazine available online from unionlearn

- Workers’ Educational Association – www.wea.org.uk

- Open University UNISON partnership – www.open.ac.uk/choose/unison/

- The Learning and Work Institute – www.learningandwork.org.uk

- National Numeracy – www.nationalnumeracy.org.uk

- The Reading Agency – readingagency.org.uk
To find out more and how to join contact:
UNISONdirect TELEPHONE 0800 085 7857
textphone users FREEPHONE
0800 096 7968
Lines open 6am to midnight Monday to Friday and 9am to 4pm on Saturday
Visit our website learning.unison.org.uk
Follow us on twitter: @unisonlearning
Stock No: ACT299