

the learning rep

» Winter 2010

Viva the revolution!
Festival promotes
informal learning

Welcome to No 10 ...
Apprentices meet
their own minister

Teaching the teachers
Unions help combat
bad behaviour

Quick Reads exclusive

Beat the credit crunch with Alvin's stardust

A celebration of apprenticeships

Last month unionlearn was at 10 Downing Street to celebrate apprenticeships. A packed event saw apprentices from a range of backgrounds and from a range of unions mixing with guests and ministers. The enjoyable and inspiring evening showed off the benefits of apprenticeships and brought together some exceptional young people.

Three of the apprentices (Adam Matthews from the PFA and Cardiff City FC; Leanne Talent from UNISON and Merseytravel; Richard Sagar from Unite and Eden Electrics) addressed the audience and impressed everyone there. A big thank to them for their professionalism and eloquence when speaking on the day.

A thank you too to ministers Kevin Brennan, Pat McFadden and Iain Wright for joining us, as well as Children's Secretary Ed Balls and Business Secretary Lord Mandelson. A strong commitment to support and expand apprentices was given by Gordon Brown, which was warmly welcomed by all those there.

In this issue of *The Learning Rep*, you will find a full report of the Downing Street event with some great photographs of the apprentices. We've decided to make this issue an apprentices special and it includes interviews with Richard, Leanne and Adam who spoke at the Downing Street event as well as an interview with Kevin Brennan, the apprentices minister.

We have an exclusive interview with TV financial expert Alvin Hall. He is one of the authors for this year's Quick Reads, which are launching in January ready for World Book Day on 4 March. You will also find details of this year's books including *Life's Too Short*, unionlearn's own contribution, which is a series of short stories by union reps and activists based on their working lives. We are delighted to be able to make a contribution to the Quick Reads series and to support World Book Day for another year.

Tom Wilson
Director unionlearn

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University of Leeds LOGIK centre

In the last edition of *The Learning Rep*, the photograph accompanying the story 'College that Leeds the way' showed staff from the University of Leeds attending an African drumming class led by Alison Lyon held in the LOGIK Centre, the university's workplace learning centre. Apologies to the staff at the LOGIK Centre and the University of Leeds for failing to mention them in the article.

Gentoo's Ian is number 1

Gateshead ULR Ian Thompson won the national unionlearn award at the learndirect Achievement Awards Ceremony in the autumn.

Unite ULR Ian Thompson picks up his learndirect award from unionlearn Director Tom Wilson (left) and event co-host Ruth Langford

Since becoming a Unite learning rep at North-East people and property group Gentoo three years ago, building worker Ian has encouraged over 400 colleagues to access learning opportunities.

He's also undertaken courses at the St Thomas Street learndirect centre in Sunderland, and completed an NVQ and a construction qualification.

"I left school with no qualifications – I was left at the back of the class and I felt that teachers forgot about me," Ian says.

"I've achieved so much with

learndirect, and as a union learning rep I've passed on my experiences and enthusiasm for learning to my colleagues."

TV presenter Eamonn Holmes and his wife Ruth Langford, who made the presentations, have worked with learndirect in the past to highlight the difference learning can make to people's lives.

"We have seen first-hand how learners from across the UK are boosting their skills, improving their job prospects and becoming more confident: all the finalists are truly inspiring, and we were honoured to help celebrate their success," Eamonn says.



Photo: www.lucindamarland.com

hires needed



Photo: Jess Hurd/reportdigital.co.uk

It's the 2012 learning legacy

The Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) and unionlearn SERTUC have got together to set up a learning centre on the 2012 site in East London, offering literacy and numeracy courses to construction workers and the local community.

The ODA supplied the building, computers and connectivity while unionlearn SERTUC supports the three-strong project team headed by Learning Centre Manager Phil Spry.

"We're a learndirect centre, offering literacy and numeracy up to Level 2, and IT courses from beginners up to Level 2," says Phil.

Situated on the fringes of the massive infrastructure project, the centre is designed not only for workers on the site but also for members of local unions and the local community.

"It's certainly different: workplace learning centres don't normally actively go out and promote their courses to the local community – it's generally just the unions onsite or in the locality," explains Phil.

The team has been meeting a range of local unions to fill them in about what's on offer, and is also working with the Communities Champion at a local Tesco

Podium places (from left): centre manager Phil Spry, ODA Head of Equality and Inclusion Loraine Martins, TUC Deputy General Secretary Frances O'Grady, unionlearn Regional manager Barry Francis, Project Worker Jane Warwick, Director Tom Wilson and centre admin assistant Mark Sadler

superstore to help promote the centre to local people.

Union-based initiatives include a plan by teachers' union NUT to have the learning centre bring its laptops into local primary schools, where parents will be able to improve their literacy, numeracy and computer skills after they've dropped off their children.

The centre will be formally opened in early 2010, and will remain onsite until March 2011, after which it is hoped to move it to a new site in the area to continue helping local people as part of the legacy of the Olympics after 2012.

Train to Gain boosts Lambeth Council learning

UNISON ULR Sheila Simpson is working with Train to Gain to help more of her colleagues at Lambeth Council in London access learning at work.

"Working in partnership with our broker is beneficial because she guides me through the funding maze and keeps me up to date with the adult curriculum," Sheila says.

In addition to Train to Gain, the union has developed partnerships with Lambeth College, Lewisham TUC and the Workers' Educational

Association (WEA) to offer Skills for Life and other courses to council staff.

Sheila started as a union learning rep in 2003, and her own workplace learning has helped her develop from being an unskilled worker with dyslexia to taking on a management role.

"I won't deny that it can be a strain, juggling work, family and studying, but with support from the ULRs working in partnership with the employer this can be achieved!" she says.



On your bikes!

With more and more workers at Eurostar Temple Mills travelling to work by motorbike, RMT ULR Jamie Liness has started organising safety courses run by police motorcyclists to help participants become safer, more competent and more confident on two wheels.

“Getting to work by motorbike has taken off at Eurostar Temple Mills,” Jamie says.

Jamie heard about the courses run by Bike-Safe London, an initiative to help to cut motorcycle rider casualties, from one of his fellow bikers at work.

“I had a huge response when I put the word out about running a course – we’ve run three courses at the depot so far with great success and are planning more in the future,” he says.

The first course was funded through the RMT learning bursary fund, while the second two were paid for by the Eurostar Temple Mills Training Department, which could see the benefit to everyone involved, Jamie says.



Full steam ahead at Network Rail

Grimsby Network Rail staff are studying for an ITQ course through Train to Gain

After putting together a successful Adult Learners’ Week (ALW) event last year, rail union RMT ULR Tony Hutton has organised a bespoke computer course for Network Rail staff in the Grimsby area.

The union has yet to sign a learning agreement with Network Rail, which owns and operates the country’s rail infrastructure, so Tony had to start from scratch when he became a learning rep, running the ALW event with funds from RMT Learning.

“The day was a success and attended by over 100 people: local management were delighted and really started to see the benefits to everyone engaging

in and encouraging the learning drive,” Tony says.

It was the results of a questionnaire circulated at the event that prompted Tony to investigate the best way of helping staff to plug their IT skills gaps.

The bespoke Information Technology Qualification (ITQ) Level 2 course, which includes elements of the TRUST software used in signal boxes, is financed through Train to Gain.

A total of 30 learners enrolled on the pilot, with skills ranging from beginner to web design.

Network Rail Development Worker Jen York hopes the pilot will smooth the path to a learning agreement between the RMT and Network Rail.

“The development of a bespoke ITQ is a huge achievement and shows what positive outcomes can happen when ULRs and Network Rail work jointly together: we have yet to sign a learning agreement and this pilot is a step in the right direction,” she says.



Thumbs up for skills strategy

The TUC has welcomed the Government’s latest Skills Strategy, which sets out an ambitious vision for giving people and businesses the skills they need to help drive economic growth.

Skills for Growth: The National Skills Strategy commits the Government to:

- dramatically expanding advanced apprenticeships, and encouraging the best apprentices into higher education
- empowering adult learners to shop around for training with their own personal skills account
- streamlining the number of public bodies responsible for delivering skills policy.

It also sets a new target of ensuring three-quarters of the population go to university or get an advanced technical qualification by the age of 30.

“By providing extra funding for advanced apprenticeships and helping trainees to go on to university, the Government is putting apprenticeships at the heart of our education system,” says TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber.

“The Government’s new target of getting 75 per cent of people under 30 into university or advanced vocational education rightly recognises that both routes matter equally if the UK is to have more highly skilled workers.”

Download the executive summary, strategy document and analytical paper from www.bis.gov.uk/skillsforgrowth

North-East learners reach higher

A joint TUC/unionlearn initiative to improve higher level skills in the North-East has exceeded its targets of getting adults on to Foundation degree courses or their equivalent.

The Higher Level Skills Project, which unionlearn and the Northern Region TUC launched in October 2007, aimed to promote higher level skills to 1,200 potential learners and see 65 learners progress to higher learning.

In fact, the project has engaged 1,213 potential learners and encouraged 144 adults to sign up for higher level learning including Foundation degree courses – more than twice the original target, according to a recent evaluation exercise by Ekosgen.

In addition, over 200 adults also received advice and guidance on training and development.

“This has been a ground-breaking project, as traditionally the trade unions in this region have focused around lower level qualifications and Skills for Life,” says unionlearn Regional Manager Elizabeth Killoran.

“The Higher Level Skills Project completes the circle so that we are tackling all skill areas and enabling learners to progress through to leadership and management skills with others, which is good news for those individuals, for businesses in the North-East and for the region as a whole.”

Another key role of the project was to raise awareness among regional employers of the benefits of union learning, particularly leadership and management skills.

Targets were again exceeded twice over, with 119 employers getting involved (the original target was 46), many of them contributing towards the cost of course fees for their employees.

“We're delighted that this project has proved so successful and we're grateful for the support and funding that's been received from regional employers who recognise the benefit of upskilling their workforce,” Elizabeth says. “Due to that success we hope to continue this level of support for union members in the future.”



Photo: LSC

More employers are realising they benefit from higher level learning

Don't leave home without it

Unionlearn has revised its popular handbook Working for Learners to help unions and ULRs promote, negotiate and broker learning opportunities for their members.

The new edition incorporates improvements suggested by a survey of users of the first edition (which overwhelmingly rated the publication useful or very useful).

The handbook now includes a section outlining the range of opportunities that learners can access from Skills for Life to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and sets out the National Qualification Framework. It also has a new section on the funding available to learners.

The handbook updates unions on the unionlearn initiatives designed to support learners such as the union learning Climbing Frame and the unionlearn Careers and Advice Service. It contains an updated jargonbuster to explain the alphabet soup of acronyms and initiatives. And it includes case studies that show how ULRs can work with employers and providers to open up learning opportunities at the workplace.



» **Unionlearn has already posted a copy of the handbook to every ULR on the unionlearn database, and you can order free copies from the website at www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications**

Your chance to go for 2011 glory



worldskillsuk

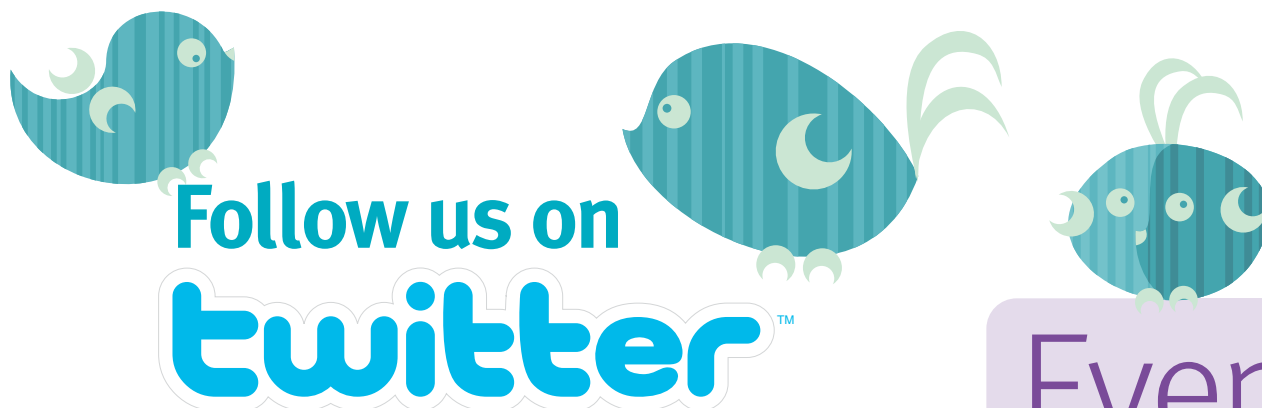
WorldSkills UK is currently organising the cycle of competitions to help identify potential members of the UK team that will compete in the next 'skills Olympics' when WorldSkills comes to London next year.

Last year, around 4,000 registered their interest in a WorldSkills UK competition, which tests young people's grasp of best practice in their chosen field, from bricklaying, carpentry and welding to web design, cooking and hairdressing.

All you have to do is visit the WorldSkills UK website, select the competition you're interested in, read all the information about it and follow the onscreen instructions to enter.

To be in with a chance of competing at WorldSkills London 2011, you need to enter this year: outstanding national finalists may be considered for potential inclusion in the team that goes on to represent the UK at a WorldSkills competition.

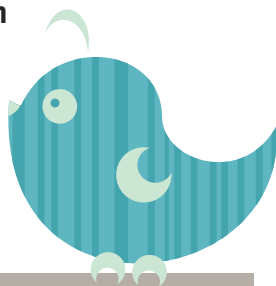
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Are you a twitterer? You may not have the one million followers of Stephen Fry but if you are embracing the world of new media and keeping in touch with what is going on through twitter you might want to add some union business to your twitter feed.

Unionlearn is now on twitter and you can follow us [@unionlearn](#). You can also follow the TUC on [@tucnews](#) [@touchstoneblog](#) and [@strongerunions](#). Many other unions are also now using twitter to get their message out; it's worth checking whether you're missing out on your union's tweets.



Illustrations © Natalia Kucherenko



What's up down under?

concept of the union learning representative seems to be of increasing interest to unions around the world," says unionlearn Research and Strategy Manager Bert Clough.

"This research paper will help interested unions worldwide to adopt and adapt the learning representative concept to their countries' industrial relations structures and learning and skills systems."

With unions around the world adopting the ULR model first developed in this country, a new unionlearn research paper compares and contrasts developments in the UK and New Zealand.

While ULRs in both countries have been strongly supported by their union centres and recognised within their respective governments' skills strategies, New Zealand ULRs do not yet enjoy statutory rights to train and carry out their duties.

"There is no one model for union-supported learning, but the

» **Learning representative initiatives in the UK and New Zealand: a comparative study by Dr Bill Lee and Professor Catherine Cassell, unionlearn research paper 10. Order your copy from TUC Publications (details on the back page). Download from: <http://tinyurl.com/ye4uwxx>**

Events 2010

January

27 Holocaust Memorial Day
31–7 Feb National Story Telling Week

February

LGBT History Month
1–5 Apprenticeship Week

March

4 World Book Day
4 New Quick Reads released
8 International Women's Day
10–12 TUC Women's Conference, Eastbourne
18 ULF Awards
21 World Poetry Day
26–28 TUC Young Members' Conference

April

16 Apprentices conference
23–25 Black Workers' Conference

May

6 Local elections
15–21 Adult Learners' Week
19–20 Disabilities Conference, Congress House
20 Learning at Work Day

July

tbc Unionlearn Conference
1–2 TUC LGBT Conference, Congress House

September

13–15 TUC Congress, Manchester
18–22 Liberal Democrats Conference, Liverpool
26–30 Labour Party Conference, Manchester

October

4–7 Black History Month
Conservative Party Conference, Birmingham

JOIN THE REVOLUTION

Trade unions across the country enthusiastically supported the autumn's month-long festival encouraging learners to pick up new skills.

By Astrid Stubbs

Photo: Roy Peters



Jump to it

Learners literally took the lead when they joined dog behaviour classes in the festival organised by Revenue and Customs unions in Northamptonshire.

Colleagues took their dogs to training classes to learn how what they did conveyed messages of good and bad behaviour, replicated by their pets.

Events also included face massage, photography and clay pot throwing.

"There is great sense of achievement when you acquire a new set of skills and find a common interest – be it pets, crafts, a love of photography, or just meeting people through interesting or stimulating courses," says Jan Smith, lead ULR, who organised the events.

"I believe a yearning to learn is a key to our enjoyment and may also enhance and further our careers."

Photo: Karen Hatch



Fix it

Taster sessions in plumbing, motorcycle maintenance, web design and sign language proved a hit with rail union members in Weymouth.

The day, organised by train drivers' union ASLEF, was also open to members of rail unions RMT and TSSA and run by Weymouth College.

As a direct result of the festival, one driver has started a part-time course at Weymouth College and it's hoped more learning will follow as a result of the sessions on offer.

Learning together (from left): HMRC staff improve their dogs' behaviour; rail staff tackle motorcycle maintenance; and Oxford families try their didgeridoos



Play it

Drums and didgeridoos proved a big hit with both children and adults attending a Family Learning Festival at the newly opened Prison Officers Association Learning Centre at HMP Bullingdon in Oxfordshire.

Other events included tag rugby, healthy eating with tasters and recipes, an introduction to computer skills and support to make a hanging basket.

Centre staff David Dillon and Katrina Alexander were supported by Adrian Ryan from unionlearn SERTUC.

"Adrian was most impressed with the attendance and the activities that had been laid on and took away 35 completed questionnaires," David says.

"Yearning to learn is key to our enjoyment and can enhance and further our careers."

“October’s Learning Revolution Festival raised the profile of informal adult learning across the country, helped in no small part by ULRs. Over 2,500 events were held across England, involving thousands of local people, families and communities. The Government will continue to work hard with its partners to promote informal adult learning and the benefits it brings to improve people’s well-being, to build confidence to take on new challenges and, for some people, to start the journey towards more formal learning and employment.”

Kevin Brennan, Minister for Further Education, Skills, Apprenticeships and Consumer Affairs



Paint it

Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (mima) was the venue for a day of art, culture and heritage organised by local unions Community, GMB, Unite and UNISON.

Learners had a chance to take part in sessions on jewellery making as well as learn about trade union heritage and the history of Teesside – all amid the backdrop of the landmark mima building, one of the UK’s leading galleries for modern and contemporary art and crafts.

Providers were on hand to give information about higher learning and The Open University took details from a number of people keen to take learning further.

“It was a great success and the feedback has been really good, with ULRs benefiting too because they had the opportunity to network and meet providers face-to-face,” says Dan Gow, learning organiser for the GMB’s Northern Region.

Revolutionary art: mima hosted a range of art-related events in Middlesbrough (left), while Leeds rounded off Black History Month and the Festival of Learning with music and dance workshops

Get it together

A series of events organised by the New Testament Church of God and supported by a cross-section of unions in Leeds jointly celebrated Black History Month and the Festival of Learning.

All members of the community were invited to participate in sessions on Black history.

Younger members then interviewed elders about their experiences of migration to Britain

and their memories of the places they left behind.

A further day gave members of the community the opportunity to participate in a variety of workshops: Gospel singing, music relating to Black history, poetry, Black art, African dance and food.

The event concluded with a concert in which participants demonstrated their newly learned skills.

Tackle it

The GMB and UNISON in partnership with Warrington Wolves held a touch rugby event coached by players.

Quick Reads and health and well-being advice was also available.

More than 60 union members and people from the surrounding

community participated with six teams taking part in the tournament.

The majority that attended filled out evaluation forms, with highly positive feedback suggesting unionlearn involvement had led to a lot of people getting involved in informal learning as a result.

Prime Minister Gordon Brown took the chance to meet a host of apprentices from around the country at a unionlearn reception in Downing Street late last year.



Going for gold

Richard Sagar's not kidding when he says apprenticeships give you opportunities you can't get anywhere else.

At the tender age of 22, the time-served Unite member is already enjoying his well-paid first job on the massive redevelopment of BBC Broadcasting House in London.

And a few months ago, he was one of just three members of Team UK who brought home a Gold Medal from the WorldSkills competition in Calgary, Canada.

No wonder he was one of a few dozen young people invited to Number 10 for a celebration of apprenticeships hosted by the Prime Minister in the autumn, where the guest-list also included political heavyweights Peter Mandelson and Pat McFadden (from the Department

for Business, Innovation and Skills), TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber and Channel 4 News Chief Correspondent Alex Thomson.

"I have the confidence to work anywhere, and the opportunity to progress as far as I want to go, with a lifetime qualification that is portable, not just in the UK, but worldwide," Richard told the gathering.

"These opportunities should be open to anyone who wants to follow an apprenticeship – the rewards are there for those who work hard, and commit to the training."

Although his qualifications would have been good enough for him to go to university, Richard opted for the vocational training route because he felt he wasn't at his best in the classroom and was keen to develop his hands-on skills.

So, once he'd done three months backpacking around New Zealand after leaving school, he discovered local firm Eden Electrics was looking for apprentices and pestered the boss until he gave him a start.

Richard was in his second year at Dumfries and Galloway College when he won its award for best apprentice, later going on to win the West of Scotland and Scottish prizes, which made him a natural to compete for a place in the UK's WorldSkills squad.

From there he went on to win the Gold Medal in electrical installation at WorldSkills in Calgary, beating counterparts from 31 other countries to the top spot.

Gordon Brown listens to apprentices (above, from left) Adam Matthews, Leanne Talent and Richard Sagar while Leanne (below) shares her experiences as a Merseytravel apprentice at the event



On the Up

A record 234,000 people started apprenticeships in the 2008/09 academic year, according to provisional data released by the Office for National Statistics.

The figures also showed 126,900 people completed apprenticeships during the same period, representing the highest ever number of starts and completions in an academic year.

The long journey from college prize to international gold took over two years' work, training and preparation which meant that "competitions have been pretty much part of my apprenticeship", he says.

His martial arts experience stood him in good stead in Calgary (he's also an experienced Thai boxer). "I'm a naturally competitive person, and I'm used to giving it all or nothing," he says.

Too old to compete when WorldSkills comes to London next year, Richard will be mentoring whoever succeeds him as the UK hopeful for the electrical installation honours. "I can give a perspective to the competitor that a training manager can't – I know the practical side, what's going to work, what's not going to work," he explains.

Accompanying Richard at the Downing Street reception were Cardiff City football apprentice Adam Matthews and Merseytravel counterpart Leanne Talent.

"When I got a place on Merseytravel's apprenticeship programme, I was – as they say – over the moon: Merseytravel is a huge organisation and my apprenticeship gives me the opportunity of working in a number of different areas of the business," Leanne says.

She appreciates all the support she's had from her union UNISON and her employer, enjoys learning on the job and meeting lots of new people, and has already completed an NVQ in Business Administration.

But she couldn't quite believe it when she found herself at the most famous address in the country for the apprenticeships celebration last year, where, alongside Richard and Adam, she spoke about her experience.

"I can honestly say that this opportunity has changed my life: 12 months ago, if someone had said I would be stood in Downing Street making a speech, I would have thought they were having a laugh!" she says.

Adam Matthews says he couldn't have picked a better time for his apprenticeship at Cardiff City FC. Not only is the club knocking on the door of the Premiership, but he himself has enjoyed an extended run in the first team.

As well as a BTEC National Certificate in Sport and an NVQ Level 3 in Sport, Adam has also secured a Level 2 coaching badge, which gives him the chance to continue working in the beautiful game if his dreams don't all come true. "Education provides me with the passport to success – whatever happens on the football field," he points out.

TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber said the event highlighted the value of apprenticeships to both business and the wider economy.

"Unions are playing a big role in working with employers to increase the number of apprenticeships and we want to do everything we can to build on the success the country's apprentices have already achieved."

Make a date with Apprenticeship Week

Apprentices, employers, unions and providers come together to celebrate the value of apprenticeships during Apprenticeship Week, which this year runs from Monday 1 February to Friday 5 February.

Organised by the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), the week features employer events, job swaps, breakfast briefings and apprentice challenges in a series of national and regional activities to celebrate the talents and skills of apprentices.

» More information:
<http://tinyurl.com/ylpsfms>

"A year ago, if someone had said I would be stood in Downing Street making a speech, I would have thought they were having a laugh!"

Unite Joint General Secretary Derek Simpson (second left) and Head of Lifelong Learning Tom Beattie (far left) introduce some of the union's apprentices to Business, Innovation and Skills Minister Pat McFadden (second right)



All photos: Jess Hurd/reportdigital.co.uk



All photos: Jess Hurd/reportdigital.co.uk

After meeting many apprentices at unionlearn's Downing Street reception, Kevin Brennan explains how the Government is expanding work-based training opportunities for young people.

My name is Kevin and

Did you enjoy unionlearn's recent Downing Street reception celebrating apprenticeships?

I thought it was a great event: it was really good to see unionlearn bring young people involved in apprenticeships from around the country into Downing Street so that we could hear their stories and how apprenticeships are benefiting them, and they can see the value the Government, the TUC and employers place on apprenticeships.

There's no substitute for meeting people who are actually going through the system: it's all very well to sit in your office and read submissions, with all due respect to them, but actually to understand what's happening out there, you need to talk to people on the frontline – and who better to talk to than apprentices themselves?

And I was very glad to see Cardiff City FC's Adam Matthews at the reception: as the Minister for Apprenticeships, it's always great when you can hold up a shining example from your own constituency!

What's your overall impression of the state of the work-based training system at the moment?

I've been lucky enough to see several workplace training providers and I think that there's been a renaissance around apprenticeships and work-based training over the past few years that we can all be proud of.

The trade union movement and unionlearn have played a hugely positive part: the way union learning reps up and down the country have been able to get out there and encourage people into training and skills qualifications has been absolutely fantastic.

The icing on the cake is the way we have been re-establishing apprenticeships as the gold standard of work-based training, working very closely with the trade union movement and employers, so I think it's pretty vibrant and pretty healthy out there.

Why does the Government set so much store by apprenticeships for the future of the economy?

I think bringing together the elements of vocational training, technical training and key skills in a work-based training programme has a very strong track record, and although it was allowed to wither on the vine prior to 1997, we now have more than three times the number of apprenticeships than we had then.

Increasing skills levels in this way is the best way to produce a good outcome for the economy and also for the individuals concerned – and that combination makes apprenticeships so important.

Apprenticeships Minister Kevin Brennan chats with apprentices at the unionlearn reception in Downing Street (above) and meets one of his own constituents, Cardiff City FC's rising star Adam Matthews (below)



What is the Government doing to lift the status of vocational education, which has long been treated as the poor relation in the UK?

Getting the kind of parity of esteem for vocational education remains a key challenge: as a minister, it's sometimes frustrating when you see headlines in the popular press about 'dumbing down' when you're attempting to get vocational education parity of esteem with academic education.

We've done a huge amount to try and overcome that by investing over £2.7 billion in the fabric of our further education colleges in recent years, by making the investment in Train to Gain and Skills for Life and the expansion of and investment in apprenticeships.

We've expressed the view in the new Skills Strategy that we want to



reach to a situation in this country where three-quarters of people under the age of 30 will have gone through either higher education or vocational training and apprenticeships up to Level 3.

In addition, I think we also need to improve the information, advice and guidance that people receive when considering careers to make sure they know the benefits of going down a vocational path.

Business, Innovation and Skills Minister Pat McFadden talks to Norwich City Football Club apprentices at the unionlearn reception

I'm your minister

What would you most like to see achieved in your time as Minister responsible for apprenticeships?

As the Minister responsible for apprenticeships, I think we have to focus on delivering more and more high-quality apprenticeship opportunities for young people, particularly at the moment – we all know that recessions hit young people hard because they may not have the skills and qualifications and experience and they're trying to get hired rather than already being in work.

So we need to make sure now that we're doing as much as we can to get employers to recognise what young people can offer and the importance that they have for the future of businesses and also for the future of the country.

Focusing on trying to increase the numbers of young people being able to get into apprenticeships is my top priority at the moment.

How can the Government, the TUC and unionlearn continue to work together to promote apprenticeships?

What's really good is the common agenda we have around apprenticeships: the partnership that's built up in recent years between the Government and trade unions has been a massive success story, one of the things we've managed to do in Government I'm proudest of.

I think there's a big role for trade unions in helping us to convert young people who are currently in jobs without training into apprenticeships because there's still a large number of young people out there with jobs where they don't have proper training.

I also think that union learning reps have a big role to play in trying to drive up that demand for learning and skills in the workforce, particularly promoting apprenticeships in the workplace and persuading employers that they should be starting apprenticeship schemes.

Union learning reps can reach the parts that others can't reach: they're a network of people who care passionately about the businesses they work for, who want to make them a success and ensure that people have a high-quality employment experience and high-quality training.

I actually think supporting union learning reps has been one of the best value-for-money schemes the Government could have undertaken.

“Supporting union learning reps is one of the best value-for-money schemes the Government could have undertaken.”

With the Low Pay Commission set to report in February on improving apprentice pay, this is your guide to why things need to change.

Why do we need to reform the system of apprentices' pay?

More than half of all apprentices are currently exempt from the National Minimum Wage (NMW): young apprentices under the age of 19 and older apprentices in the first year of their course are currently not entitled to the NMW. Under a separate arrangement, apprentices not entitled to the NMW should be paid at least £95 a week.

Can't we just improve the weekly pay rate for apprentices?

No. While the weekly rate has been an excellent first step, it is still a very low rate and weak enforcement means some employers are still getting away with paying apprentices as little as £2 an hour or nothing at all in a few cases. In addition, it hasn't protected all apprentices from being forced into excessive working hours, with around 40,000 apprentices regularly working over 40 hours a week, and 10,000 working more than 48 hours a week. An hourly rate would discourage employers from making apprentices work very long hours.



Next stop, better pay

Photos: LSC

So what's the solution?

The TUC argues that the best approach is to introduce three new age-based hourly rates based on the existing NMW rates:

- £3–£3.18 for 16- to 17-year-olds
- £4.05–£4.29 for 18- to 20-year-olds (19 and 20, first year of apprenticeship only)
- £4.87–£5.15 for over-21s (first year of apprenticeship only).

The TUC estimates that between 11,000 and 14,000 apprentices would be better paid as a result. Female apprentices and those in low-paying sectors such as early years education and hairdressing are most likely to benefit.

The better we pay apprentices, the more likely they are to complete their training

How will the new rate help?

The better you pay apprentices, the more likely they are to complete their training. Research by the Learning and Skills Council last year showed that apprentices who quit before completion were receiving significantly lower average pay rates than those who went on to finish. In addition, an apprentice minimum wage could help close the massive gender pay gap: male apprentices are currently paid on average £10.32 an hour while their female counterparts earn just £6.55.

It's a union thing

Unionlearn is pushing the message that apprenticeships are union business with a series of regional seminars to share information and good practice.

"Today's apprentices will play a crucial role in the future of our economy and unions are working with employers to increase the number of apprenticeship starts," explained unionlearn Regional Manager Dave Eva at the North-West event in Liverpool.

Unionlearn Union Development Co-ordinator Tony Saunders was delighted that 100 participants attended the event to find out more about apprenticeships in the region.

"We're really pleased that so many made the effort to contribute to the launch of our regional initiative – it shows the importance that trade unions, employers and Government alike are attaching to the role of apprenticeships," he said.

"We're determined to build on the work we've already undertaken and will be providing training and resources to ULRs and other union reps to support and improve apprenticeships."



People power



A new approach to Investors in People involves three main areas of change: this is what it will mean for you.

Greater focus

The new approach is much more flexible and tailored to the specific needs of the organisation. The starting point is 'what does the organisation want to achieve?' and the discussion is on how the Investors in People framework can help.

More choice

The Investors in People framework has been extended to offer organisations greater choice. It still contains the Standard, which represents the national benchmark of good practice, and organisations will still need to show they can meet the 39 evidence requirements to become an Investor in People.

However, the extended framework contains another 157 additional evidence requirements.

So, for example, if an organisation wants to improve the way it provides equality of opportunity in learning and development it can use the relevant evidence requirements as a benchmark. It then develops an action plan to meet these evidence requirements and be assessed against them to see if it has improved and has met the requirements.

Extended recognition

To encourage the use of this extended framework, three additional stages of recognition have been introduced (Gold, Silver and Bronze) to recognise the additional achievements of those organisations that choose to work with this extended framework and go beyond the Standard.

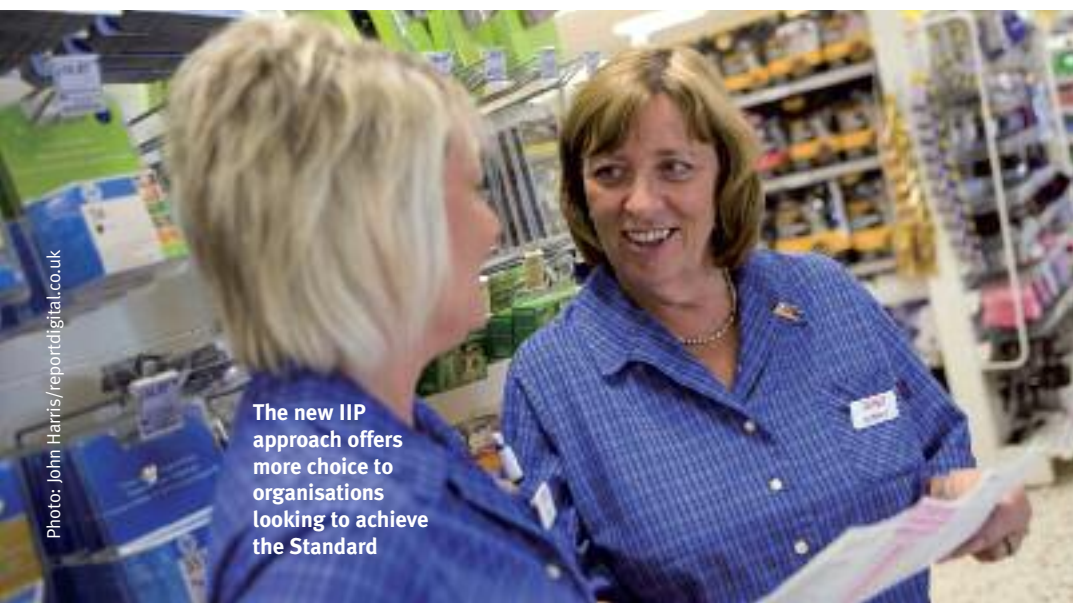
The High Five offer from Investors in People

- **It is based on an extended framework, which includes, but reaches beyond, the scope of the Standard.**
- **Its purpose is to customise assessments to your needs: you decide how much of the framework you wish to be assessed against depending on your priorities.**
- **The feedback you receive will be tailored to your needs and expressed in your language.**
- **Over and above the Standard, you can achieve Gold, Silver or Bronze awards depending on how many evidence requirements you meet.**
- **Annual Review will now be available to all, meaning that Investors in People can now be tied into your annual planning cycle.**

How IIP can help your union

The new approach offers unions a number of opportunities to better link Investors in People with the learning agenda and improve the quality of members' working lives:

- The new focus makes it easier for employers to see the links between skills development and the organisation's needs and objectives and so encourage the take-up of Investors in People.
- The extended framework goes into much more depth in key areas of union concern such as equality of opportunity, staff consultation and involvement, career development and work-life balance. The evidence requirements in the framework provide unions with a blueprint to help employers develop a workplace culture, which champions learning, staff involvement and respect and dignity at work.
- The new Bronze, Silver and Gold recognitions and the increased emphasis on annual assessment provide an opportunity to embed continuous improvement. This helps unions to ensure that Investors in People is built into discussion and consultation and not seen as something that happens every three years.



The new IIP approach offers more choice to organisations looking to achieve the Standard

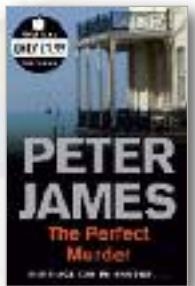
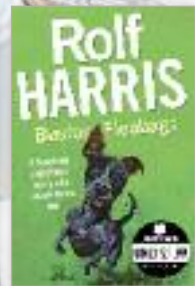
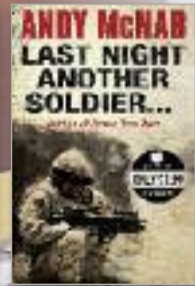
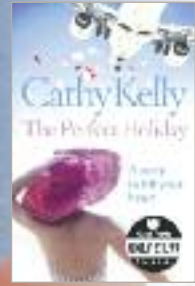
Photo: John Harris/reportdigital.co.uk

Getting more information

A range of information and additional publications is available on the Investors in People website:

www.investorsinpeople.co.uk

For advice or information, contact the Investors in People Centre in your area. To find your nearest centre, call 020 7467 1900.



Short, sharp solutions for reading

ULRs have used Quick Reads to bring about astonishing changes in learners' lives

The Quick Reads initiative has already made a massive contribution to learners and tutors across the country – and is all set to go even bigger on World Book Day this year.

The difference Quick Reads have made to learners across the country was demonstrated to adult learning providers and tutors at three national Skills for Life Conferences held in London, Leeds and Birmingham in the autumn.

Participants had the chance to watch a new DVD featuring learners in literacy and English for Speakers of Other Languages from Leeds, Redbridge and Tameside, illustrating just how effective Quick Reads have been in helping learners overcome their fears of reading and discover the joys of books.

This year, Quick Reads marks its fifth anniversary on World Book Day, Thursday 4 March.

Since its inception in March 2006, over 1.25 million books have reached hundreds of thousands of new readers and helped to change the face of adult literacy in the UK and Ireland.

Prime Minister Gordon Brown has described Quick Reads as “one of the great success stories of the English language”.

Bestselling authors Andy McNab, Val McDermid and Cathy Kelly, together with television personalities Rolf Harris and Alvin Hall, are among the authors who provide brand-new books for the fifth anniversary list.

“The Quick Reads initiative has had a remarkable impact on the lives of learners and the role of tutors,” says NIACE Campaigns Team Leader Richard Crabb.

“We hear time and time again how Quick Reads have filled a much-needed gap in the teaching of literacy to adults. And you only have to hear the learners’ stories to appreciate the astonishing effects these books have had.”

“We hear time and time again how Quick Reads have filled a much-needed gap in the teaching of literacy to adults.”



Telling it like it is

Learners talk about how important Quick Reads have been to improving their reading and writing in the new DVD by NIACE and Coracle Films, which was premiered at the LSIS conferences.

Their comments include:

“Looking at people who could read and write, I used to think: ‘How intelligent that is’, and the more I tried, it never ever sunk through. When I had my own children, that’s when I realised that I have to read and write. After reading Quick Reads I found myself reading without really noticing. The more you do it, the more excited you get and the more you want to learn.”

“I got to the point where I thought I was stupid because I couldn’t read and I couldn’t write. I found out I was dyslexic. Coming back to learning I was so scared. I walked in and nearly walked back out again but I knew I had to do something. With the Quick Reads it was, as a beginner, fantastic because it’s not too much to begin with and as you get better you want more of them. It’s the best thing I ever did because it’s improved everything.”

“I kept thinking: ‘Why didn’t I have this when I was younger?’ Then I could have had a lifetime of enjoying books, instead of being afraid of them.”

“Before, I was reading Harry Potter, but that book was very hard. In that book there are big words. I can’t understand the meaning. At first I read this Quick Read then my English really improved and then I can read really thick books, just like Harry Potter.”

“I like reading books: I didn’t used to like them at one time, but now I can’t put them down.”

Leeds City College tutor Marjorie Lynette says: “I think the thing with the Quick Reads is, you get a story that appeals to an adult intellect, but is presented in language and a style that means it can be accessed by beginner and emerging readers. People feel pleased that they’re part of a book group, there’s a bit of kudos with that.”

You can watch the film at:
<http://tinyurl.com/ybark4p>

»» For more information visit
www.quickreads.org.uk

We're off to see the financial

With his new Quick Read *Money Magic*, finance guru Alvin Hall hopes to teach more people how to conquer their financial problems.

By Martin Moriarty

Watching him on TV or reading his books, it's easy to imagine finance guru Alvin Hall has always been good with money.

Yet despite the financial fluency and elegant wardrobe he's known for these days, it wasn't always thus: after escaping the rural poverty of his childhood, Alvin nearly buried himself under a mountain of personal debt as a young man.

But once he cut up the credit cards that had fuelled his disastrous shopping habits in the early 1980s, he sat down to figure out where he'd gone wrong in the past and how he could avoid making the same mistakes in the future.

Nor did he stop there. He also decided he was going to learn exactly how money worked – and then set about teaching the rest of us, most famously in the UK through his BBC series *Your Money Or Your Life*, first screened 11 years ago.

There certainly wasn't much money around during his childhood. The eldest of seven children raised by his mother and grandmother, Alvin grew up on a small subsistence farm in the Florida Panhandle of the 1950s and '60s.

His mother had to travel to Tallahassee to find work as a day maid to white families: the going rate was \$25 a day, and it was a really good week if she managed to find three days' work.

"We were what you call in the South 'dirt poor', which means we owned the land on which we lived but we had nothing else, we had no money," he recalls.

"Somedays on Sundays we'd wake up and there'd be very little food in the house, so we would get our fishing poles and we'd walk to the river about a mile away from the house and we'd go catch mullet or bream and that would be the breakfast, along with grits and eggs – if we could get eggs from one of our neighbours."

An avid reader as a child, he would consume anything he could get his hands on, from his mother's True Stories magazines to escapist adventure classics like *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

And escape was very much on his mind as a child. "My entire life from age nine forward was about nothing more than getting away. I was determined: I never talked about it, I never expressed it, I just did as well in school as I could because I figured out if I got the best grades, I would get into a good school," he says.

Although his mother and grandmother supported him, it was schools integration in 1968 that changed his life, as it did for so many black people of his generation.

Starting at a school that had been whites-only before then, he met a teacher who recognised his abilities and entered him onto the Project Upward Bound programme, which was designed to develop the skills and motivation of students from low-income families.

"It was that programme, that single thing, that gave me the ability to see further than just where I was going," he says.

Originally enrolled at Bowdoin College in Maine to study sciences, it was another chance encounter that changed his mind, when a teacher in a compulsory English class read aloud a story by the award-winning chronicler of the Deep South, Eudora Welty.

"I couldn't get the sound of his voice out of my head after the class, I just couldn't, and I realised it was all the voices I had heard all my life; I had not realised there was a literature that would speak so profoundly to me, and that's when I changed from science and math to English," he says.

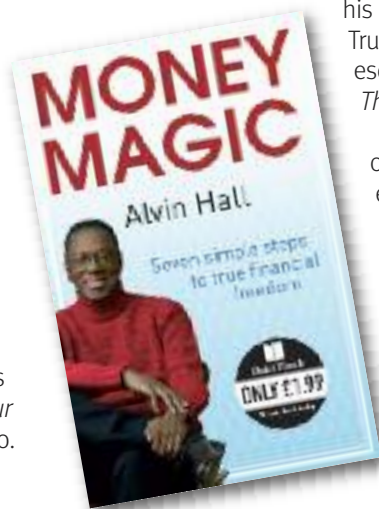
It was after he'd finished his first degree, completed a second at the University of North Carolina, and got a job as a teacher that his money troubles began.

It all started when he took out his first credit card, and discovered that when the bill arrived at the end of the month, he didn't have to settle the whole thing: welcome to the wonderful world of the minimum payment.

When he reached the spending limit on the card, he got another. Once that was maxed out, he applied for a third. By the time he'd acquired his fourth, he'd accumulated thousands of dollars of debt and lost his ability to enjoy a good night's sleep as a result.

What helped him climb out of debt was not just his facility with numbers but his youth as a farm-boy.

"You work on a farm, you have to solve problems quite realistically. If the crop isn't doing well, you have to come up with a solution because it's your food! If the pigs are getting a





wizard

Alvin Hall CV

Born in 1953, Alvin was the eldest of seven children raised by his mother and grandmother on a subsistence plot of farmland in Florida.

After studying at university and teaching English literature, he started working on Wall Street in the 1980s, rising to become executive director of the New York Institute of Finance from 1987 to 1990 before leaving to start his own company, Cooperhall Press, which designs and delivers courses about the securities and futures industry.

He presented the award-winning BBC TV series *Your Money Or Your Life* for four years from 1999, and has made regular appearances on *The Apprentice – You’re Fired!* He is currently working on a new BBC series on social entrepreneurs due to be screened in the spring.

The author of several titles about finance in addition to his new Quick Read, Alvin has also written a successful children’s book, *Show Me The Money*, which has been translated into nearly 20 languages. He lives in New York City.

Photo: Jim Franco

“My entire life from age nine forward was about getting away: I just did as well as I could in school because I figured out if I got the best grades, I would get into a good school.”

disease, you have to come up with a solution else you don't eat!" he says.

But in addition to his financial fluency and practical mindset, there's a third element to his success in the world of financial self-help: his emotional insight.

It was, he says, while putting together the first series of *Your Money Or Your Life* that he really twigged that money problems almost always had a significant emotional component, with many of us associating powerful feelings of guilt, shame, denial and fear with money (aided and abetted by the companies that encourage us to believe we can solve our problems through shopping).

Alvin believes we all need to start by working out our own money style – Big Spender, Cheapskate, Ostrich, Cynic or some combination of those big four.

Big Spenders think that what they *want* and what they *need* are one and the same thing. Cheapskates

can't enjoy a meal out with friends without calculating how much it's costing them. Ostriches let bank statements and credit card bills pile up unopened in a drawer. Cynics think what's really important is the next get-rich-quick scam.

Alvin's argument is that we should all be aiming for balance. "You should be able to enjoy shopping without over-spending; to save without becoming stingy; to deal with money matters without becoming too fearful; and to make good money plans without becoming cynical."

While he's always cultivated a prose style that's informative and clear, Alvin admits writing *Money Magic* wasn't wholly straightforward.

"The challenge for me was getting the tone of the book right and the information at the right level so that it would not be intimidating, so that it would sound to the readers like a friendly practical voice

talking to them – not somebody talking down to them, and not somebody trying to show off what he knows, but somebody making every new bit

of information feel like common sense," he says.

One of the key issues was the amount of technical financial vocabulary (he includes a list of key terms at the end of the book such as APRs and compound interest).

"You can't substitute, you just have to learn them – but if you want to make your financial life better, it's like learning a foreign language: if you can master these words, you're on the right course."

Honoured to have been asked to contribute to the Quick Reads series, he's full of praise for the publishing initiative for putting out a title that he hopes will prove useful in the financial state we're in. "By doing this, Quick Reads are really offering the public a very important service," he says.

It all ties in perfectly with his own determination to spread financial understanding. "One of my key philosophies is that I give all the information like this away: I want everybody to learn what I learned – and more – and if they can take it and make their lives even better than I've done, I'm happy, I'm very happy."

Photo: Jim Franco

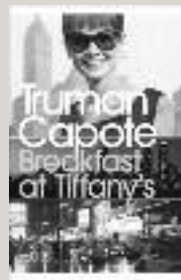


What are you reading?

The book I read every year is James Baldwin's *Go Tell It On The Mountain*. I first read it when I was 15 or 16 and I never get tired of reading it – there's something about that book which really has always spoken to me.



I think that everybody deserves to read Truman Capote's *Breakfast At Tiffany's* – it's a much darker, more intriguing story than the movie, and it's another of those books I also read a good deal.



The book I've read most recently which kept me fascinated was Lena Horne's biography, *Stormy Weather* by James Gavin. I read it on the plane home and then I re-read it when I got home, it was that good!



Course I can!

Park keeper and GMB member Chris Ward explains how he's preparing himself for a new career by taking an Open University Openings course.

I want to retrain as a primary school teacher but when I talked to the teachers at my daughter's school, they said I'd be mad try and undertake full teacher training with two children under five!

So I thought I would look at doing some related courses in the meantime to put myself in a better position for when I do go on to more substantial learning – and I got the opportunity to do that for free through a UNISON-led scheme at the London Borough of Barnet.

The Openings course Understanding Children has been brilliant from my point of view. The resources have been very easy to use, the tutor has been very accessible and constructive, and we've had three face-to-face tutorials in the workplace as well which has been really good.

The content of this course is absolutely ideal for me: not only is the subject matter relevant to what I want to go on to do, two of the three units are about children in the age range my own are (Charlotte is four and William is two).

The whole underlying ethos of the course is about familiarising people with skills to study again and I found that very useful: I was at college 15 years ago and did two years of a degree course but when I signed up to try to complete it a few years ago, my study skills weren't able to keep up.

I found developing the study skills very helpful, the tutor was very helpful in making the academic points, and the activities within the course were very useful for reflecting on how you learn and recognising what it is you're doing while you're reading and preparing notes and preparing for an essay.

I've gained personally and professionally: I couldn't recommend the course highly enough – the more people who know about it the better.

Openings up

Openings are introductory-level courses that have been specially designed to help you find out what it's like to study with The Open University (OU).

They are perfect for new learners and you can fit the course in with your other commitments, as long as you can find around six hours a week for study for around 20 weeks.

Find out more at:
<http://tinyurl.com/yftc9n9>

I hate you, miss!

Teaching unions are taking a range of measures to help their members develop the skills to deal with bad behaviour in the classroom. **By Astrid Stubbs**

With more and more problem pupils disrupting lessons, teaching unions are stepping in to help their members develop new behaviour strategies.

Sixty per cent of teachers have to deal with pupils swearing at them or refusing to do any work every week, according to a poll conducted by the National Union of Teachers (NUT).

Twenty per cent of teachers are sworn at every day, 40 per cent have been assaulted, and almost half have been threatened with violence, according to a separate poll by the Teachers' Support Network.

A national survey by teaching union NASUWT reveals that significant amounts of teaching time are lost every day as a result of this disruptive behaviour.

Analysis of the responses from over 10,000 teachers and headteachers estimates that primary schools lose 16 days' teaching time every year to disruptive behaviour, while secondary schools lose 26 days (when figures from the survey are scaled up).

Teaching unions including the NUT, NASUWT and ATL are equipping members to cope with such issues with a range of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses in managing classroom behaviour.

The NUT courses include a set designed specifically for supply teachers, who face a particular set of issues, often coming into class at short notice, and needing to establish a rapport with their students from the outset.

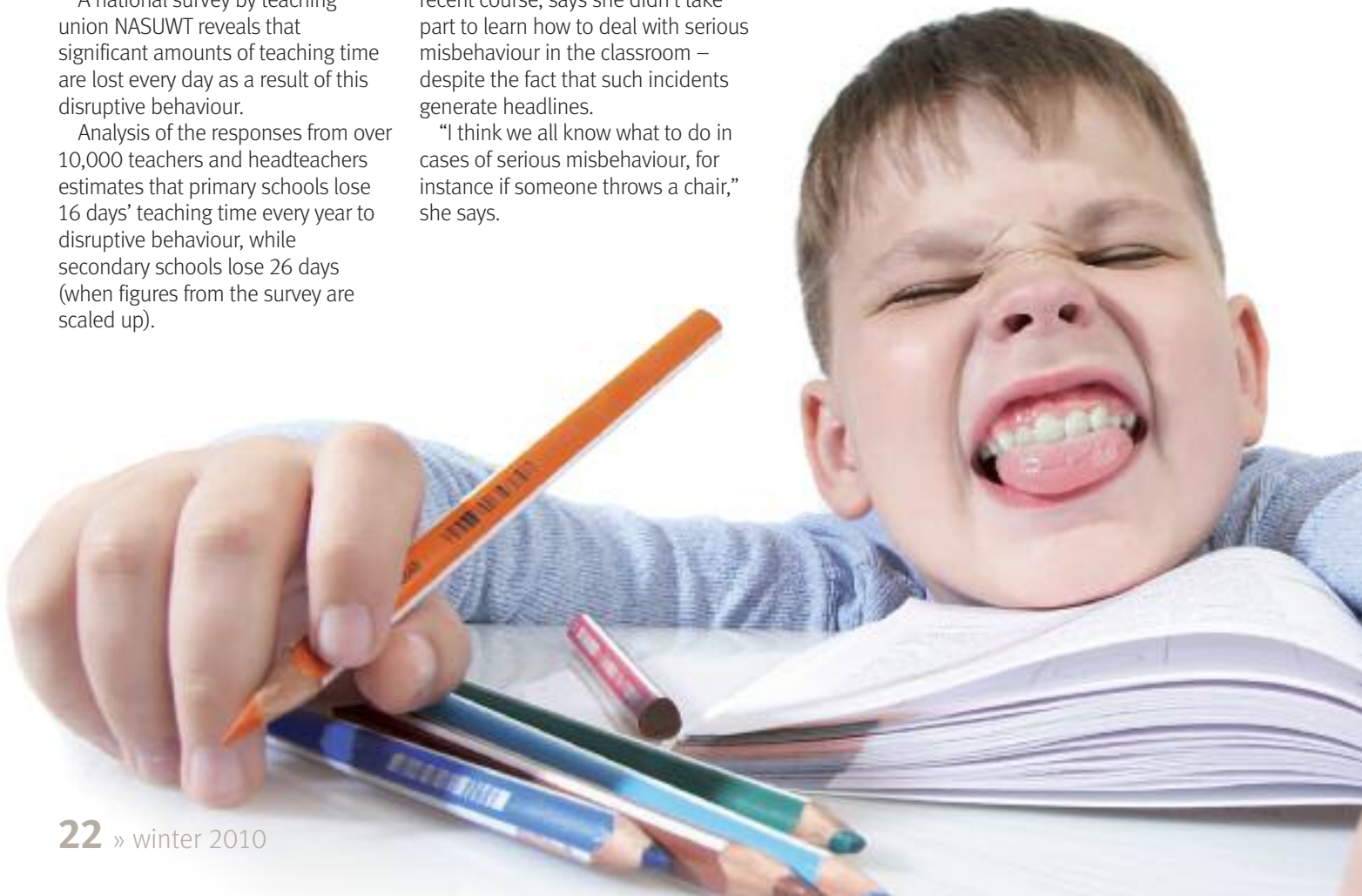
Sarita Kitson, a supply teacher in West Sussex who attended the most recent course, says she didn't take part to learn how to deal with serious misbehaviour in the classroom – despite the fact that such incidents generate headlines.

"I think we all know what to do in cases of serious misbehaviour, for instance if someone throws a chair," she says.

"It is the constant minor interruptions, the low-level things, that cause difficulty," she says.

Sarita was a full-time class teacher in a secondary school and became a supply teacher last year.

"I went on the course because I was looking for strategies about making the class as successful as possible and, because I am now supply teaching in primary schools too, I wanted strategies to deal with a different age group."



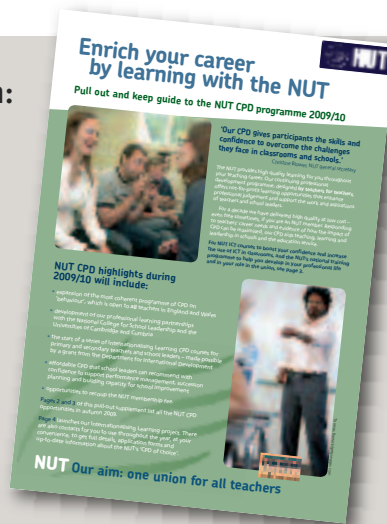
The next NUT courses for supply teachers are in:

- Sheffield on 18–19 February 2010
- Wrexham on 25–26 March 2010.

» For more details of courses for all teachers visit www.teachers.org.uk/cpdcalendar

The NASUWT has produced a Behaviour Management Pack as a practical resource for teachers alongside a number of publications that address issues associated with pupil behaviour.

» Log onto www.nasuw.org.uk for more details.



ATL provides a set of courses, including **Cracking Behaviour, Behaviour Management in the 14–19 Classroom and Using Your Voice to Manage Behaviour.**

» For details visit www.atl.org.uk

She found the course boosted her confidence hugely. “It clarified my professional and legal status – for instance reminding us about the law on restraint and re-establishing what we can and can’t do,” she says.

“It was also good on practical measures such as just standing up straight and establishing from the beginning that this is your class.

“It gave me the confidence to use my professional knowledge and judgment and it was most useful in providing the chance to find networks and share others’ experiences and ideas.”

NUT CPD Manager Richard Stainton says proof that the Managing Classroom Behaviour course is useful to Sarita and her colleagues lies in the fact that over 500 supply teachers (NUT members and others) have taken part so far.

“It works very well and we are obviously meeting an unmet need because we have been running the course for five years and the need does not seem to diminish,” he says.

Supply teachers are a group for whom there is no line manager or employer to share the responsibility for their CPD, Richard points out.

“We recognise from our trade union work there is very much an unmet CPD need,” he says.

“But in terms of being a provider of CPD, we recognise an audience that that does not have anyone else trying to meet their common needs, although supply teachers do in essence exactly what others do, which is manage a group of children and provide good learning.

“They have to do it in a special way, often several times a day or in lots of different schools or classes so they are having to do a basic teacher job many times over and very, very effectively, which other teachers have more time to do.

“They are in a very special situation and it is very demanding and yet there is no professional support for them. We have stepped in to meet some of that need.”

The two-day seminar aims to enable participants to review and extend effective approaches to classroom behaviour management that match the special circumstances supply teachers face. It also enables supply teachers to review, exchange, update and learn new behaviour strategies.



It is the constant minor interruptions that cause difficulty in the classroom, says supply teacher Sarita Kitson

Christine, a London supply teacher, said: “I’ve had more time in these two days to talk about children’s behaviour than I did as a mature student on a three-year course on managing behaviour!”

Before they leave, participants identify aspects of the seminar that are particularly relevant to them and plan how they will incorporate these into their teaching over the subsequent six or eight weeks.

Two months after the course, they are invited to take part in a short self-evaluation of how they have got on with implementing their plan and what they have learned from putting their learning into practice.

Richard says the courses’ successful roadshow approach, which has taken it to 16 venues around England and Wales, enabling staff to take the course near their homes, has proved successful and will continue.

360 degree learning

Whether it's an award-winning project for hard-to-reach learners or a forum to discuss poverty and globalisation, trade union education in the Southern and Eastern region offers something for everyone.

Reach out, we'll be there

Lewisham College has been Highly Commended at the Association of Colleges Beacon Awards for its sterling work supporting hard-to-reach learners.

The awards were announced at a ceremony hosted by comedienne and author Shappi Khorsandi at the AoC's annual conference in Birmingham in November.

Lewisham took Highly Commended in the Edexcel Award for Lifelong Learning, which recognises effective and imaginative approaches to encouraging adults to take up courses.

The Trade Union Studies department at Lewisham delivers courses to hard-to-reach learners using mobile technology, allowing access to learning materials on the college's intranet.

The Trade Union Studies department decided to target ferry workers, rail engineering workers, construction workers, freelance journalists and public sector workers as their hours of work create a barrier to actually attending the college.

"We are delighted to receive the award," said Rossina Harris, Head of Trade Union Studies.

"This will be well received

by the trade union learners who participated, many of whom were returning to education and have achieved success due to the high quality support they have received from Trade Union Studies at Lewisham College."

Comedienne
Shappi Khorsandi
announcing the
AoC Beacon Awards



Tackling global poverty

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive from the recent Gender, Globalisation and Poverty Reduction course run by the Trade Unions Studies Centre (TUSC) at South Thames College.

One participant called it "very interesting and informative", while another said: "The rich variety of viewpoints and experiences exceeded my expectations."

For two days, workers from hospitals, schools, colleges, local government, NGOs and trade unions explored the relationship between globalisation and inequality and the impact of globalisation on women in particular.

Adwoa Sakyi, president of Ghana's agricultural workers union AWTG, gave a very powerful presentation on the way in which globalisation had

impacted upon women in Ghana and the challenges it presented for international development.

An important part of the course involved students identifying ways in which links could be built with trade unions in developing countries.

There were positive examples of work being carried out in their own unions ranging from ATL, BECTU, NUT, PCS, UCU, UNISON and Unite.

Didem Ozmir spoke about the Olympics Fairplay campaign and the event finished on a celebratory note with a college joint union meeting and social.

"Although gender and equality issues are an integral part of all the courses we teach, this was the first time we've put on a gender-specific course, so it was very challenging for us," commented TUC tutor Angie Birtill.

TUSC will be running the course again in March 2010.

Tel: 020 8918 7421.



Southampton goes U-Net

Unionlearn has launched a new U-Net Learning Centre in Southampton, located in the Trade Union Studies department in City College.

The centre offers a range of courses that lead to nationally recognised qualifications in maths, English and IT, through learndirect.

Learners come from all walks of life and a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds: what they have in common is the desire to improve their skills and knowledge.

Coordinator Alicja Adamczewska (standing) and tutor Valerie Arrowsmith run the new U-Net centre in Southampton

“Learndirect offers flexible learning, where learners can study via the internet from their home, workplace or from the U-Net centre. They are able to proceed at their own pace and have the support of the tutor when needed,” says coordinator Alicja Adamczewska .

Tutor Valerie Arrowsmith says: “Studying with U-Net could increase learners’ confidence, help them get promotion at work or a more rewarding job – even help them with their children’s homework.”

Helping ATL reps start right

Activist Academy courses tailored for the ATL and taught at Ruskin College, Oxford, are proving highly successful.

By linking training, activity and action, the Academy has helped ATL members early in their teaching career develop skills and increase their knowledge.

It’s also provided additional support and resources to help reps build a stronger ATL in their branch, workplace, sector or network, say participating reps.

Trainees are working on a variety of projects, which are wide-ranging in terms of their scope, target

audiences and goals. Many of the projects focus on a particular region or sector but, if successful, each one could be rolled out nationally across ATL regions and branches.

Madeleine Hill and Richard Marshall, both supply teachers in the North-East, are developing a regional network for supply teachers, who have fewer rights than most part-time workers.

Other trainees are working on projects such as raising the union’s profile in under-represented workplaces and addressing the issue of bullying in schools in the South-East.

MiP gets training boost

Training for union reps who are senior managers in the NHS has helped the Managers in Partnership (MiP) union recruit 300 new members.

Designed for MiP by unionlearn, the training has gone down very well with union members.

“I feel energised having spent time with like-minded people and my faith, which had been waning, is restored,” says Antony Hooker, a Rewards Analyst/Independent Transplant Assessor and MiP member.

“I have struggled for several years faced with staff side colleagues who automatically see anyone labeled as ‘manager’ as wanting to put staff down and exploit them,” he says.

“There are managers like this, but as we know, many more whose ethos is no different from staff side – fairness, equity and honesty, plus some hard graft! I know I am in for a struggle as I will be received with suspicion on both sides, however, I know that I will be supported by my fellow course attendees and the staff of MiP.”

MiP National Officer George Sheppard says feedback proved that the union training made people better managers because they better understood the benefits of consulting and involving other union reps in their workplaces.

Union training makes better managers, says George Sheppard



Paul leaps up the learning ladder

Paul Norris started learning with a TUC Certificate Course in Employment Law – and it’s led him all the way to an MA.

Unite member Paul took the course at the Centre for Trade Union Studies at Colchester Institute, where he also achieved a Level 2 Certificate in Adult Literacy.

His work and confidence improved considerably and he was presented with a special award by Colchester Trades Council to mark his achievement.

Paul has now completed an MA in Employment Law and Industrial Relations at Keele University.

“For a large number of people attending TUC Courses, this will be the first time they have undertaken any form of education since leaving school,” says TUC tutor Mark Andrew.

“These courses are delivered in a way that helps people to develop skills, build their confidence and revive their thirst for education.”

The largest-ever survey of reps trained with TUC Education has revealed huge support, with hundreds of examples of changes in the workplace identified by reps who have attended courses.

Changing the world

The training provided by TUC Education is helping union reps deliver an “inspiring” range of practical outcomes, according to the largest-ever survey of course participants.

Reps reported courses they’d been on had helped them recruit members and get them involved, adopt more systematic working methods, develop relationships with management, improve union team working, and draw up new agreements and policies.

The first such survey to be conducted solely online, the excellent response and high completion rate (over 1,000 reps were interviewed) offers confidence in the results.

Respondents covered a broad spectrum of trade unions, age bands, union roles and union experience.

UNISON ULR and safety rep Anne Keen, who works as an administrative assistant at Suffolk Coastal District Council, helped one of her members who needed flexible hours because her child had attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), which an after-school club was no longer able to deal with.

Anne helped the member present her preferred working patterns to management, giving direct advice and support and attending meetings to discuss the issue.

Through her TU training, Anne had learned that the local authority management were required by law to give proper and careful consideration to the request. The result was a favourable outcome and the member was granted the flexible hours.

In another example, BFAWU member Kendra Walker, who works in Warburton’s bakery in Stockton and had no previous union

“The most valuable thing I gained from the courses was the confidence to tackle members’ problems, to break them down into manageable parts and approach them in a methodical way.”

experience, became a learning rep alongside other ULRs, workplace and health and safety reps.

She worked in the union team to set up a new learning centre in the bakery, which has around 200 staff, working round-the-clock shifts seven days a week. Many staff have low literacy and numeracy skills.

Management agreed to donate the space for the learning centre and computers and a printer were installed.

Now there are weekly visits by staff from the local college to run Skills for Life sessions. A library bus also visits weekly. There are ECDL tests on site and Kendra is the invigilator.

Kendra reports that her own skills have built up from a low level over a series of TUC courses. Participating in the learning and skills forum is also a great help.

She is now seconded full-time to her union role, partly to help set up a new learning centre in a second bakery in the area.

Fire Brigades Union rep Tim Davis, who works for the Fire Service in Surrey, wanted to improve working conditions in fire station garages by lowering diesel emissions.



The diesel emissions issue was a problem in fire stations nationally and not fully understood when raised with local management. Tim shared the issue with other reps from around the country and their support led to the issue being resolved nationally.

Tim took TUC Education’s Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety course at the same time as negotiating with management around the issue. He used the example as part of his special project for the certificate course. He reports that support from his TUC tutors gave him confidence to raise the issue at station level and then at the regional health and safety committee.

On satisfied rep reported: “TUC courses give reps the confidence and knowledge to do the job – without them, it is just groping around in the dark.”

Another commented: “The most valuable thing I gained from courses was the confidence to tackle members’ problems, to break them down into manageable parts and approach them in a methodical way.”

The report, which was carried out by The Open Learning Partnership, a



Case studies

Tackling school fire risks

Paul has been a **UNISON** workplace rep and health and safety rep for seven years.

He works as a caretaker responsible for two schools – one infant, one junior.

He identified an issue within the school hall where examinations and evening adult education classes take place. He carried out a risk assessment together with reps from teaching unions, which showed the need to improve emergency lighting on the first floor. Fire exits were not accessible, there was no signage, and stairwell exits were locked with no crash bars.

On the Stage 2 course he looked into the fire regulations, and had to study different scenarios and how to handle them. Especially useful was how to approach management and negotiate an appropriate course of action. These lessons directly helped to resolve the situation, according to Paul.

charity dedicated to widening access to learning through the intelligent use of technology, made the following key findings:

- The great majority of respondents would recommend the courses to other reps. They believe them to be essential for carrying out their union roles, and they agree that they have been able to apply lessons from the courses in their own workplace. Most said that they learned more than they expected on their course.
- There was clear agreement on the skills that are important for union reps. The skills they felt they need are closely related to their regular activities. In addition, nearly all respondents agreed that using a computer is of at least some importance to a union rep.
- Respondents agreed that the TUC courses did develop these skills. The exception is computer skills, which are not included routinely in many of the courses.
- Reps gained confidence and a sense of confirmation in their role on the courses. They learned improved ways of finding information and more systematic

ways of handling problems. For some, the course experience was life-changing.

- Three out of four reps gave concrete examples of improvements they had made at work or in the union after attending a course. These improvements included recruiting members and getting them involved, adopting more systematic working methods, improved relationships with management, better union team working, and new agreements and policies. “To see the practical outcomes of the training listed by the reps in this survey is truly inspirational.” says Head of TUC Education Liz Rees.

»» **The survey is available from TUC Education. Email: akalsi@tuc.org.uk for your copy.**

Going green

Allen has been active in the FBU since 1989. He is now a branch rep, ULR, health and safety rep, membership secretary and branch treasurer.

He works for the Fire Service and has to travel around different sites as health and safety rep for the area.

Allen got involved in the TUC Green Camps, which run alongside the Tolpuddle Festival. The union committee now negotiates with the chief officer at monthly meetings.

Green issues are raised – they include transport, buildings and carbon saving. There are now consistent recycling schemes at all locations instead of isolated initiatives.

He finds it helpful on the courses to meet reps from other unions, and also reps from comparable industries such as transport, logistics and office-based work.

He has run the first green issues session on the branch reps course, and is taking a TUC Education online course.

The voice of experience

New unionlearn Board Chair Dr Mary Bousted will be using her knowledge of education and the skills agenda to defend and promote union learning in the years ahead.



ATL General Secretary Mary Bousted sets her focus as the newly elected Chair of the unionlearn Board in the broader political context.

“There is an election coming up and the Labour Party is committed to union learning and the Conservatives have said they think it is good idea and funding is a good use of public money,” Mary says.

“But I have no doubt that in times of economic hardship we are going to have to defend union learning and defend that investment in developing people’s skills and their

abilities to be better equipped to do their work and progress in their working lives.”

Mary reckons her experience as a teacher, higher education lecturer and union general secretary is going to be invaluable in moving forward the debate about the skills agenda.

“Unions are uniquely well-placed to develop skills in the workplace – what a tremendous investment this is and what significant results there can be in terms of raising the working population’s skills level through unionlearn and through working with unions to develop our members’ skills, abilities, and knowledge base,” she says.

A regular contributor to newspapers and education journals who frequently appears on national media, Mary is both delighted and honoured to be elected chair of the unionlearn Board, having been a member for three years and a member of its audit committee for a year.

“It’s an area of TUC work that I have been very involved in: I have made that commitment because I feel passionate about union learning and the learning agenda for working people’s lives,” she says.

For the ATL, her election is a mark of the union’s growing involvement and profile in the TUC: it has been affiliated only for nine years and now has two members on the General Council.

“I have no doubt that in times of economic hardship we are going to have to defend union learning and defend that investment in developing people’s ability to progress in their working lives.”

“I feel that we have worked hard to be integrated and to raise the union profile and I’m pleased this has been recognised,” she says.

Mary’s defence of unionlearn will no doubt keep her busy for some time to come but should she ever get the chance she’d love to improve her French and would like to take a course in Thai cookery.

Mary Bousted CV

Mary began her career teaching English in London comprehensive schools, moving on to work in York University, Edge Hill University and Kingston University where she was head of the School of Education.

The General Secretary of teaching union ATL, she also sits on the executive committee of the TUC, and was a member of the unionlearn Board for three years before she was elected Chair.

MBE for Barney as he bows out



Barney McGill, who has retired as unionlearn's Northern Regional Manager, was honoured shortly before his departure with an MBE for services to lifelong learning in the North-East.

When Barney started work for the Northern Regional TUC 10 years ago, his brief was to develop a network of union learning reps; by the time he left, he had helped create a cohort of just under 4,000 ULRs in the region.

"Much of unionlearn's success in the Northern Region has been due to Barney and it is very fitting that his contribution has been formally appreciated in the form of his recent MBE," says Northern TUC Regional Secretary Kevin Rowan.

Before joining the TUC and then unionlearn, Barney worked in some of the region's manufacturing giants and spent 20 years as a full-time convenor at Tyneside engineering firm CA Parsons.

"My time with the TUC and unionlearn has been truly inspirational and it has been a pleasure and privilege to watch as union learning has burgeoned into a meaningful and embedded part of thousands of people's working lives," Barney says.

Retired unionlearn Regional Manager Barney McGill picks up his MBE, joined by (from left) daughter Pam, wife Anne and son Paul



"As a lifelong trade unionist, receiving the MBE was the icing on the cake going into retirement as it is recognition not just of personal achievements but of the contribution that many of my colleagues and fellow trade unionists have made to improving our region in so many ways."

Barney is succeeded as Regional Manager by Elizabeth Killoran, who was previously unionlearn's Union Development Co-ordinator in the region.

Photo: Rod Leon

...and Mike goes, too



Mike Power enjoys a laugh in the shadow of Lenin as he signs off at the end of his career in Congress House

Mike Power, who edited *The Learning Rep* since the launch of unionlearn four years ago, retired as communications and marketing manager as the previous edition went to press.

Appropriately enough for someone who organised unionlearn's mould-breaking national conferences, Mike's combined birthday and retirement party at Congress House was something of a multimedia extravaganza that bore little relation to the standard-issue nibbles and speeches affair.

Kicking off with performances by Sing For Joy, the choir he helped set up with his wife Nina Temple, the evening featured a video farewell from Congress House colleagues (each contributing a line from a re-written version of New York, New York) and even a mystery guest from his years as BBC correspondent in Bulgaria, in the form of Dimitrina Petrova.

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Jay knows

Jay Sreedharan, unionlearn's website officer, answers some recent questions raised by site visitors

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Q I've always wanted to do a degree but I'm nervous about taking the first step.

A People make the decision to get into higher education at all times of life and for all sorts of reasons. University is not just for 18-year-olds – in fact 60 per cent of undergraduates in the UK are over 21.

To ease you into an honours degree you could consider taking a Foundation degree. Foundation degrees were introduced by the Government in September 2001 to provide a practical alternative to more traditional academic programmes. They were developed with employers to encourage talented people of all ages into higher education. This is a great route into higher education for a wide range of students from many different backgrounds. The qualification is broadly equivalent to the first two years of a bachelors degree.

They are practical in nature and are an excellent way to combine critical thinking and academic skills with practical hands-on experience, while also developing the all-important attributes valued by today's employers – such as communication, problem solving and team building skills.

There are no set entry requirements. Check with the university or college to see if you have the necessary experience or qualifications to do a particular Foundation degree, or search for Foundation degree courses at the UCAS website.

For more information, visit:

- www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning
- www.fdf.ac.uk
- www.findfoundationdegree.co.uk
- www.open.ac.uk

Q I attended a ULR course a few years ago but I feel I can benefit from more training. Is there an advanced course I can take?

A I'm happy to announce that ULR stage 2 is here! TUC Education has been working hard to provide a new set of courses for ULRs. They feature some of the current ULR modules to form new stage 1 and 2 courses. Like the current ULR course, the new stage 1 is for union reps who are new to helping members with their learning requirements. If you have already completed your ULR training course, you might want to take the next step and sign up to the ULR stage 2 course. This new course will give ULRs the opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills learnt during their current ULR course. Stage 2 aims to cover the following:

- review and plan ULR's own development needs
- carry out and analyse learning needs survey
- know how to work with providers and potential partners
- further develop skills in supporting learners
- find out about learning projects
- plan and develop a campaign around learning.

TUC Education is piloting these new courses across the country early this year. For more information please contact your Regional Education Officer at

www.unionlearn.org.uk/tuedContacts

Ask questions, share information and create an online community



Whatever problems you have, the chances are that there's a ULR out there who has been there and solved it. The unionreps discussion forum has over 13,000 members registered at present. This is the perfect place for you to swap ideas, and get help and support from other reps. Join now at www.unionreps.org.uk



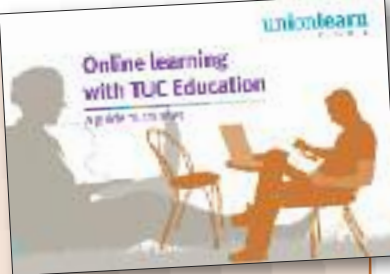
Order now from
www.unionlearn.org.uk/freebooks
And postage and packing is also free

»» **Union professional development programme 2010**

The professional development programme brings high quality, accredited education and training to union officers locally. The Union Professional Development Programme prospectus clearly shows which courses are inter-linked, helping candidates to identify the most appropriate training for their needs.



new



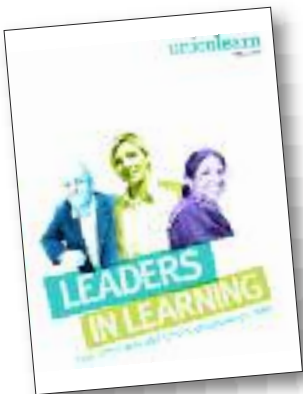
»» **Online learning with TUC Education**

This guide to TUC Education's online courses shows how the service has expanded. There are some 18 courses now available – all are fully described in the guide. It also contains a helpful introduction to online learning, answers to some frequently asked questions, and a learner case study.



»» **Apprenticeships are Union Business**

This guide is for union negotiators and reps. Its purpose is to help full-time officers and union reps get apprenticeships on the bargaining agenda. The publication details what apprenticeships are, what makes a good one, and how to organise around them.



«« **Leaders in learning**

This is a must-read for all ULRs, employers, union officers and politicians. It is packed with solid case study evidence of how employers and unions working in partnership can benefit both the organisation and the workforce.

new



«« **Your rights as an apprentice**

This is an essential advice leaflet for apprentices on their rights at work, training opportunities and advice on joining a trade union.

»» **Learning representatives in the UK & New Zealand**

The learning representative concept is now being adopted by unions in other countries. One such country is New Zealand. This research paper, written by Dr Bill Lee and Professor Catherine Cassell, compares and contrasts ULRs in the UK with learning representatives in New Zealand through the use of case studies.



new



new

«« **Working for learners**

This handbook has been updated and is a major source of information and advice for trade unions and their representatives who are, or want to be, involved in accessing training for their members.

»» **Spread the word about the work of ULRs and learning project workers by ordering more copies of *The Learning Rep.* Give them to colleagues at work, learners and anyone interested in union learning.**

