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ISSUE 27 AUTUMN 2020

PCS WINS BIG FOR HOME OFFICE APPRENTICES

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Helping reps think global, act local

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unionlearn
from the TUC



FOREWORD

Kevin Rowan

Director of unionlearn

Since the beginning of the coronavirus crisis, trade unions have been playing an absolutely central role in how the country weathers the storm. We need to play an equally central role in the recovery from Covid-19, as the TUC has explained in its detailed report, *A Better Recovery*, which includes a raft of crucial proposals on how we can help workers and businesses develop the skills they need to meet the challenges of the months and years ahead.

Those challenges will involve change on a major scale for many of us – more home-working, more job restructuring and – as many employers have already made clear – more redundancies. That's why unionlearn has developed our new Skills and Recovery campaign, gathering together existing resources and developing new ones to help union learning reps (ULRs) and other union reps better support members facing major change.

We have been working with colleagues in the TUC's Rights, International, Social and Economics (RISE) department on a new guide for reps to help them deliver the most effective support around redundancy. And our colleagues in TUC Education are already working on developing some micro-learning around different sections of the guide that ULRs and others can work through online.

We are also comprehensively updating a booklet we produced in the wake of the 2008 financial crash, signposting reps towards useful resources for facing change at work. And we will be including many practical sessions in our Supporting Learners online events this autumn to help people improve their employability and job search skills.

For the past two decades, Union Learning Fund (ULF) projects and ULRs have been helping develop cultures of learning in workplaces across the country that have enabled groups of workers to develop themselves and face change together. We plan to continue this vital work to help us all play our part in building a fairer society and a stronger economy. 🌱

“ULRS HAVE BEEN HELPING DEVELOP CULTURES OF LEARNING IN WORKPLACES ACROSS THE COUNTRY THAT HAVE ENABLED GROUPS OF WORKERS TO DEVELOP THEMSELVES AND FACE CHANGE TOGETHER.”

A close-up portrait of Neil Masters, a man with light brown hair, wearing glasses and a dark blue blazer over a light blue shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a blurred office setting with a window showing a teal view.

HOW PCS SCORED A MASSIVE WIN FOR HOME OFFICE APPRENTICES

Apprentices in the Home Office used to endure some of the worst pay and least effective training. But PCS ULR Neil Masters has led and won a long campaign to change all that.

STORY MARTIN MORIARTY PHOTOGRAPHY MARK HARVEY

When the Home Office began hiring apprentices in 2017, PCS argued that the new recruits deserved a better pay deal than a rate just above the national minimum wage



HUNDREDS OF HOME OFFICE apprentices are benefiting from permanent contracts and pay rises worth thousands of pounds thanks to determined campaigning by the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS).

It was PCS Home Office Apprenticeship Lead and union learning rep (ULR) Neil Masters who led the campaign, which was backed by the union's Home Office Group Executive Committee (GEC).

Back in April 2017, the Home Office began externally recruiting Level 3 apprentices to roles that involved the same work as Administrative Officers (AOs) but for significantly less money.

The disparities were huge. By the end of March this year, the gap between what an apprentice outside London was getting paid and what their AO equivalent was earning was £5,888; while a London apprentice was lagging behind their AO counterpart by £6,976.

With his 13 years' experience as a ULR plus five years running an earlier

incarnation of the department's apprenticeship scheme (before the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy), Neil could easily identify the flaw in the department's case for the discrepancies.

"To provide evidence for their Level 3 qualification, the apprentices would have had to be working at AO grade even though they were getting paid substantially less than that," Neil points out.

"I could see that what the department was doing wasn't up to scratch because of my background in learning – being a union learning rep and learning coordinator for PCS Yorkshire & Humber Home Office – and because I ran the apprenticeship schemes in the Home Office for about five years, so I knew how they were supposed to work."

The department resisted the union case for equality for a full 18 months.

But then in October 2018, 100 Home Office apprentices (and another 550 across the Civil Service) had their apprenticeships put on hold when the Education and Skills Funding Agency

“WE ARGUED IT WAS WRONG TO PAY THE APPRENTICES JUST ABOVE NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE WHEN THEY WERE EFFECTIVELY DOING THE SAME WORK AS AN ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER.”

Too many Home Office apprentices had a poor learning experience with the provider Premier Partnership, according to a damning Ofsted report in 2018
© Fizkes/ Getty Images



(ESFA) terminated its contract with their provider, Premier Partnership.

It was a damning report by the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) that forced ESFA’s hand.

Lowlights included: “Too many apprentices have a poor learning experience and do not develop substantial new skills, knowledge or behaviours.” And: “Trainers do not ensure that apprentices receive the support and encouragement that they need to make the progress of which they are capable.” And: “Too many apprentices are approaching the end of their programme without realistic or clear plans for their next steps.”

But with no one delivering their legally required off-the-job training while the Home Office looked for an alternative provider, the Premier legacy apprentices effectively became full-time staff on

apprentice wages – and PCS was not going to let that stand.

“We worked with our branches and we talked to the apprentices to say, ‘As you can only be working full-time at this stage, you should get the going rate for the job’,” Neil says.

That kicked off months of determined campaigning by the union, engaging members on the issues and encouraging them to take action to help get it resolved.

That forced the Home Office to announce in April last year that it would convert the legacy Premier apprentices onto substantive contracts – the first group of apprentices in the department to secure that protection.

“When the department first introduced the new apprenticeship grade, we argued it was wrong to pay the apprentices just above national minimum wage when they were effectively doing the same work as an Administrative Officer,” Neil says.

“The first opportunity we had to challenge them was when Premier’s contract was withdrawn. And once we’d won that first battle, the department’s apprenticeship team recognised that what we were saying was right – and that we were going to take every opportunity to challenge them on what they were doing.”

But just as the department was beginning to contemplate a new deal for its apprentices last summer, senior management at Border Force unilaterally decided to shut down AO recruitment and hire hundreds of apprentices

instead – on the original low-paid and insecure basis.

“Just when everyone else in the Home Office was accepting they should rethink what they were doing but before any decision was made at the top of the department, Border Force decided they were going to exploit the situation,” Neil says. “That’s when we kicked off, big style!”

Throughout last autumn, Neil was able to call on the advice and support of the PCS Union Learning Fund team, which is led by Project Manager Kim Hendry.

However, just as the GEC was putting the finishing touches to its Border Force campaign, the general election was called for 19 December – meaning that under pre-election rules PCS members were prevented from anything that looked like political campaigning.

“We realised we’d need a completely different strategy to get the whole thing stopped,” Neil says. “So we decided to escalate the issue all the way up to General Secretary Mark Serwotka’s office.”

The general secretary went on to raise a long list of questions from the union side in a formal letter to the most senior civil servant in the department.

The union argument finally prevailed in February this year, when the Home Office let it be known that it would be raising all its apprentices onto AO pay and conditions and full-time contracts on completion of their training.

But it was only in May that PCS was able to reveal the victory it had achieved, when the apprentices started receiving the new pay rates.

“We had to allow the department to put the structures into place to change the contracts and for them to announce the pay increase to the apprentices,” Neil says. “So the union announced it at the same time as the letters were being sent to the apprentices themselves.”

Unionlearn National Apprenticeship Project Officer Mark Rowe has helped



‘I’ve worked with Neil on the learning agenda for many years. His knowledge and skills as an experienced ULR, especially around apprenticeships, put him in the best place to take the issue forward. We held training sessions on apprenticeships at the Yorkshire and Humberside regional ULR network meetings and apprenticeships are now a regular agenda item. At these meetings, Neil regularly shares his knowledge and experience with other ULRs. Neil’s involvement as a PCS ULR and GEC member ensured someone was fighting the apprentices’ corner and the PCS ULF project has been able to provide the support that enabled him to progress these issues to a positive outcome.’

**Janet Johnson, Regional Learning Organiser,
PCS Yorkshire and the Humber**

PCS go on to create and develop apprenticeship support strategies across departments.

“Asking apprentices to download the Apprenticeship Essentials app is a great way of ensuring each apprentice can rate their own apprenticeship and flag up issue to union reps,” Mark says.

Looking back over the time since he took on the role of Home Office Apprenticeship Lead in 2018, Neil is happy he has been able to make a difference with the help of the GEC and the ULF project team.

“I am fairly proud of what we’ve managed to achieve in a fairly short timescale,” he says.

“Within 18 months, we’ve just completely turned things round to now completely rebuilding the reputation of the Home Office apprenticeship schemes.” 🍷



DELIVERING SKILLS FOR THE RECOVERY

Unionlearn has launched a three-month Festival of Learning to help ULRs and learners prepare for whatever autumn brings.

PHOTOGRAPHY [JESS HURD/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK](https://www.reportdigital.co.uk) AND GETTY IMAGES

UNIONLEARN'S FESTIVAL OF LEARNING this autumn will help ULRs support learners looking to gain and develop the skills they need to meet the challenges of the next few months.

The festival will spotlight unionlearn's new Skills and Recovery campaign but will also cover higher learning, digital skills, supporting young workers, supporting older workers and health and wellbeing.

Running all the way through to the end of November, the festival will include a virtual edition of unionlearn's annual conference, featuring many of the elements that have made it such a popular event in the union learning calendar, plus virtual Supporting Learners events in the regions with a focus on practical support and skills.

There will also be online briefings on the theme of 'create your own future' to help learners identify where they want to go next and how to get there, as well as webinars on a range of useful learning topics and other interactive virtual learning sessions.

To ensure the greatest possible take-up, all the sessions will be completely free to participants.



Part of the Festival of Learning, this year's unionlearn annual conference may be an online event but it will include this year's ULR awards, as usual

"FESTIVAL OF LEARNING WILL HELP SHOW THE VALUE UNIONLEARN BRINGS IN PROVIDING MUCH-NEEDED SUPPORT TO UNIONS, REPS AND LEARNERS."

The Festival of Learning will also act as an umbrella for a number of annual campaign weeks, such as Maths Workout Week and Get Online Week, showcasing the wide range of resources and publications available from unionlearn and our partners.

"This exciting new festival will bring opportunities to learn new skills, to get updated on key topic areas and to network and interact with others," says unionlearn Projects Officer Louisa Smith.

"Union learning continues to make a huge difference in the workplace and beyond and the autumn Festival of Learning will help show

the value unionlearn brings in providing much-needed support to unions, reps and learners."

The new unionlearn Skills and Recovery campaign will feature throughout the packed autumn calendar.

Like the Learning@Home campaign launched just after lockdown, Skills and Recovery occupies its own area of the unionlearn website to make it easier to keep up to date. The campaign brings together a mix of new and existing resources to help ULRs, other reps involved in learning and individual learners themselves improve existing skills and gain new ones so

The Festival of Learning will launch new resources to help ULRs support learners facing change in the workplace



“ULRs HAVE PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN DEVELOPING A REAL CULTURE OF LEARNING IN SO MANY WORKPLACES.”

they can put themselves in the best position to overcome the challenges everyone is facing in the coming period.

That could be identifying desirable skills learners might not even realise they already have; learning how to put together an eye-catching CV; or gaining crucial new digital skills to find and apply for new jobs online.

The campaign will help ULRs support learners who are dealing with change at work – whether their employer has signalled it intends to restructure, is consulting about potential redundancies, or whether learners themselves want to take the initiative about their next steps, regardless of what may or may not be on the horizon.

As well as being valuable in and of itself when workers need to improve their skills, learning also helps boost their confidence and adapt more successfully to change, as countless studies have shown.

And ULRs have played – and continue to play – a very important role in helping learners develop more flexible mindsets.

“Through all the work they do promoting learning and supporting learners, helping their colleagues boost their confidence and expand their skills, ULRs have played a key role in developing a real culture of learning in so many workplaces,” says unionlearn Projects Officer Andy Moss, who has helped put together the Skills and Recovery campaign.

“That really stands learners in good stead when things change at work and they need to start looking at all their options.”

One of the new resources developed as part of the campaign is a new guide for reps to help them deliver the most effective support around redundancy, where that becomes necessary.

The guide is a joint project between

unionlearn team members and colleagues in the TUC’s Rights, International, Social and Economics (RISE) department and will be available in both print and online versions to ensure maximum reach.

In addition, TUC Education is developing bite-sized learning versions of some key sections of the new guide to help ULRs and other reps get to grips with some of the issues when dealing with redundancy in their workplace, such as fair selection.

Another new resource in development is a practical guide for people facing redundancy or change at work, along the lines of a similar booklet we produced to help with the fallout from the 2008 financial crash.

We’ll flag these up on the unionlearn website as soon as they are available, so keep an eye on the new Skills and Recovery section of the site (address on page 10). The best way to ensure you

“WHILE THE NEW SKILLS AND RECOVERY CAMPAIGN AIMS TO HELP ULRs, UNION REPS AND INDIVIDUAL WORKERS WHO HAVE TO DEAL WITH REDUNDANCY, IT IS DESIGNED TO HELP ANYONE GAIN THE SKILLS THEY NEED TO FACE CHANGE AT WORK.”

never miss anything is to ‘subscribe’ to unionlearn’s email alerts via the website – simply click the orange ‘subscribe’ button in the top right corner of any page on the site and send us your details.

In addition to the new resources, new webinars, new briefings and virtual events, Skills and Recovery will also bring together existing resources that ULRs have already found useful in helping learners develop the confidence and identify the skills they need to move on in their careers.

The Value My Skills tool, for example, helps learners identify skills they might not know they have and others they need to develop – and it’s now available in another nine European languages, to help migrant workers get the most out of using the tool.

Another valuable resource is CareerZone, which provides a ‘one-stop-shop’ for careers information, that learners can use

to explore almost 400 careers through the comprehensive careers directory; compare careers by pay, conditions and employment; watch careers advice videos; and examine the gender pay gap across different job roles.

And earlier this summer, unionlearn published another useful guide, *Smart Choices: Preparing for the third age*, which aims to help workers aged 50 and over manage change in the workplace, with the information and advice they need to make informed choices about their next steps.

As well as highlighting and developing resources in-house, the campaign will also be signposting ULRs and learners to the wide range of tried-and-tested support available through unionlearn’s network of external partners, including The Open University (OU), the Workers’ Educational Association (WEA), The Skills Network,

Wranx and the National Careers Service.

“While the new Skills and Recovery campaign aims to help ULRs, union reps and individual workers who have to deal with redundancy, it is designed to help anyone gain the skills they need to face change at work,” Andy Moss says. 🧡

[Keep up-to-date with the Festival of Learning here](#)

[Explore all the resources of the Skills and Recovery campaign here](#)

UNISON
Head of
Learning and
Organising
Services
Teresa
Donegan
(seated,
second left)
and Inclusive
Learning
Project
Manager
Martin Russo
(back row,
far left) with
members
of the ULF
project team



DELIVERING LEARNING IN LOCKDOWN

UNISON ULF Project Manager Martin Russo explains how the team is helping union members continue developing themselves even though classroom courses aren't possible during the Covid-19 crisis.

STORY **MARTIN MORIARTY** PHOTOGRAPHY **JESS HURD/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK**

LIKE EVERY UNION Learning Fund (ULF) project, UNISON's Inclusive Learning project has had to rethink its whole approach to promoting, supporting and delivering learning in the Covid-19 era, says Project Manager Martin Russo.

"We've been transitioning a lot of our classroom-based activities to make them accessible to members online, accelerating some of the things we were planning to do digitally anyway," he says.

The project has been able to support a significant uptake in online learning, with the help of both its existing and its new partnerships.

"There's been a real jump in take-up of our online offer and some parts of our work have increased a lot more than we anticipated before Covid-19," Martin says.

The most significant new partnership has been with the Staff Skills Academy – which was already in development before lockdown.

But what began as a small-scale pilot just in March, with the union testing the water by buying 100 licences to help members access the 550-plus courses on offer through the provider, has massively expanded in the Covid-19 era.

In fact, the offer proved so popular that the union has now bought thousands of licences to help members continue learning online while classroom courses are not an option.

In addition, the project's existing partnership

“WE’VE BEEN TRANSITIONING A LOT OF OUR CLASSROOM-BASED ACTIVITIES TO MAKE THEM ACCESSIBLE TO MEMBERS ONLINE.”



“WHEN MEMBERS WANT TO LEARN ON THEIR MOBILES, IT’S BEEN REALLY VALUABLE THAT THEY CAN DO THAT WITH THE LIKES OF WRANX AND TUC eNOTES.”

with online provider Wranx has also helped learners improve a wide range of skills, especially English and maths at both functional skills and GCSE level.

The fact that it’s now so straightforward to access a wide range of union learning on smartphones and tablets has definitely helped take-up, Martin thinks. “When members want to learn on their mobiles, it’s been really valuable that they can do that with the likes of Wranx and TUC eNotes,” he says.

Some groups of members have been swift to access development opportunities that would have been much harder to pursue in their pre-Covid working lives. School staff are a case in point. And that’s a big bonus when so many schools have offered the lion’s share of training to their teacher colleagues in the past.

“We’ve found that lots of teaching assistants (TAs) and other members working in schools have taken the opportunity to develop their own skills as they have had the time

to do that,” Martin says. “Taking these courses means they’ll be able to show how they’ve been improving themselves when they return to work.”

To help learners demonstrate they have been engaged in Continuous Professional Development (CPD), the Staff Skills Academy courses are all accredited by The CPD Certification Service.

While the project has been keen to help support members who have been furloughed from their jobs or are working from home, it has also prioritised supporting those groups of members in health and social care at the eye of the coronavirus storm.

To support residential care workers affected by the Covid-19 death toll, the member learning team (which works alongside the ULF project) collaborated with the charity Cruse Bereavement Care to develop a new video-conference course to help members deal with their own feelings of loss and respond to the

grief of co-workers and residents’ families.

Feedback from members who have taken the two-hour course has been enormously positive. Within half an hour of finishing, one emailed to say the training was fabulous and she was recommending it to everyone, while another got in touch to say she found it extremely interesting and useful.

The project has been swift to use all its online resources – the Learning and Organising Services (LAOS) website and e-learning site as well as the union’s digital Organising Space – to offer a wide range of support to members and to ULRs over lockdown.

While members were already keen to improve their quality of life through subjects such as mental health awareness, stress awareness, wellbeing and creative writing before Covid-19 (the team logged that by analysing the data from the 2019–20 project year), these topics have become even more important over lockdown.

So in addition to raising awareness of mental health learning opportunities via Wranx, the Skills Academy and The Open University (OU), the project is also signposting members to an online version and webinar of the stress awareness workshop, Staying Strong (a popular part of the LAOS member learning offer).

It also promoted a series of summer webinars to help different groups of members (youth workers, social workers, primary school support staff and secondary school support staff) inform, educate and safeguard young people about gaming and gambling.

And over the autumn, it will be encouraging members to take part in new online versions of three of the most popular member learning workshops in collaboration with the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) – Power To Be You, Your Skills, Your Future, and Get That Job.

The expansion of online and digital learning does present some issues – IT problems; access to a computer or other device; and reliable broadband.

But there are also important upsides, as the union's South West region discovered when it set up its Facebook reading



The Inclusive Learning project team has been able to get together much more regularly now that meetings have moved online, says Project Manager Martin Russo

group. That has been able to engage more than 100 members across the whole region partly because no one has to make the time to travel to a real-world meeting, for example.

The ULF project itself is benefitting from something similar, Martin points out.

"We used to schedule project worker meetings once a year because they were quite difficult to organise with everyone in different locations across the country and working to different schedules, particularly those project workers who are seconded onto the project part time," he says.

"But we've had a whole series of meetings online now which we haven't had before, which is great because the project workers do really valuable work engaging learners and promoting the project."

The project workers have been playing an increasingly important

"WHEN I STARTED FIVE YEARS AGO, THERE WERE JUST TWO PROJECT WORKERS AND NOW THERE ARE NEARLY 20."

role in recent years, Martin says.

"When I started five years ago, there were just two project workers and now there are nearly 20, which has made a really significant impact for thousands of learners and right across UNISON and also helped put learning on the map with many employers," Martin points out.

The team now includes 12 project workers employed by

“I GOT A LOT FROM DOING THAT DEGREE: IT REALLY GAVE ME THE CONFIDENCE THAT I COULD HAVE A SHOT AT THE ROLE AS A PROJECT WORKER AND IT’S INFORMED AND DEVELOPED MY CAREER.”

different regions of the union plus eight branch-based project workers, seconded from their substantive posts in local government and the health sector (two of the eight have had to return to their posts because of Covid-19).

“It’s been great to see how the project workers have all developed and grown in their roles, setting up learning activities, negotiating learning agreements and growing UNISON membership,” says Martin.

The project has also worked with many of the union’s regional learning teams to help promote and deliver UNISON’s member learning offer, elements of which will now be delivered online over the autumn.

When it comes to supporting members with any kind of union learning, Martin is able to call on his own experience of undertaking adult learning, which helped him make the move from working in the finance team at UNISON Centre to his current role running the ULF project.

It was the experience of completing his Masters in journalism at Birkbeck, University of London (with financial support from the union to help cover the costs of his study) that gave him the confidence to apply for a project worker role in the ULF team back in 2015, he says.

“We’re always talking about the journey of our members and I can really identify with that because

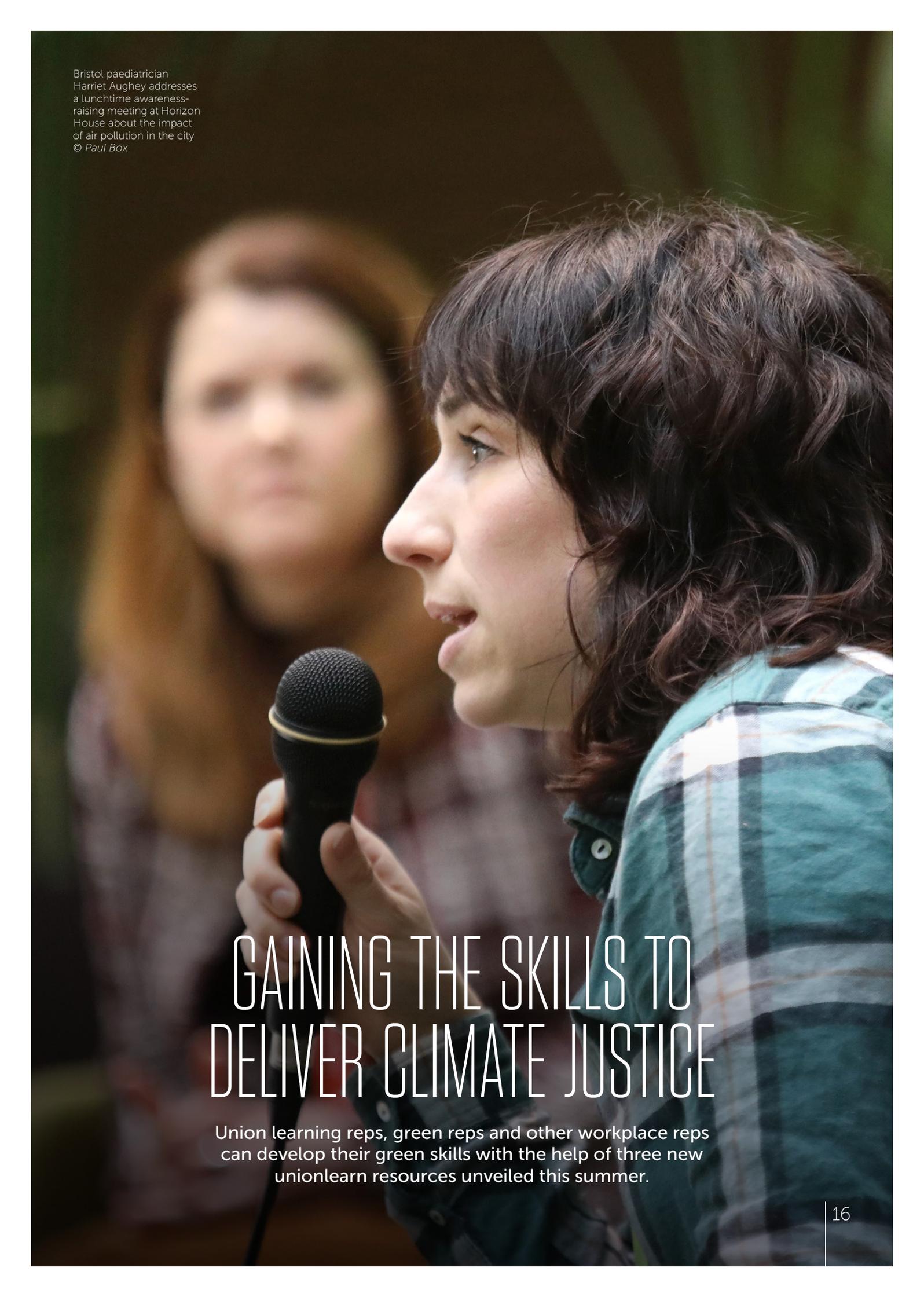
I’ve been on that journey myself,” he says.

“I got a lot from doing that degree: it really gave me the confidence that I could have a shot at the role as a project worker and it’s informed and developed my career.”

Martin loves seeing the way the project helps UNISON members develop skills they sometimes never imagined they could gain.

“It’s incredible to see how some of the learners we’ve supported have, for example, developed their confidence in writing and have moved on to further or higher education – it’s wonderful to see how that learning improves their quality of life,” he says. 🍷

Bristol paediatrician
Harriet Aughey addresses
a lunchtime awareness-
raising meeting at Horizon
House about the impact
of air pollution in the city
© Paul Box

A woman with dark, curly hair is shown in profile, speaking into a black microphone. She is wearing a blue and white plaid shirt. In the background, another woman is visible but out of focus. The overall scene is a lunchtime awareness-raising meeting.

GAINING THE SKILLS TO DELIVER CLIMATE JUSTICE

Union learning reps, green reps and other workplace reps
can develop their green skills with the help of three new
unionlearn resources unveiled this summer.

UNIONLEARN HAS DEVELOPED three new resources to help union learning reps, green reps and other workplace reps deepen their understanding of the climate emergency and what they can do to help green their workplaces.

They will all help reps make the case for the sweeping changes required to tackle the climate crisis.

The new resources are:

1. *Cutting Carbon, Growing Skills: Green skills for a just transition*: a practical guide for union reps and members about what they can do to tackle the climate emergency
2. *Green Skills for a Just Transition*: an hour-long webinar to accompany the new booklet
3. *Green Skills and Environmental Awareness*: a new assessment on SkillCheck that helps learners test their knowledge of environmental issues.

Launched earlier this summer, the new resources could not be more timely, as ever more union reps and

members look to learn the about the practical steps they can take to help ensure their employers translate pro-environmental words into sustainable deeds.

Many of the union reps who are already actively working with their employers to reduce waste, save energy and improve recycling have been using older TUC publications to guide their work, such as *How To Green Your Workplace*, which is now more than 13 years old.

The new booklet and webinar offer a completely up-to-date overview not only of the work that original publication has helped inspire but also of the latest developments in the green agenda, with a focus on the need for a just transition from a carbon-based economy.

In addition, a new report from the TUC highlights the need both to tackle the climate emergency and to invest in the skills of the workforce as the country sets out on the road to recovery from the coronavirus crisis. There's more about that report on page 21.

WHAT IS JUST TRANSITION?

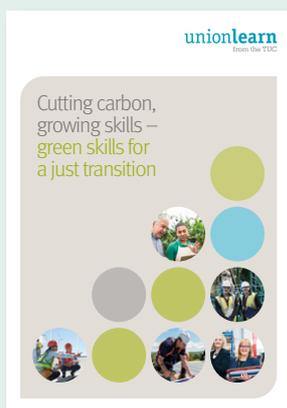
The just transition to a decarbonised economy requires:

- a clear and funded path to a low-carbon economy
- placing workers at the heart of delivering this plan
- access to funding for every worker to improve their skills
- the creation not just of new jobs but good jobs.

A Just Transition to a Greener, Fairer Economy,
TUC statement, July 2019



1. CUTTING CARBON, GROWING SKILLS BOOKLET



What a just transition would actually look like, and how green reps can help bring it into being, is the core of the new unionlearn booklet *Cutting Carbon, Growing Skills: Green skills for a just transition*.

It sets out to explain what just transition is and how unions are working with each other and with their employers to ensure their members develop the skills necessary to thrive in a decarbonised economy.

The booklet gives union learning reps, green reps, reps in general and union members the tools they need to tackle the climate emergency in their workplaces and communities.

When union branches elect or appoint green reps (also called environment reps, climate reps and sustainability reps), they are much more likely to be able to be part of creating positive change in the workplace, the booklet shows.

Having at least one person taking responsibility for the impact of climate change measures at the workplace enables unions to play a more effective role in raising awareness of the climate emergency and developing action plans to reduce waste, boost recycling, save energy and establish green purchasing policies.

The 10 detailed case studies in the booklet demonstrate the practical, hands-on approach to delivering change



Green reps can help their workplaces develop more effective recycling schemes © Monty Rakusen/Getty Images

that the rest of the booklet advocates. They show how:

- UNISON's team of environmental reps at Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) is helping deliver peer-to-peer training at the local authority to equip staff with the knowledge and skills they need to protect and improve the environment.
- Unite is rolling out a multi-stranded education programme to equip its reps with the skills to negotiate with their employers on all aspects of the climate emergency.
- The Bakers, Food and Allied Workers' Union (BFAWU) has been working with high-street baker Greggs to train staff and raise environmental awareness.
- Union reps from PCS and UNISON working for different government organisations in the same building in Bristol are advancing their environmental and industrial agendas through a cross-union committee.
- UCU supported a Climate Change and Power Themed Learning Week across the five sites that make up City and Islington College in north London in February this year.

Read the new booklet

Stockport UNISON Environmental Officer Mary Clarke (standing) and the branch's green reps are delivering peer-to-peer training at the local authority to equip staff with the knowledge and skills they need to protect and improve the environment
© Paul Herrmann



Clockwise from top left: Tim Page, Anna Kalsi, Graham Petersen and Sarah Woolley



2. GREEN SKILLS FOR A JUST TRANSITION WEBINAR

The Green Skills for a Just Transition webinar examined how unions are already boosting the green skills agenda, with contributions from Greener Jobs Alliance Secretary Graham Petersen, author of the new *Cutting Carbon* booklet; BFAWU General Secretary Sarah Woolley; and the TUC's Senior Policy Officer Tim Page.

The deindustrialisation of the 1980s demonstrated the disastrous effects of unjust transition, Tim says in the webinar, which is available to watch again on the unionlearn website.

"The UK's history of moving from coal mining is a case study in the definition of an unjust transition – industry closed, communities died, opportunities for workers died, nothing left for them," he says.

"We can't make that mistake again: we have to ensure that as we move away from these high-energy sectors, we take the workforce with us and create new opportunities."

Sarah Woolley sets out how BFAWU has developed its successful green partnership work with high-street bakers Greggs, after the union moved the climate change motion at the 2017 TUC Congress.

The two sides trialled a series of training sessions with the union's health and safety reps in the retail sector looking at carbon footprint, waste management and energy use. And they have incorporated environmental issues into the health and safety agenda, ensuring both management and staff understand how to use a new energy tool that displays a shop's peaks and troughs, for example.

"We're not quite there yet with other employers in terms of working together like this – we know we've got a lot more work to do – but Greggs is certainly an example of what can be achieved when you work together," Sarah says.

For Graham Petersen, there are four key issues with green reps:

- they are most effective when integrated into the branch structure in the workplace, unlike individual green champions
- they must be supported at regional, sector and national levels by their unions
- they are well placed to tackle social justice issues such as inequality by race and gender
- they need access to time off for training since the range of issues they can be dealing with is so huge.

[Watch the webinar](#)

3. GREEN SKILLS AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS ASSESSMENT

Anyone keen to test their understanding of the climate emergency can work their way through the latest assessment to be added to unionlearn's SkillCheck portfolio.

The new Green Skills and Environmental Awareness assessment allows learners to test their existing knowledge of environmental issues and signposts them to sources of useful information to help them improve their scores, where necessary.

The assessment covers a broad range of issues in just 15 key questions, including the role of green reps, the design of green jobs, definitions of key concepts and key components of the climate emergency such as air pollution, greenhouse gases and rising sea levels.

When you successfully complete your assessment, you will gain a digital badge from Open Badges, the leading standard for digital credentials that has been working with unionlearn for several years now.

Check your environmental knowledge



Workers can now test their existing knowledge of green issues on SkillCheck © FG Trade/ Getty Images

COVID-19 RECOVERY NEEDS HIGHER SKILLS AND GREENER JOBS

The UK needs a Just Transition commission, with workers, business and government working together to oversee a Covid-19 recovery programme to reduce carbon and increase jobs, according to a new report from the TUC.

The report also makes the case that investing in the skills of the workforce will be vital to rebuild the UK's industrial capacity and deliver this transition.

The government should help workers secure new jobs, with a new jobs guarantee, an individual right to retrain, supported by a funded individual learning account, and a new drive for quality apprenticeships, the TUC says.

And it should not stop there. "To open up learning opportunities to those facing the greatest barriers, we need a new expansive skills system that provides lifelong learning accounts for all adults incorporating entitlements to upskill or retrain; a new right to paid time off for education and training for workers, and a new entitlement to a mid-life skills/ career review and development of an all-age careers guidance service in England," the report says. 🌱

Read the TUC report



HELPING ARGOS LEARNERS STAY ON TRACK

The Learning Curve at the Argos Contact Centre in Widnes has been one of the most successful learning centres within the network run by the Usdaw Lifelong Learning Project. But what happens when the centre can't open because of Covid-19? ULRs Michelle Whitley and Kerry Dunning explain how they have continued to support their learners during lockdown.

STORY MARTIN MORIARTY PHOTOGRAPHY PAUL HERRMANN

How has the Argos Contact Centre been operating during lockdown?



Michelle: There's a skeleton crew onsite. Normally, there's 200 people onsite at any one time but it's gone from a full room, which would hold around 100 people, to something like 20 – everybody else went to home working. We've had a few people shielding, no furloughs, and for the rest, the business went out and bought laptops and sent everybody home, which was good.

“WE’VE BEEN OPERATING FOR MORE THAN 10 YEARS AND WE’VE ONLY HAD TO CLOSE THE DOORS ONCE IN THAT TIME, WHEN THE ULR WHO WAS RUNNING IT HAD TO GO BACK ON THE PHONES FOR SOME REASON. WE WENT BERSERK BECAUSE WE HAD TO CLOSE FOR HALF A DAY BACK THEN – AND NOW WE’VE BEEN CLOSED FOR MONTHS!”

How did it feel to have to close The Learning Curve?

Kerry: At the point when lockdown commenced, a lot of people were stressing about being in close proximity because at the time we didn't have as much information and obviously the room is quite small.

I think it was the best decision so they didn't need to be put through coming up to the learning centre to contact us because we could be available in other ways.

Normally, we have drop-ins constantly. People can book appointments as well and we will stop people coming in when there's an exam on or a meeting.

But when there's nothing going on, it's an open door, people can just pop in – and because we're at the back of the canteen, we get a lot of footfall, which is a good position to be in usually. The canteen has been closed up to now, although it is starting to slowly open again where people can sit in there now.



Michelle: We've been operating for more than 10 years and we've only had to close the doors once in that time, when the ULR who was running it had to go back on the phones for some reason. We went berserk because we had to close for half a day back then – and now we've been closed for months!

Although they have had to close The Learning Curve, Usdaw ULRs Kerry (left) and Michelle have been able to signpost learners to online opportunities they set up last year



What have you found works best to stay in touch with learners when most of them are working from home?

Michelle: Definitely email. We already had a distribution list for all our members with their email addresses so we've sent out emails about everything we're doing and all the courses that we've got on offer.

We also use Facebook, which we haven't used that much for a few years, so we re-did our Facebook page and put loads of different opportunities on there that we offered not just to learners but to their families as well. We also use Yammer, the social network that the business use.

Did you have to change your delivery model for lockdown?

Michelle: We were really lucky because we spent the whole year before this setting up remote learning as well so everything we did apart from assessments was distance learning – we don't have anything you actually

have to come in for apart from maths and English.

We made the switch because there are people working on weekday evenings and at the weekends when we wouldn't normally be open, to make sure as many people as possible had the chance to take one of our courses.

Both Kerry and myself are qualified functional skills assessors, so anybody who's going to do an apprenticeship or anyone doing an apprenticeship who needs extra help are sent to us and we tutor them in maths and English – so we've had to change that to tutorials over video-conferencing software.

How did you come to support learners at the Argos site in Acton Gate as well?

Kerry: We've been helping Acton Gate in Stafford because Jackie, the coordinator there, has been shielding and Carol, the ULR, had to go back to the frontline, so we've been running both centres remotely – although they're both back now.

Michelle: We jumped in and said, 'We'll run both sites' because we originally helped set up the site and we had a website for them as well. So everything we did for us, we mirrored for Acton Gate.

Kerry: Without Michelle's insight into making all our workbooks and enquiry forms into Google documents, and her persistence in learning how to add links to images for our emails, I don't think we would have been able to support our other site as easily or had many responses at all.

She has also made it so much easier to catch equality and diversity data remotely on both sites, which is one of our criteria for Usdaw.

What's take-up been like since lockdown?

Kerry: It was so bizarre at first. We were so busy before lockdown and then suddenly nothing. But it's picking up again now.

Our Mental Health First Aiders – we probably have 80 altogether on both sites – they've been asking for more help and we've managed to get a Level 2 course in Mental Health First Aid and advocacy in the workplace through Warrington College for Widnes and North Warwickshire College for Acton Gate.

I sent out the email about it to all Mental Health First Aiders and champions and within 24 hours, six people signed up in Widnes and about the same at Acton Gate.

Michelle: As well as the main Learning Curve website, we have built separate websites for literacy and numeracy

learning and we've just made an out-of-hours website for stores and distribution centres. As soon as we put that up, we got people come through to do courses.

All our websites now let learners enrol directly on courses: you click on the link, read about the course and at the bottom you can enrol – it takes them straight to a nationwide provider.

What have learners told you about the benefits of learning in lockdown?

Michelle: One lady lost her father during lockdown and was having a really bad time with it. I saw her one time when I nipped into the centre and she said, 'Please send me some courses because it's really going to help my mental health'. So we sent her some short courses on different things and she says it's really helped to keep her going during that really bad time for her.

How are you working with the Royal Literary Fund (RLF)?

Michelle: We're doing a project with RLF, where Clare Shaw and Mary Colson are encouraging members to write about their experiences during lockdown. Clare and Mary are awesome: we love it when we get to talk to them – they are so uplifting!

Clare made a video about how to write a poem, talking about all the little tricks you can use, which is really good. I tried it myself and I promised them both I would put it on Yammer to show people, 'Yes – you can do it'. (We reproduce Michelle's poem on the next page.)

I COME FROM *by Michelle Whitely, July 2020*

I come from Widnes with the disappearing pubs and ever changing restaurants,
I come from the crossroads and the too steep driveway like living in a castle,
I come from the poor abandoned Wendy house at the bottom of the garden,
I come from shabby chic and hand-sewn stitching,
I come from food deliveries and working till my hands are numb,
I come from comforting cups of tea in specially gifted cups,
I come from the eeriness of visiting work,
I come from constant frustration and worry,
I come from a remote Kerry on Facebook and Zoom,
I come from Sia's *Unstoppable* on repeat:

"I put my armour on; show you how strong I am, I put my armour on; I'll show you that I am, I'm unstoppable."



What's been the biggest challenge for you during lockdown?

Kerry: If I had to go on the floor to do some printing, I could be gone for two hours because I would get stopped constantly and asked about courses or support – that was my job – that was me, I was always interacting with people.

The weeks of being at home and being isolated were really affecting me, so I made the decision to go in for a couple of hours a couple of times a week just to get a bit of normality back – and that's massively helped me.

While you've been supporting learners, who has been supporting you?

Kerry: We've been having weekly catch-ups with the North West Project Workers Julia Baldwin and Jonathan Charnock-Bradshaw, and with Neil Chapman, who's the project worker who covers Acton Gate, and Jackie and Carol now they're back. We've had a lot of support – Jonathan's at the end of the phone, he always answers or gets

back to us straight away. And me and Michelle have a really good relationship – we're in touch every day and we tend to be a shoulder to moan on for each other when we need that!

What are you proudest of about what you've been able to do over lockdown?

Kerry: The fact that we've been given the opportunity to carry on our work and that's down to the business as well as having the support from Usdaw because without all that it would have been awful!

And the fact that we've still been available for anybody who needs us for advice or support or just to have a moan – we still have been available to the learners.

So we just need to learn from what we've gone through so we'll be more prepared in the future and be able to use what we've learned and move forward. 🍷

HELPING CREATIVES HIT THE HIGH NOTES

Singers, musicians, actors, writers and many more creative sector freelancers are honing their business and communication skills through the bespoke learning delivered by FEU Training.

STORY MARTIN MORIARTY



Actor, singer and Equity member Julia Titus has gained the courage to commit to music full-time through FEU Training
© Picasa

OVID-19 HAS THROWN THE FUTURE of the country's creative sector into deep crisis, as venues have been forced to close their doors, with many organisations planning large-scale redundancy programmes and some even going into administration.

And while relentless campaigning by the sector managed to secure the £1.57bn rescue package from the government this summer, none of this money is going to help the thousands of freelance actors, singers, dancers, comedians, musicians, writers, directors and many more who make up such a huge percentage of the creative sector workforce.

In this era of massive uncertainty, with even the major employment opportunities represented by panto season now closed down and many creative freelancers excluded from the provisions of the government's Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS), one crucial source of support has become even more vital – the learning available through FEU Training.

The Union Learning Fund (ULF) project is a partnership launched four years



The government rescue package designed to save arts venues won't help creative sector freelancers in the short term
© David Cliff/
NurPhoto/PA
Images

“VENUES HAVE BEEN FORCED TO CLOSE THEIR DOORS, WITH MANY ORGANISATIONS PLANNING LARGE-SCALE REDUNDANCY PROGRAMMES AND SOME EVEN GOING INTO ADMINISTRATION.”

ago by four members of the Federation of Entertainment Unions (FEU) – Equity; Musicians Union (MU), the National Union of Journalists (NUJ); and the Writers' Guild (WGGB).

FEU Training aims to help learners develop the business and communications skills they need – in addition to their talent, specialist skills and experience – to build successful careers.

At the core of its offer is an evolving portfolio of bespoke training, the vast majority of which the project provides itself (although it does broker a handful of specialist courses).

All the courses are free to members of the four unions, which removes the enormous barrier of cost – vital in a sector where so many people are only just about managing to make a living at the best of times.

Being a provider means that the project can develop and tailor its courses to the precise and changing needs of its learners, explains Project Manager Frances Dredge.

“There are loads of business courses out there but they're not accessible or relevant to our membership,” Frances says. “For example, you wouldn't get a course like our Finance For Creative

“OUR LEARNERS KNOW THAT WE UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY’RE GOING THROUGH BECAUSE WE’RE GOING THROUGH IT OURSELVES – WE’RE ALL IN THE SAME BOAT.”

Freelancers, which is developed specifically with our members in mind and whereby they can learn in a peer group environment.”

The project focuses on practical, hands-on training through short courses because many creative sector workers have already attained qualifications in their chosen field.

“They want relevant and topical training that they can apply now to their working lives to maximise their career potential, from achieving work consistency to better pay,” Frances says.

“That’s why we offer maths-based courses where they can learn to manage their business finances, from calculating tax to assessing cashflow, and English-based courses to help them write for various purposes including sales and marketing.”

To help secure the relevance and topicality that is the whole purpose of FEU Training, the project works with trainers who are practitioners themselves.

“As well as being skilled trainers, all the tutors we commission are freelance, have industry knowledge and are working within the industry, which helps build rapport and credibility with our audience,” Frances says.

The same is true of the project team, all of whom work part-time and pursue their own creative careers: NUJ member Frances works in communications and publishing; project worker and NUJ member Muriel McClymont runs her own coaching business; while administrator and Equity member Kate Willoughby is also a working actor and writer.

“Our learners know that we understand what they’re going through because we’re going through it ourselves – we’re all in the same boat, which adds to the delivery and effectiveness of the training,” Frances says.

“We find that our first-hand knowledge of freelance work helps to create a warmer and more unified environment too.”

To help ensure that the training provision

continues to meet ULF priority targets and to track short- and long-term impacts of its courses, the project has developed its own bespoke learner management system – which has come into its own with the migration of its content online during lockdown.

For creative freelancers, many of whom spend a lot of their working lives in isolation, the opportunities for networking at face-to-face sessions with FEU Training have proved invaluable. And connecting with their peers has become even more important in the Covid-19 era.

“It’s so easy to feel isolated but the FEU Training workshops show you that you’re not alone,” says actor, singer and Equity member Julia Titus, who has taken part in a number of FEU Training events, including Creative Productivity, Diversify Your Portfolio and You’re Hired.

“It’s great to feel part of something bigger: it’s fantastic to mix across the creative space with people who are all creatives rather than only performers.”

Matt Helm has developed vital new business skills through FEU Training © Taya Uddin



Taking part in the workshops has been genuinely transformational for Julia. "Attending these workshops has allowed me to live my dream," she says.

"They gave me the courage to quit the day job, a huge step for me, and one I have not regretted for a minute. Becoming self-employed is a very daunting step but was made easier knowing that there were other people that had done it successfully."

It's been a similar story for guitarist and MU member Matt Helm (pictured above), who has benefited from a number of courses including Money Matters ("brilliant"), Creative Productivity ("made a big difference")

and How to Shoot and Edit Video ("gave me so much confidence in my ability").

"These courses have been the number one benefit of my union membership so far," Matt says.

"I've got something useful from every course, Everything I have attended has contributed to helping me streamline the admin side of the business by managing the money, my confidence, resilience and time management, all of which lets me focus more on the music."

Singer and singing teacher Steven Tharpe (another MU member) has learned some life-changing skills on FEU Training courses, including one on negotiating skills – particularly vital for self-

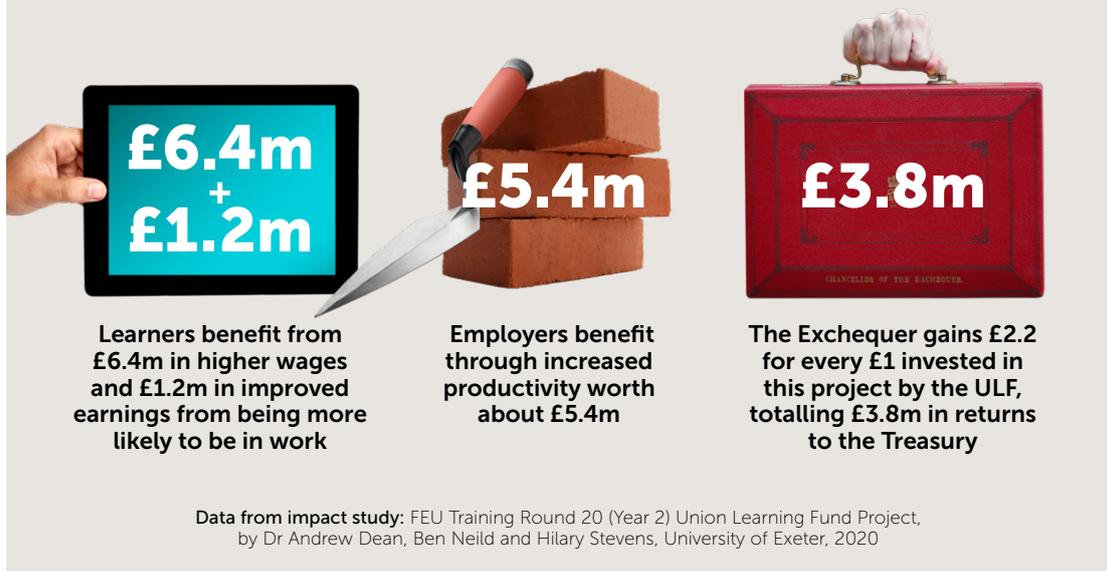
"THESE COURSES
HAVE BEEN THE
NUMBER ONE
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UNION MEMBERSHIP
SO FAR."

employed workers, who have to agree fees on a case-by-case basis.

"After the session, I negotiated a really good rate for some work where I would have offered a much lower one," Steven says.

"I took on board the tips about valuing yourself

MEASURING THE IMPACT OF FEU TRAINING



and making your rates sustainable for you to continue working, named a more appropriate price, was able to justify it, and the client said, 'Yes!'

To help its learners stay safe in the Covid-19 era, the project has moved all its provision online: its Digital Learning Centre was already in place but 80 per cent of courses were face-to-face before lockdown.

The team has also developed new offers to help members through a time when most of their existing work has evaporated and even rehearsing together, let alone performing, is all but impossible.

"We've developed several new 'of the time' webinars and workshops to help people manage the crisis period and the resulting mental health challenges including

Dealing With Uncertainty and Finding A Balance While Staying At Home," Frances says.

"We've also added to our technically based provision to help with online communications, for example Mobile Video Kickstarter, Get Creative With Graphics and Networking Via Social Media."

As well as developing new courses for the Covid-19 era, the project is also replicating those all-important networking opportunities in its digital spaces by creating virtual breakout rooms where participants can connect with each other during training.

"It's trickier to arrange and takes more time to do it but I think people so far have appreciated getting into groups to find out how everyone is doing as a means to learn but

also to connect with and gain support from other creatives who are going through the same things," Frances says.

Unsurprisingly, when creative sector freelancers are facing such troubled times, feedback from participants has been very positive – just as it always has been.

"It's been stressful and really hard work for everyone but my heart sings when you read comments like, 'Brilliant at the best of times but even more so in the worst of times' – it's incredibly rewarding to hear that people find what we do so valuable and that we're helping them through such a devastating period," Frances says. 🌟

THERE'S A WEBINAR FOR THAT!

As part of our Learning@Home campaign, we've built up a rich resource of webinars to help ULRs and learners develop themselves through the Covid-19 crisis – and meet some of the challenges presented by lockdown itself.

WELLBEING

Mental health challenges beyond Covid-19: tips for looking after our mental health as we emerge from lockdown.

[Watch the webinar](#)

Staying positive in lockdown and beyond: including wellbeing tips, mindfulness and therapy techniques.

[Watch the webinar](#)

Mindfulness: explore how to reduce your stress through a series of short, engaging exercises rooted in the practice that helps maintain awareness of our thoughts, feelings and physical sensations, and the surrounding environment.

[Watch the webinar](#)

Tackling isolation: hints and tips to help learners overcome isolation issues.

[Watch the webinar](#)

Laughter yoga: how appropriate laughter-based ideas and playfulness can help people face life's challenges.

[Watch the webinar](#)



© Momo Productions/Getty Images

ONLINE LEARNING

Demystifying online learning: roundup of free online learning resources.

[Watch the webinar](#)

You, your kids and online safety: how to talk to your children about their online activity.

[Watch the webinar](#)

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mid-life development: support available for mid-life and older workers, including the online Value My Skills transferable skills assessment too.

[Watch the webinar](#)

Tools to create your own future: career adaptability, skills self-assessment, making learning part of day-to-day life.

[Watch the webinar](#)

Study skills: supporting your own and your members' online learning.

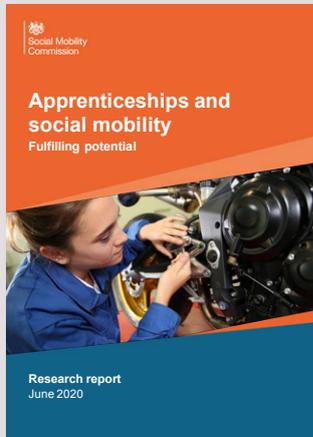
[Watch the webinar](#)

APPRENTICES

Apprenticeships and Covid-19: how unions and union reps can support apprentices and keep learning during the crisis.

[Watch the webinar](#)

NOTICEBOARD



APPRENTICESHIPS AND SOCIAL MOBILITY: FULFILLING POTENTIAL

Social Mobility Commission, June 2020

Key message

Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to be selected for apprenticeships and are more likely to get an entry-level start in a lower-paid industry.

Key stats

- ▶ Apprenticeship starts by individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds have declined by 36 per cent, compared to 23 per cent for more privileged people (2015/16 to 2017/18).
- ▶ Disadvantaged apprentices do not receive equal value training: 48 per cent of disadvantaged starters were enrolled into an intermediate apprenticeship in 2017/18, compared to 41 per cent of more privileged starters.

Where to find it

[Click here to download the full report from the social mobility section of gov.uk](#)

RISING TO THE UK'S SKILLS CHALLENGES

Industrial Strategy Council, June 2020



Key message

The UK recovery from the Covid-19 crisis will be faster and more sustainable if the government works in partnership with unions, employers and providers to improve the country's skills system.

Key stats

- ▶ The UK tends to plug skills gaps by recruitment rather than training: more than 73 per cent of UK enterprises recruit rather than train, compared to 63 per cent in France, 53 per cent in Germany and 15 per cent in Italy.

- ▶ Adult participation in learning in the UK has declined from 39 per cent in 2011 to 33 per cent in 2019.

Credit to unionlearn

"In the UK, unionlearn supports trade unions to help workers acquire skills and qualifications to improve their employability. One of the ways it does this is through the training of union learning representatives (ULRs). Unionlearn has been particularly successful in recruiting low-skilled workers into training."

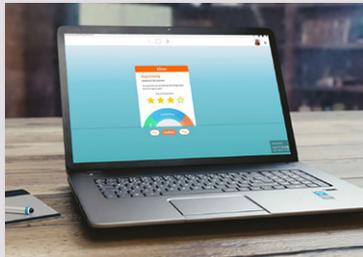
Union perspective

"The context in which we are now operating increases the urgency with which partners in the skills system need to adapt and respond ... increased engagement of trade unions and employers in the design and implementation of skills provision will be key in driving up participation in job-related training and cultivating a lifelong learning culture." Community General Secretary Roy Rickhuss, who is also a member of the Industrial Strategy Council.

Where to find it

[Click here to download the full report from the Industrial Strategy Council website](#)

NOTICEBOARD



WILKOMMEN AND BIENVENUE TO VALUE MY SKILLS

Workers from a wide range of European countries can access unionlearn's popular Value My Skills online tool and identify their transferable skills in their mother tongues, now that the popular resource has been translated into nine other languages.

Value My skills is now available in: Finnish; French; German; Italian; Latvian; Lithuanian; Polish; Romanian; and Spanish, as well as English.

The online tool was developed as part of unionlearn's Mid-life Skills Review Project to help workers explore experiences and skills from all areas of their lives in order to identify strengths and areas for development.

The tool takes you through the steps to identify and rate your skills, keep reflection notes, design an action plan and record your progress.

Where to find it

Click here to access Value My Skills, including a 'quick start' guide to using the tool



EMPOWERING DYSLEXIC LEARNERS

Unionlearn has produced a new guide to help ULRs improve the support they offer to learners with dyslexia, which affects around one in 10 people.

The new guide sets out best practice when it comes to talking to learners who have been diagnosed with dyslexia, those who think they may be dyslexic and those who show signs of the condition before they start any courses.

It includes strategies for supporting reading and writing skills that ULRs can use when facilitating or delivering courses, and useful tips for making meetings more inclusive for people with dyslexia.

The booklet also sets out how technology can help, using the built-in features on smartphones and the apps that are available, and also includes a useful initial assessment checklist to use with learners.

Where to find it

Click here to download the new guide from the unionlearn website

NEW DISCOUNT ON UNIVERSITY COURSE FEES

You can now secure 10 per cent off the fees for four online programmes to help you progress your career in a number of different directions, thanks to unionlearn's new partnership with the University of London.

And as they are all online courses, you can enrol from anywhere in the country – you don't have to live or work in the capital.

The new 10 per cent discount is available on any of these online programmes:

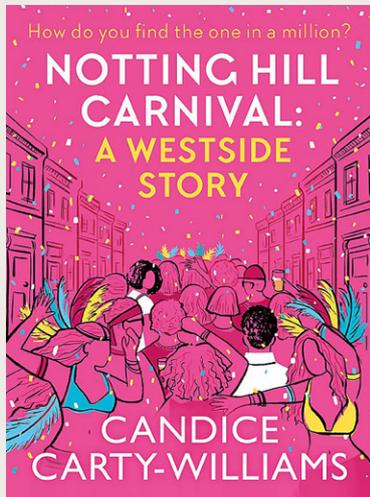
- BSc Business Administration (academic direction by Royal Holloway)
- BSc Computer Science (academic direction by Goldsmiths)
- BSc Psychology (academic direction by Kings College London)
- Global MBA (academic direction by Queen Mary).

The discount is available to new students who are members of any TUC-affiliated union, and covers the registration fees, examination entry fees, course module fees and module continuation fees.

Find out more

Click here to find out more, including about how to apply, on the University of London website

DIARY



BLACK HISTORY MONTH

1–31 OCTOBER

Black History Month aims to promote knowledge of Black history, culture and heritage and celebrate the contribution Black Britons make to UK society.

Find out more here

What you can do

Choose a title for your book group by a Black writer, such as *Notting Hill Carnival: A Westside Story*, the new Quick Read by Sunday Times bestselling author Candice Carty-Williams. For book groups comfortable with longer reads, you could try *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith (winner of the Whitbread Book Award for a debut novel, 2000); Andrea Levy's *Small Island* (Orange Prize for Fiction, 2005); or *Girl, Woman, Other* by Quick Reads author Bernadine Evaristo (Booker Prize, 2019).

Resources

Notting Hill Carnival: A Westside Story. 2020 Quick Read by Candice Carty-Williams. After Sapphire walks away from her gang, the Red Roses, she forms an instant bond with a boy called Apollo when they meet on her way to Notting Hill Carnival. She thinks he could be the one – until she discovers he's a member of a rival gang, the Gold Teeth.

Find out more here



DYSLEXIA WEEK

5–11 OCTOBER

Dyslexia Week aims to raise awareness of dyslexia by producing resources and highlighting a different dyslexia-related theme each year.

Find out more here

What you can do

Run an awareness session to help staff better understand this learning difference. Include a ULR (or other union rep or member) on the panel talking about what empowers them as a dyslexic person.

Resources

Empowering Dyslexic Learners: A practical guide for union learning reps is a new unionlearn resource that includes an outline of the main issues around dyslexia; how to identify whether a co-worker is dyslexic; how to undertake proper workplace assessments; and how companies can do more to support staff with the condition.

Find out more here

Learning at Work Week 2020

LEARNING AT WORK WEEK

5–11 OCTOBER

Learning at Work Week aims to highlight the importance of continual learning and development and help people build a learning culture in their workplace.

Find out more here

What you can do

Organise an online event on this year's theme of 'Learning Journeys'. You could ask an apprentice to share their story. Or invite a learner who has completed a Mid-life Development Review to talk about what they got out of the process. Or ask your green rep to discuss what they are doing to help your organisation meet the challenge of climate change.

Resources

Running a Learning Event at Work is a webinar presented by unionlearn Projects Officer Adrian Ryan. It includes advice on planning exciting and engaging learning events; making good use of local organisations, including colleges and community learning providers; and identifying the hidden skills and talents in your workplace that could be shared.

Find out more here

DIARY



WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

10 OCTOBER

World Mental Health Day's aim is to promote mental health and create awareness about the issues associated with mental illness.

Find out more here

What you can do

Organise an online event promoting mental wellbeing. Ask a union member who is open about living with anxiety, depression or stress to talk about their experiences.

Resources

Mental Health in the Workplace is a TUC Education workbook that sets out how all workplace reps can support those in the workplace with mental health problems.

Find out more here

Mental Health Support in the Workplace is a TUC Education eNote that helps reps recognise when colleagues may have mental health issues; summarises the law on mental health in the workplace; help reps support and represent members with mental health problems.

Find out more here

Talking Mental Health is a webinar led by Chris O'Sullivan, head of workplace mental health at Mental Health Foundation. It focuses on reaching out appropriately to somebody who isn't coping; helping with ongoing concerns, including reasonable adjustments and return to work; and working strategically to improve the nature of work to protect and promote mental wellbeing for all staff.

Find out more here



MATHS WORKOUT WEEK 2020

12–16 OCTOBER

Unionlearn's annual celebration of everyday maths that reminds everyone to have a go at brushing up their maths skills.

Find out more here

What you can do

Unionlearn is looking to promote union success stories about engaging maths learners, interesting maths learning journeys and how learners are using their new-found maths skills in their everyday lives at home or at work.

If you would like to write a short blog post on any aspect of everyday maths skills to be published online during the week, **contact Kirsi Kekki here**.

And **follow #mathsworkout on Twitter here** to keep up with all the blog posts, maths news and daily teasers we'll be posting on Twitter during the week.

Resources

SkillCheck offers essential initial assessments in maths and in everyday finances that you can signpost learners to during the week – and all year round!

Find out more here

The National Numeracy Challenge is a free website to help you check and improve the maths you use in daily life and at work. The website had a makeover earlier this year and now includes a new quick check that only takes about 10 minutes.

Find out more here



GET ONLINE WEEK

19–25 OCTOBER

Get Online Week aims to help people improve their digital skills using a range of communication methods.

Find out more here

What you can do

Get Online Week isn't encouraging unions and other organisations to organise large events with lots of people in public venues because of Covid-19.

Instead the focus this year is on remote support for digital skills using the phone or video-calling software, with the option to offer one-to-one support in person where it's safe to do so.

Keep an eye on the campaign website, which will feature lots of tips and resources on how to take part this year so you can engage with the people who need your help without necessarily having to physically be together.

Resources

SkillCheck now offers a new Staying Safe Online assessment, which covers cyber-crime, viruses, phishing, ransomware, strong passwords, multi-factor authentication and other aspects of safely navigating the online world.

Find out more here