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COMMUNIQUE



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10TH BIRTHDAY WISHES

North West Regional project worker Ray Atkinson looks back on a decade of training, education and progress at the CWU's first learning centre

ContactUs

CWU
The communications union
 150 The Broadway, Wimbledon,
 London SW19 1RX
T: 020 8971 7200
E: info@cwu.org
W: www.cwu.org

General Secretary
 BILLY HAYES
E: bhayes@cwu.org
W: www.billyhayes.co.uk

Head of Communications
 KEVIN SLOCOMBE
E: kslcombe@cwu.org

Publications Editor
 LAURA WRIGHT

Contributors
 ULRs and RPWS of the CWU

CWU Education and Training Department
 150 The Broadway,
 Wimbledon, London
 SW19 1RX
T: 020 8971 7340
E: learn@cwu.org
W: www.cwueducation.org

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 Century One Publishing Ltd.
 Arquen House, 4-6 Spicer Street,
 St. Albans, Herts AL3 4PQ
T: 01727 893894
F: 01727 893895
E: enquiries@centurypublishing
 .ltd.uk
W: www.centurypublishing.ltd.uk

Art Editor
 HEENA GUDKA

Design & Production
 SARAH THORLEY
 OLIVER BEESON

Cover image
 CWU

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CHANGE - BUT TO WHAT?

BILLY HAYES
GENERAL SECRETARY



In the coming months we'll hear a lot more about the need for change. Education is a good example of just what change we are being offered.

Let's not forget the changes we've seen in education since the last Conservative Government was in power. We've seen the creation of the Union Learning Fund – supporting the training of more than 22,000 ULRs as champions of workers' education. In the CWU alone

this has meant more than 25,000 members accessing courses that they would not have otherwise been offered.

We can make valid criticisms that the current Government has been too trusting of big business to work for the good of the country rather than its own short term

profit – and such criticisms are clearly applicable in

education, in the employers track record with Train to Gain.

But if any funding for workplace training survives the Tories' proposed cuts in public spending they have already made it clear that it will be in more of the employer focused training that has failed so completely in the past.

If the change we are being offered is the change from being offered opportunities to being denied them then it's a change we can do without.

In the past 10 years we have built a network of advocates for workers education. Now it is up to us all: ULRs, Regional Learning Committees, Unionlearn and other activists, to defend the learning agenda from any and all who would seek to undermine it.

But this is just the beginning...

TRISH LAVELLE
HEAD OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

We stand on the verge of a new phase of our Union Learning project.

The global economic crisis brought on by the banks has placed considerable strain on the public purse. We need a strategy to sustain learning through that period.

It would be totally wrong to be defeatist about this. The Labour Government set up the Union Learning Fund which enabled us to develop a network of learning centres and ULRs that are the envy of many learning campaigns that have been around much longer than we have.

Our ULRs provide truly independent Information, Advice & Guidance and our learning centres provide real transferable skills at a time when employers are pushing (and in some cases seeking to make compulsory) NVQs of such limited worth that Skills Minister Pat McFadden had to question the merits of these in the current economic climate.

We are exploring avenues such as Nextsteps contracts to support sustainability beyond the ULF – but we can't forget that these are also dependant on government funding and are also vulnerable to the Tories planned programme of public service cuts.

If the Tories were to win the next election and cut the ULF it would obviously limit the learning opportunities we could offer our members but it would not end it – we've come too far for that.

Projects such as Castleford Community learning show how it is possible to survive against an actively hostile government and we should all take heart from that. But we must also remember that the next election isn't a done deal. We have 25,000 members who have accessed learning that they would not have done if it were not for the ULF – that's just one tenth of our membership. We owe it to the other nine tenths to fight tooth and nail to offer them the same opportunities.

T. Lavelle



1st Class learning for Dorset members

Bournemouth & Dorset lead ULR Barry Underdown is helping Dorset workers gain new life skills and qualifications

[UPDATE]

Bournemouth & Dorset AMAL Branch have established an impressive range of courses for workers in the Dorset area, both at the 1st Class Learning Centre (in Dorset Mail Centre, Poole) and Dorchester Delivery Office. Fully supported by the branch, lead ULR Barry Underdown has organised free courses for everyone.

The courses, delivered by Bournemouth Adult Education, focus on skills for life and lead to nationally recognised qualifications in Literacy or Numeracy. They

also help workers learn new skills in other areas such as IT, Digital Photography and Spanish.

New course is hailed success

Since becoming a ULR last year, Barry re-opened the 1st Class Learning Centre in March 2009 with a Digital Photography with Maths course. The course provided learners with Level 2 Numeracy qualifications as well as new skills in photography.

The first course was a fantastic success and, coupled with publicity from a June LAW Day Event (supported by funding from

South West Unionlearn), there have been requests for new courses. Consequently, the original course was re-run in August and the curriculum expanded to include Spanish and IT. By popular demand, similar courses were also arranged for Dorchester Delivery Office.

In addition to all his good work, this year Barry has also undertaken the ULR 1 and ULR 2 course at Alvescot and an NVQ Level 3 in Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG).

● For more information contact Barry Underdown on 07782 367 568 or email barry.underdown@unioncwu.org



Learning new skills

CWU LEGACY IN THE N.I. WEST



A care worker who completed a CWU organised sign language course has helped change the life of one day centre attendee.

The worker, who took advantage of a CWU British Sign Language (BSL) course at her centre in Strabane, County Tyrone, can now communicate with a profoundly deaf patient and help him participate in centre activities. In the past, although the patient's needs were met at a basic level within the centre, there was no one who was able to engage with him socially.

Now, through the worker's participation on the course, seven other day care workers are taking a BSL Level One training course.

Paul Carlin, ULR N.Ireland West Branch, said: "It has enriched the whole environment within the centre, and it reminds me of the old saying: 'never underestimate the power of one to effect change on behalf of all'."

Review of NVQs



Government is considering a review of vocational qualifications such as NVQs.

Skills Minister Pat McFadden said they will be releasing a strategy document that helps individuals gain new skills rather than just recognizing existing ones.

In an interview with Personnel Today, he called for greater empowerment of individuals in their choice of courses.

Trish Lavelle CWU welcomed the news, "CWU has long been arguing that members have the right to make an informed choice about their learning needs. What is also fundamentally important is that our ULR's will offer our members full and impartial Information, Advice and Guidance on which to make that choice. This is not something that the employers are offering - indeed in some cases they are even trying to make their NVQ programmes mandatory!"

Contact your CWU Branch or local Union Learning Rep to find out more.

Trish Lavelle (Head of Education) George White (Lead ULR) and students at Mount Pleasant Learning centre



London's ULRs conquer ITQ skills

ITQ AWARDS

The head of CWU training and education was on hand to award Information Technology Qualifications (ITQs) to a group of CWU ULRs in London.

Trish Lavelle gave out certificates to ULRs who had successfully gained qualifications in ITQ during her first visit

to Mount Pleasant Learning Centre in an official capacity.

90% of new jobs need IT skills

Trish said she was very impressed by the facilities provided to the members and was pleased to see the ULRs putting themselves forward

to take the higher level ITQ. She also thanked the College of North East London for their support through workshops and distance learning in delivering the important project.

"This is a very appropriate time for these ULRs to gain certificates," she said. "The knowledge gained will provide branch members

with a high quality service, and it's already benefiting local branches. The ULRs have given up their own time and utilised Information Computer Technology (ICT) skills to aid branches in updating their membership records and this has assisted in the due process for a National Ballot of members in Royal Mail."

Growth in Midlands community learning

LEARNING

Community learning continues to build in the Midlands as the CWU seeks to gain a wider presence.

The Port Vale learning centre was officially opened by Billy Hayes in July, and the Midlands No 7 Branch signed a learning agreement with Unite and Port Vale FC.

Wolverhampton AMAL branches, headed by ULR Steve Hackford, continue to support the Sikh Temple learning centre, where more than 150 learners attended courses such as Wrestling, Music, Cookery, IT, Numeracy and Literacy in this quarter.

Congratulations should also go to community ULR

Paul Malyan in setting up the first course at Stoke's Wallace Sports and Education Centre.

The 'Festival of Learning' also kicked off in October, with a week of informal learning events such as Beginners Salsa, Spanish, French, Drama and Music, which culminated in a grand show at the end of the week.

More than £1,000 funding has been sourced from Unionlearn to run the events at the Centre.



Boomer the Port Vale mascot and Dave Condliffe

Up the Junction!

PRESENTATION

The Junction Learning Centre at Crick's National Distribution centre held a presentation event for learners who had gained qualifications.

Hub manager Mr Bebbington presented certificates for a range of subjects including: NVQ in Warehousing, Business Administration, Team Leading, ITQ Level 2, Literacy, Numeracy and NCFE Level 2 in Equality & Diversity, Nutrition & Health and Palliative Care.

He not only congratulated the students on their achievements but also praised the hard work of ULRs Paul Ims Lynn Ribano and Peter Jalland in their running of the learning centre. A Service Level Agreement was also signed between Northampton Branch and Warwickshire College, in order to promote this sustainable relationship.

Customer service site gets first learning centre

CENTRE OPENING



Midland No 7 Branch has opened the first learning centre at a Post Office customer services site.

CWU general secretary Billy Hayes opened the centre at an event attended by head of education and training Trish Lavelle, and more than 30 learners and branch officers.

Local ULRs Maxine Tuck and

Sam Craig were instrumental in the success of the centre. Maxine said: "It gives me immense satisfaction to help provide learning opportunities for our members in the workplace."

“It gives me immense satisfaction to help members in the workplace”

During the ceremony learners were presented with certificates for a range of courses including Literacy, Numeracy, IT and Spanish, with courses running

four nights a week.

Trish Lavelle paid tribute to Maxine's determination and engaging personality in making the learning centre a resounding success.

The recent successful Matrix accreditation has also enabled professional Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) to be delivered.

This, coupled with a strong relationship with Newcastle College, promotes a learning centre with a long term sustainable future.

The achievements are all the more

remarkable as they have taken place against a back-drop of sustained management attacks on the Burslem and Stoke offices that have resulted in the removal of 15 branch activists.

Lead ULR for the branch, Shaun Pender, said: "To meet the demands of the new industrial relations landscape the branch is restructuring itself.

"This will see a team of activists appointed whose remit will be to bring together the realms of organising, recruitment and learning."

CWU learn to organise

IAG SUPPORT

The union learning project at North Midlands Branch has offered support to 200 Vodafone workers facing compulsory redundancy.

The management team agreed to the CWU's proposal to deliver Information, Advice & Guidance (IAG) interviews for the workers in question.

Assisted by CWU Midlands regional organisers and Stoke-on-Trent College, a team of ULRs were able to provide career information as well as offer new education opportunities.

Ultimately, the CWU provided such a good service that Vodafone HR invited it to deliver IAG to the rest of the workforce.

"The learning agenda has given the North Midlands branch an opportunity to demonstrate what the CWU can deliver to Vodafone employees," said Andy Cawley, North Midlands Branch secretary. "The ongoing IAG service to Vodafone employees will increase recruitment opportunities tenfold."

Parcelforce workers celebrate launch

CENTRE OPENING

CWU members at Parcelforce Worldwide in Glasgow celebrated the official opening of their workplace learning centre.

The Learningforce Centre, Cambuslang, which opened in August, was established with the support of the CWU Learn For Life Project, funded from the Scottish

Union Learning Fund (SULF), Parcelforce Worldwide and John Wheatley College.

ULRs Divender Jhakra and Gwen Menzies were among those who worked extremely hard to establish the centre, which utilises 10 PCs on a 'hot-desk' basis during the working day and, after hours, makes them available to all employees.

It has also formed strong links

with John Wheatley College and the Workers Education Association that currently provide courses at no cost.

Katrina Quirke of the CWU National Executive, who officially opened the centre alongside Peter Macdonald, HR director of Parcelforce Worldwide, said: "Yet again this is great example of how the CWU, its members and Parcelforce Worldwide can work together for the betterment of all."

Respected ULR McKenzie dies

CWU TRIBUTE

Ken McKenzie, assistant secretary and editor of the Scottish Regional Learning Committee, was a well known and respected ULR.

As one of the first ULRs to receive a ULR Award, Ken played a significant part in the success of CWU Learning in Scotland and will be greatly missed by many. He died peacefully on September 3 2009 after a short battle with illness.



The Learning Centre Steering Group

NATIONALLY
RECOGNISED IAG
ATTAINMENT
MIDLANDS



MIDLAND BRANCHES

More than 11 branches in the Midlands gain the National Quality Standard for the delivery of IAGs

MATRIX MIDLANDS

The Midlands achieved the National Quality Standard for the delivery of Information Advice and Guidance in July.

The assessment was Midlands wide and consisted of more than 40 interviews with ULRs, learners and various partners, with Jackie Plass, Matrix Assessor, visiting 11 learning centres.

The results of this intensive process was that the Midlands achieved the Matrix standard, with the report identifying four areas of best practice:

- Relationship with partners
- Evaluating feedback
- Business planning
- Monitoring performance

Regional learning committee secretary Jacky Morrey said: “Although the experience was a real rollercoaster ride, it clearly demonstrated we have strong, capable

ULRs in the region who supported each other every step of the way in order to achieve a common goal. I cannot find words to express how grateful I am to my fellow regional learning committee members for the hard work that they put into this project to ensure that it was a complete success. I am proud to have taken this journey with them. The guidance of Matrix adviser Aly Jackson, the support of RPW Dave Condliffe, the enthusiasm of the ULRs and support of branches was invaluable in the Midlands achieving the Matrix.”

IAG

The CWU have also embarked on a pilot project to investigate the possibility of providing professional Information Advice & Guidance (IAG) through our ULRs.

- It provides our membership with

professional, up-to-date Information, Advice and Guidance.

- Up-skills our ULRs.
- Through IAG our ULRs can offer worker focused peer group support which could create a national learning fund.
- The CWU are in negotiations regarding contracts to deliver IAG which could create a national learning fund.

CWU raise the bar

In addition, the CWU was successful in gaining the Unionlearn Quality Award for IAG provision in June. The CWU IAG model will now form a case study for other unions wishing to use IAG as part of their wider lifelong learning strategy. The award was presented to Lynn Ribano by comedienne Jo Brand at the Unionlearn conference.



Dave Condliffe, Lynn Ribano, Billy Hayes & Trish Lavelle receive the Unionlearn Quality Award

LEARNING IN THE SOUTH EAST REGION

Seven promotional learning events across the South East have helped raise awareness of the work of ULRs and their branches...and recruit new members

A series of promotional learning events have been run by South East ULRs in their workplaces to celebrate Learning at Work Day.

Seven branches in the region ran events, which typically involved setting up a stand in a prominent area of the workplace where ULRs provide workers with advice on learning.

Most branches in the South East now have ULRs to promote and facilitate learning in the workplace, and these events gave them the opportunity to also conduct learning surveys and generally promote the fact that ULRs can work with local colleges to set up courses in the workplace, at times to suit workers.

ULRs in the South East are supported in their work by advice on learning from the South East regional learning committee and from South East regional project worker Tracey Bent. The regional learning committee officers are Joe Showler (secretary) Kevin Murray (chair) and George Hannah (assistant secretary). Through the regional learning strategy, the Committee promotes and facilitates CWU driven learning projects across the region.

The Learning at Work Day events also provided the opportunity to raise the profile of branches and to



Above: Jon Weeks (far right) from South East No 3 Branch marks Learning at Work Day with committee members and West Kent College staff

recruit new members.

In the South East, seven Learning at Work Day events were organised by ULRs with the support of their branches and/or funding from South East Unionlearn. In most cases local management also supported the events either by donating money for prizes or by helping to advertise the event.

Across the region, the events resulted in more than 1,000 workers having face-to-face contact with a ULR; the completion of more

than 800 learning surveys; more than 40 people expressing an interest in becoming an activist, and 18 new members being recruited.

Congratulations should go to all ULRs who organised these events. Not only have they proved hugely popular with workers but they have also helped raise the profile of their branch in the workplace, and, in most cases, resulted in new members being recruited to the union. Well done to everyone involved!



Celebrating a decade of achievement at Open2all



HAPPY 10TH BIRTHDAY OPEN2ALL

The CWU's first learning centre, Open2all, celebrates its 10th anniversary this month. North West regional project worker **Ray Atkinson** was instrumental in setting it up and shares memories of its foundation and achievements

Communiqué: Happy Birthday! Can you remember the opening?

Ray Atkinson: I certainly can. At 9am on Monday November 22 1999, we opened the doors for the first time and: "bloody hell, we've done it!" were the exact words I said to my colleague, Dave Barnes!

C: So how did it all get started?

RA: It began three years earlier when I was area delivery rep and member of the North Lancs & Cumbria Branch. Our members were facing an increase in new technology, which I was convinced would lead to massive job losses. (Ironically, 10 years later this is still on our IR agenda!) I looked at what training was available to the membership and found there was very little help. Telecoms comrades taking exit packages or facing redeployment were offered no assistance with money management, learning or anything that would prepare them for the labour market or enable them to progress within the company. I was

determined this was not going to continue, but had no idea how to change things.

C: What support did you receive from the employer?

RA: We first approached Royal Mail in 1996. It had a half empty building in Preston, and I asked for a room where our members could take courses in Maths and English or Computers. Royal Mail said it had no spare rooms and everyone had to be able to read and write to sort and deliver letters so why should it waste time giving people computer skills when they didn't need them to do their job. You couldn't print my reply!

C: What did you do then?

RA: This disgraceful reply made us more determined to put something together. At one of the meetings I attended on behalf of Preston Trades Council, I got talking to John Inskip who worked for the TUC Bargaining for Skills Unit (later to become Unionlearn). John was extremely enthusiastic about the learning ►

► agenda and we discussed how we could take things forward. He put me in touch with Lancashire Consortium of Colleges, who were looking into workplace learning, and we met Jon Piggott, the head of the consortium, who asked us to put a business plan together. This led to a meeting with Preston College. Although it sounds like it was all done in a few days; it took nearly three years! There was a lot of negotiating.

C: Were members aware of what you were doing and what role did the national union play?

RA: We sent out a number of questionnaires seeking members' opinions. Two issues continually came up: one that as a result of the IR situation they would not attend a learning centre on Royal Mail premises, and two that they would not do courses with a "load of kids". The college was leasing premises in the heart of Preston and I floated our plan to the old Organising & Training Department, but got a less than enthusiastic reception. So, it wasn't until the following summer that I contacted HQ again, when our ULF bid needed national sign off. This time I spoke to education officer Dave Ward and was overwhelmed with the response. He was up in Preston within days and the bid was signed off.

C: Where did the funding come from for the project?

RA: In the first two years we put individual bids into the ULF. This was before we got

organised and submitted bids at national level. In partnership with the college, we also submitted a bid to the European Social Fund (ESF) to cover the start up costs. In the third year of the project we submitted a bid direct to the Lancashire LSC "Local Initiatives" fund which we used to expand our provision into three local offices.

C: What achievements are you most proud of?

RA: We've won a number of awards for innovation, and Open2all has achieved a number of 'firsts'. It was the first CWU learning centre; first to acquire funding from ULF; the first official ULR; the first CWU centre to achieve Matrix Standard, and the first – and I think only – stand-alone learning centre to successfully bid into the ESF. All this was done before the CWU's National ULF project and before the appointment of RPWs. What I am most proud of is we opened the door to learning for our members and encouraged other branches to join what was really a learning revolution for the CWU.

C: What is Open2all doing 10 years on?

RA: There's now four Open2all centres in Carlisle, Blackpool Penrith and Preston. In rural areas we also have laptops, and earlier this year successfully bid for funding to set up a mobile learning centre.

C: What has changed most in union learning over the last 10 years?

RA: When we first started we did all the work recruiting



Paul Newsham - Learning Coordinator North Lancs & Cumbria



Imran Gangat - Lead ULR Open 2 All

learners while the colleges received all the funding. Now we negotiate something in return. The main change is the trust we have built up with the members. Plus, we no longer just offer Numeracy, Literacy and Computers; the range of courses really has changed. If we can't provide the chosen course in the learning centres we signpost members to the best provider, and, if there is a charge, we try to negotiate discounts.

C: Did you think CWU learning would take off?

RA: Not at all. When I look back, the CWU were late starters compared to some other unions, but now it is leading the way. Other unions are asking our advice, Unionlearn are keen to work with us, and we are generally seen as a union that delivers. All the ULRs and branches involved should be very proud of this achievement.

Well done 2all

"It is a privilege to be a part of the Open2all centre. Over the last 10 years I have seen it benefit a lot of union members – helping them to up-skill/re-skill and breaking down barriers to learning that has led many of them to gain qualifications. Happy anniversary and well done Open2all!"

John Inskip, Unionlearn

ESSEX ULR GETS RECOGNITION

[REPORT]



Trish Lavelle congratulates Rob on award

Rob Wilcockson, Lead ULR for Essex Amal Branch received a Highly Commended award when he came second in the Learners' Champion section of the annual Essex LSC Big Skills Awards for 2009.

Rob has been running his learning centre at Southend-on-Sea Mail Centre for four years and has successfully encouraged his colleagues to take courses in IT, languages, Digital Photography and Skills for Life amongst others. Rob has also worked with colleagues to widen learning to other locations in his branch area and was also elected this year as Regional Learning Secretary for the

Eastern Region.

Rob says "There have been ups and downs because of funding but I work with a good provider and have the full support of my Branch. It was difficult to get going initially but word of mouth has meant that I've reached people who four years ago weren't interested in learning."

As well as encouraging others to learn, Rob has been bitten by the bug himself. He has gained an Adult Learners Support qualification and completed his level 2 numeracy and literacy awards. Rob is looking forward to starting his IAG NVQ level 3 and A1 Assessor's qualification soon.

Graeme Brinded

For the past 2 years Graeme Brinded has been making a huge contribution to support adult learning on the National Learner Panel. Graeme tells *Communique* about his experiences.

In 2007 I received an e-mail from Mark Hughes, the TUC Course coordinator in Norwich, asking if I had considered applying for the National Learner Panel (NLP). This was the beginning of an adventure spanning two years, giving me opportunities to meet with government ministers and policy leads and give my opinions to many organisations involved in FE policy.

The NLP is made up of learners involved in various types of FE courses. They are selected on diversity criteria, not elected. As well as attending NLP meetings, members can also participate in subgroups and sector conference presentations. When selected for a second year I decided to stand for vice chair of the panel, and was elected in November 2009. Organisations that I have worked with in my time on the panel include Ofsted, Ofqual and LSIS (Learning and Skills Improvement Service), the panel sponsor organisation.

My time on the panel has been amazing and I have learned a great deal about how government works. I believe the learners' voice can make a difference to the way policy is developed. I would certainly recommend others involved in Union Learning consider applying for next year's panel.

● You can find out more about the NLP by visiting <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/nlp>



ONLINE LANGUAGES A BIG HIT IN BRADFORD

Learners at Bradford Mail Centre have taken to the world wide web and logged on to an online language course in a bid to learn world wide languages

Many people think that languages are best taught in a classroom environment but one solution is not always suitable for everyone and many people are now using online courses.

Learners at Bradford learning centre believe these web-based courses are cost effective, accessible and flexible.

Language learning website Livemocha.com uses online instructional content with a community of language learners, and supports six popular languages: English, Spanish, French, Hindi, German, and Mandarin Chinese, with more planned for the future.

Practical exercises

The website provides lesson plans and the ability to choose 'friends' – who are all members and learning the same language – for help and support.

Lesson plans include more than 160 hours of beginner and intermediate level content teaching, everyday conversational language, and a full range of practical reading, listening, writing and speaking exercises.

Mick Ball, who works at Bradford Mail Centre, was introduced to Livemocha.com when he

attended a learning centre open day, and, having booked a holiday to Spain, wanted to learn Spanish. Five months on and Mick's Spanish continues to improve and he has the appetite to do more.

Flexibility and support

Since his first experience Mick has become a big advocate of the course.

"Whereas classes can sometimes be rigid, being able to access the learning at anytime offers real flexibility," he said.

"Anyone can get on to the site if they have access to a computer and broadband, and it's free. You work at your own pace and don't need to keep up with people and you never miss a lesson. You choose when to learn."

“You work at your own pace... you never miss a lesson ...you choose when to learn”

The main difference with this site is the level of support offered from other members and 'friends'. They are able to help and advise, mark submitted written and oral work, and provide feedback on pronunciation and dialect.

"It is an excellent resource and having the support of



Above: Bradford Mail Centre workers learn languages using a web-based language course

others who can speak the language fluently is really beneficial," said Mick. "People take the trouble to help you; mark your work; correct you, and talk to you. I had 'friends' that lived in Spain, Argentina, Columbia and Bolivia."

Rewarding work

Mick says helping other people improve their English has been very rewarding. "They help you and you support them, mark their work and feedback your comments using written and recorded messages," he said.

Mick is just one CWU member using Livemocha, but everyone who has utilised it considers it to be a great learning resource.

[FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO
WWW.LIVEMOCHA.COM]

POSITIVE SPIN

N.Ireland regional learning committee training in action

NORTHERN IRELAND REGIONAL LEARNING COMMITTEE

Officers from the N.Ireland regional learning committee will be learning how to project manage future committee programmes by establishing a new website, recruiting new ULR members, and working closely with other unions – all to enhance the positive image of the CWU



The N.Ireland regional learning committee will be taking on more responsibility for

co-ordinating the learning agenda within the region, with officers of the committee studying for certificates in project management.

This training, provided by the North West Regional College, will give the officers the necessary skills to project manage future committee programmes.

One of the first tasks is the establishment of a regional website, which will host a learning page from each branch

outlining all the latest information in relation to their learning programmes.

The regional learning committee is an advocate for learning not only within the workplace but also

incorporating those waiting to become the next generation of workers.

Positive image

The region views this work as important because it creates a very positive image of what the union can do, not only for all of its members but also for their family and friends in the wider community.

“The committee is in the process of recruiting new members to become ULRs”

The committee is in the process of recruiting new members to become ULRs, as well as taking existing ULRs to the next stage in their development. It is hoped this will create the sustainability required for the long-term development of the learning project.

Existing and new ULRs will also give the branches the opportunity to recruit and better

communicate with every member of the union.

First of a kind

The committee is also developing a strong working relationship with other unions involved in the Union Learning Fund and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

The committee is collectively working towards hosting an exhibition early next year which will be a first of its kind in the region and is designed to celebrate and showcase the collective success of the union learning project.

Presentation banner

At the last meeting of the committee, Trish Lavelle gave an overview of the union's position on how the regional committees are to be developed.

At the end of the meeting she was presented with the old N.I Regional Banner which will be displayed in the new education centre at Alvescot.

SUCCESS FOR SCOTLAND

A new learning centre has brought training and skills to workers at Glasgow's Mail Centre and it's already proving a big success

Scottish Shadow Minister for Economy and Skills, John Park MSP, opened the CWU KEY 2 Learn Centre in Royal Mail's Glasgow Mail Centre in September.

The opening day was a huge success, on the day both the Spanish and Sign Language classes were running, providing all attendees with an insight into the learning centre's courses.

The KEY 2 Learn Centre was set up as part of the CWU Learn for Life project, funded through The Scottish Union Learning Fund (SULF). Royal Mail also contributed funding towards the centre through its own employee First Line Fix scheme.

The centre gives all 1,100 Mail Centre employees the opportunity to access learning in the workplace.

Skills future

Since opening, 500 learners have passed through its doors, and to date 280 learners have taken part in 30 different courses.

John Park said: "I am delighted to be able to support the CWU and Royal Mail's learning centre. Workplace learning projects are critical to ensuring Scotland's skills future.

"I know this new centre will benefit both the company and the workforce for years to come through improving training and enhancing development opportunities".

True partnership

John said he felt certain that the project would make a real difference.

"I congratulate the CWU/Royal Mail partnership on its hard work to bring this learning centre to Glasgow," he said.

Julie Morrison, head of external relations at Royal Mail, said: "This new learning centre is a true example of a partnership working to ensure that our people are equipped for life both in the workplace and in other areas."

Royal Mail firmly believes that by

encouraging its people to engage in Lifelong Learning, the business will also reap the benefits.

"Everybody, both our people and the CWU representatives, involved in the setting up of the Key 2 Learn Centre, should be commended for their commitment in pioneering this initiative".

“It's clear that flexible workplace learning...is increasingly important to job security”

Trish Lavelle, CWU head of Education added "Our ULRs in Glasgow have done a tremendous job and have worked tirelessly for two years to open and establish this centre. They are a tremendous example of how the CWU is taking opportunities to our members and extending the trade union role into our communities. It is great to see working people develop skills and confidence."

The centre, which is the third of its kind within Scottish Royal Mail Group premises, is also supported by the STUC. It is hoped the KEY 2 Learn Centre will

enable further constructive work to establish a network of learning centres in Royal Mail sites throughout Scotland.

Below left: Trish Lavelle (CWU Head of Education), John Park MSP, Brian Regan Backshiff Lead ULR and Craig Anderson (CWU Project Worker)

Below right: John Park MSP & learners from the Accredited Spanish Class



NEW COURSES FOR WORKERS AT HWDC

South East No 5 lead ULR Parminder Kaur has given the course curriculum at her centre a new look with free classes for early, late and night shift workers



South East No 5 lead ULR Parminder Kaur has organised a new set of courses for workers at Heathrow Worldwide Distribution Centre (HWDC).

Working alongside ULR Jerry Hatherall, Parminder has given the course curriculum a new look with courses being delivered on the early, late and night shifts at the centre in Langley, Berkshire – for free.

The English classes, which are run on a weekly basis, provide opportunities for workers to gain nationally recognised accredited literacy qualifications. Similarly, the IT classes, which are run each term, help to provide learners with the opportunity to submit work for a European Computer Driving License.

Development of a new timetable of courses

Parminder and Jerry became ULRs last year after completing the ULR 1 at Alvescot in February, and they subsequently organised a promotional workplace learning event with West Thames College, which was run for workers on every shift.

The promotional event resulted in 200 people participating in a learning survey, three new members being recruited and 35 people expressing interest in becoming a learning rep.

A learning survey also led to the establishment of a learning database, and this information was crucial in organising an initial trial set of courses, which was shortly followed by the setting up of the new

timetable of courses provided by West Thames College.

Joint approach to learning

One of the main strengths of the project is that Parminder and Jerry have facilitated a team approach to setting up and running the project; supported by their branch, local management and West Thames College.

The branch donated prizes for the prize draw in connection with the learning survey, which was used to organise new courses. Dave Warren, branch secretary and NEC officer, showed his support for the event by presenting learning survey winners with prizes.

High praise for college

Local Royal Mail manager Bob Lawrence also helped to organise extra rooms and computer equipment to facilitate the extra courses, as well as supporting the promotional learning event with publicity and prizes.

Praise should also go to West Thames College for its part in the project, providing tutors morning, afternoon and evening to help give learning opportunities to workers on all shifts. Meetings between the ULRs, West Thames College and Bob take place on a regular basis to review and plan future courses.

● For further information on new courses at South East No 5 please contact Parminder Kaur on 07795 822 049

Above: Lead ULR Parminder Kaur provides information about courses

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