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COMMUNIQUÉ

THE MAGAZINE OF THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING DEPARTMENT



MINISTER **OPENS NEW** **CENTRE**

John Denham joins CWU
Solent branch to open the
Southampton Learning Terminal

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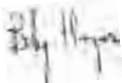
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BILLY HAYES
GENERAL SECRETARY



CALLING ALL!

Our union has undoubtedly benefited by being involved in the lifelong learning agenda since 1997. But we do not believe that any of us can afford to rest on our laurels. Which is why we affiliated to the campaigning alliance for Lifelong Learning (CALL).

ULRs need the opportunity to make their voices heard on the Sector Skills Councils. The SSCs have been given an important role in the skills agenda but appear to be struggling to manage the tensions between corporate self-interest and the wider national interest. The employer dominated nature of the bodies undermines the aim to offer meaningful qualifications – because the concept of transferable skills is often seen as directly opposed to employer relevance. Without a

broader strategy to ensure that the learning needs of all members of society are catered for this proposal is doomed to failure. It is the same laissez-faire logic that has so spectacularly failed to regulate the finance industry.

Our members realise that in the current economic climate they need more than the tick-box exercise of accreditation of their existing skills. CALL quite rightly point out that education can and should be much more. Our members are entitled to be offered a range of learning opportunities that are relevant to their whole lives – both work and home. Everyone gains something – that's the essence of the win-win that everyone keeps talking about. And that is what our ULRs and CALL are campaigning for.



TRISH LAVELLE
HEAD OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

T. Lavelle

We won't forget

As I write, it is 25 years since the start of the Great Miners Strike. The following song was written by Paul Mackney in 1985 and performed by the Banner Theatre Company. As our own union faces the threat of privatisation in Royal Mail and a government that seems to be attacking our very organisation, we can learn and be inspired by the solidarity and the historic struggle of the miners.

WE WON'T FORGET (Comrades for life)

*We'll always remember the year of the strike,
And the fifth day of March eighty-five,
They can say that we lost; they can say what they like,
But we had the time of our lives.*

*And we've no regrets; we've no regrets,
The flame continues to burn,
And we won't forget; we won't forget,
United we will return.*

We all fought together – women and men,

*To stop them closing down mines,
If we had our time over we'd do it again,
And be quite sure we're ready next time.*

*The Congress House traitors had promised
for years,
Their support would be second to none,
You could hear their hearts bleed; you got drowned
in their tears,
But precisely nothing was done.*

*We marched in the streets till we blistered our feet,
We withstood the full force of the law,
The miners united they'll never defeat,
We sang till our voices were raw.*

*With their truncheons and horses they opened
our eyes:
You hold on to what you can defend,
Comrades in struggle are comrades for life,
And stand solid and true to the end.*

*The smug commentators can peddle their lies,
We're proud that we formed picket lines,
We'll build the resistance and we'll organise,
And we'll have the bastards next time.*

*And we've no regrets; we've no regrets,
Though the flames of vengeance still burn,
And we won't forget; we won't forget,
United we will return.*

By Paul Mackney (1985)



Acquiring better qualifications and skills through life-long learning should be at the heart of workplace philosophy

Organising through learning

The CWU in the South West have initiated a new project early in 2009, involving CWU members working at Orange in Plymouth.

Phil Sutton, South West RPW and David Atkinson from Organising met with South West & Thames Valley Branch Orange members to discuss the benefits of bringing CWU-led learning opportunities to Orange workers, not only to help bolster union membership but to help them become better organised.

"Having recently attended a strategy meeting with colleagues from

the Education & Training Department, it is clear that joint working can only improve the prospects for these workers," said David Atkinson.

Karen Jones, CWU Lead workplace representative on site is keen to embrace organising tactics and learning policies to raise the profile of the CWU with a view to increasing membership; the end game being to ensure union recognition within Orange.

"Hearing what Phil and David had to say about how they could help support our

vision of a better place to work once recognised inspired all of us who are active within the CWU to formulate a strategy which includes learning at its heart," Karen said.

She explained that bosses at Orange recently offered learning opportunities to members of staff. However, when workers asked to embark upon these opportunities they were told the offer had been shelved and was no longer available.

This incident has served to alienate and demoralise the already overstretched workforce.

At a time of deep concern among working people about their security at work, the CWU believe it would have been far better to embrace those people who want to improve their qualifications, skills and chances for a better future. And this is what the CWU want to achieve by offering all our members Lifelong Learning in the workplace.

We will continue to press Orange management to take education seriously, and hopefully work with them in this important mission.

Lessons with a difference

As converts to Lifelong Learning are discovering, there's more to lessons these days than stuffy classrooms.

James Roberts, who works for BT Operate, contacted his Learning Co-ordinator, Jacky Morrey, with regard to a DSC level 1 course. As the nearest course for James was being held in Shropshire, Jacky contacted Kim, the Project Worker for Wales, who investigated further.

James then contacted a local BASC accredited DSC assessor who agreed to complete an assessment for James and a colleague in October.

James completed his assessments successfully and now has his qualification – a level 1 Deer Stalking Certificate! The course has renewed James's interest for Lifelong Learning.



Moving in on the Matrix

Over 100 ULRs from across England will be working towards completing their Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) NVQs level 3 and 4 during 2009.

Each region will put forward a number of Learning Centres to be Matrix accredited.

Midlands Project Worker Dave Condliffe said: "Once completed, the CWU will be the first trade union to achieve Matrix accreditation on this scale in the UK. This will show that the CWU are offering professional IAG services to members and will open up opportunities for IAG delivery contracts, providing funding to support the sustainability of the CWU learning project."

Why IAG

- Provides members with professional, up-to-date IAG on education.
- Up-skills ULRs.
- Gives Learning Centres a common level of quality.
- Working with Nextstep, will deliver a national learning fund for IAG that can be accessed by all.



Shaun Pender Lead ULR, Mary Alys Unionlearn, Jan Blakeman Stafford ULR, David Kidney MP and Marcus Cope RM

MP opens Stafford centre

Stafford MP David Kidney officially opened Midland No 7 Branch's 10th Learning Centre at Stafford Mail Centre, and congratulated the CWU and Royal Mail on their learning partnerships.

Mr Kidney met workers who are taking ITQ and Spanish courses, and was briefed on a new Healthy Living Course, funded through Sport England and

provided for the workers by Stoke College. He was also told about plans to start courses in British Sign Language to enhance the communications skills needed by postal workers.

The Stafford Learning Centre, which began its operation last year, has now seen 65 learners complete courses on site.

Shaun Pender, Midlands No 7 Lead ULR, said:

"Once again the CWU has shown its determination to deliver workplace learning opportunities to our members, however this would not be possible without the hard work put in by Jan Blakeman and Carol Louis, ULRs here in Stafford."

After the official opening a round-table debate took place between ULRs, Stoke College, Unionlearn and Royal Mail, including a frank

exchange of views on education in the wider context of a recession and a conflictual relationship between the CWU and Royal Mail in the midst of the Hooper Report.

"People who say that it's not the right time for employers to invest in skills training are wrong," said Mr Kidney. "Now is the most important time to invest in your greatest asset – your workforce!"

Going places – ULR activists take on wider roles

Activists who have become ULRs have taken on positions in the wider CWU, including: two at national level; eight at regional level (one Youth Secretary); 15 IR Representatives;

six Branch Secretaries; four Women's Officers; and, seven Equality Officers.

"This group are progressive, forward thinking and keen," said

Learning and Organising Project Worker Simon Massen. "Their involvement in the Organising Agenda would be highly beneficial."

One suggestion is

an Organising leaflet with a Learning focus, as this is discussed at recruitment sessions say 77% of ULRs, while 56% add that recruitment is undertaken by reps.

Spanish Stoke-on-Trent

Union members in Stoke-on-Trent have said a big *muchos gracias* to the CWU for providing them with free Spanish classes. Forty workers from Midland No 7 Branch have started the Level 2 NVQ, which takes place at their work units.

Stoke-on-Trent College, with City of Wolverhampton College, have put together a syllabus that provides learners with the kind of grammatical knowledge that they need to complete a

language course.

Branch ULR Shaun Pender said: "It became apparent that many members did not have an understanding of English grammar. By providing them with a refresher course, taught within a Spanish context, learners find that they are better able to cope."

Principal tutor Gisela Lorenz Duran is from Barcelona. She has been in the UK for six years and has a strong trade union background.

Linking our strategies

We have added an innovative strand to our ULF project to link our Learning and Organising strategies. Simon Massen is working with ULRs and CWU Organisers:

- to research and develop best practice on developing the link;
- to create training modules to promote Organising; and,
- to create a Resource to promote the link.

Early findings have shown Best Practice in 38 Branches.

The BT Distribution centre at Magna Park was identified as a

potential location where Learning is being used to gain recognition through raising membership levels amongst hard-to-recruit agency workers.

ULRs identified more than 120 "things each ULR should always do", and said they had recruited 535 new members via Learning; however, 33 hadn't recruited any new members.

● **Email your ideas on how to develop the link between Recruitment and Learning Strategies:** smassen@cwu.org

Recipe for success



Lesley Buckley receives her prize from Graham Kingston

The Learning Rep's at Stockport MDEC (Manual Data Entry Centre) produced an international recipe book to link International Women's Day with Learning at Work Day. The profits are being divided between their proposed new Learning Centre, CWU Humanitarian Aid and Barnardos. Launched at the ULR Conference in December, over 100 copies were sold.

Previously, a competition was run at MDEC to name it. Of the 50 entries received, Lesley Buckley from Team 2 on the late shift won by combining the initials of Royal Mail and CWU to come up with *Royal Meals – Cook With Us*. Lesley was presented with her £50 prize by Graham Kingston, Lead ULU

for the North West Central Amal Branch, who is based at the MDEC and coordinated the preparation of the recipe book.

Although the MDEC is an extremely interactive workplace, all the events the ULR's put on there over the past few years have been without the benefit of a Learning Centre. It is only now that the MDEC will have its own centre in which to focus events.

Plans are being made for various Event Days in Stockport during the year, details and news of which will be made available.

If anyone is interested in getting hold of a copy of the recipe book, please contact Graham at: mdeclearn@ymail.com

InBrief

Wales TUC ULR Conference

The 5th Annual Union Learning Reps Conference was held on 13 and 14 November 2008 at the Holiday Inn Newport. With over 200 people attending, this was the biggest conference of its kind held in the UK.

Workshops included Basic Skills Cymru, how to engage with the 'hard to reach' learner and how learning should be a fun and enjoyable experience.

Working in the community

The Northern Ireland Learning Committee has established links with a community group in one of the most deprived wards in Northern Ireland. It supports single mothers who are seeking to enter the job market but feel they lack literacy and numeracy skills. The CWU was able to use our past experience working with colleges to develop a to deliver a Literacy and Numeracy programme to meet their needs. We view this as an important part of our lifelong learning strategy. It portrays a positive image of what unions can provide to our members – and their family and friends in the community from where we will draw future members.



"HOLA" TO NEW COURSES

New funding from the Scottish Union Learning ESF project has made courses such as Spanish, IT and sign language available on the curriculum in Edinburgh

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) Key Learning Centre located in Edinburgh Royal Mail Centre has recently successfully secured funding from the Scottish Union Learning European Social Fund (ESF) project.

SPRING COURSES

The KEY Learning Centre, which was the CWU's first Learning Centre to be opened in Scotland back in October 2006, will run the new courses over the spring 2009 period.

Learners working at the Royal Mail Centre now have access to new courses that have never before been offered in the workplace, at no cost to learners.

LEARNING SPANISH

The successful application means the centre is now able to provide a Spanish course, a Short British Sign Language course, two Intermediate IT courses and an Accredited E-Citizen IT course.

Union Learning Reps

(ULRs) from the Mail Centre submitted an application to provide a comprehensive and varied programme of learning. Information from a previously conducted workplace Learning Needs Survey provided the information required for the funding application.

Demand has been high for the particular courses now funded, especially for the three Intermediate level IT courses.

The funding will provide an opportunity for progression both to learners who have participated in the extremely popular Computers for the Terrified classes, and to those learners with existing basic IT skills.

EVERYDAY SKILLS

The new programme of courses will run in conjunction with the existing Everyday Skills courses already being offered to learners at the KEY Learning Centre.

The newly funded courses will see the CWU continue to work with existing providers Stevenson College and the Workers Educational


▲ Spanish is one of the courses now available at the CWU's Learning Centre in Edinburgh

Association. Through the new SUL ESF project, Cumbernauld College has been introduced as a new provider to the KEY Learning Centre. This will help to provide learners at the Mail Centre with an even greater variety of courses.

ILA CRITERIA

Craig Anderson, CWU Regional Project Worker, said: "The opportunity to access funding to provide courses to learners who must fund their own learning has been welcomed by the CWU. With the most recent changes to the ILA Criteria, the majority of CWU members are ineligible for financial assistance towards learning in Scotland. This has proved to be a barrier at the Edinburgh Mail Centre and other CWU sites throughout Scotland."

FUTURE HOPES

With continued rounds of SUL ESF funding available, the CWU hope that future applications will lead to more opportunities being made available to CWU members in Scotland. 

PHILIPPINES SOLIDARITY

A project to empower telecommunications workers in the Philippines is one of the challenges proposed by the CWU's Education Department

One of the aims of the CWU's education programme is to promote solidarity among the world's workers and to develop and strengthen free and democratic unions.

Against this background the union's NEC, with the assistance of the Education & Training and International Department, has submitted a Civil Society Challenge Fund bid for £500,000 to assist with a three-year project.

PROJECT GOAL

The project's goal of 'Empowering and Alleviating Poverty of Women & Precarious Workers in the Philippines

Telecommunications Industry' has been developed over the past few years, with stronger links being forged with the Philippines' MKP union,

which organises telecom workers and is headquartered in Manila.

Gary Jones, CWU NEC member, said: "We have worked hard to construct the proposed project, which has a number of outcomes designed to help achieve some of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals.

"We won't know if our bid is successful until early next year," he continued, "but that doesn't mean that our solidarity work can't continue – we really would urge branches to consider 'twinning' with an equivalent branch in the Philippines; to do this is not difficult, but the impact of this solidarity activity is fantastic."

Through various activities, the project hopes to achieve the following:

- women and precarious workers organised and

▼ NEC member Gary Jones is encouraging branches to 'twin' with equivalent branches in the Philippines

- educated on their rights;
- capacity of organised telecommunication workers to campaign for rights of women and precarious workers strengthened;

- a campaign for the creation of a sector (telecommunication) union launched and implemented to support the campaign for precarious workers' rights;
- a campaign for the implementation of critical policies and legislation for women and precarious workers is waged and resolutely pursued;
- Legal Policy Support / Advice accessibly provided to telecommunications industry workers; and,

- solidarity and mutual support between the Communications Workers Union of the UK and the Philippine telecommunications workers strengthened.

Gary attended a two-day workshop in Manila, accompanied by Lee Wakeman from the E&T Department, to help develop the application. Gary and Lee were also asked to speak at a conference organised by the MKP to debate the proposition of a unified Communications Union. ☐

● For more information on the project or to learn about the twinning process, please contact Gary Jones at gjones@cwu.org or Lee Wakeman at lwakeman@cwu.org



MINISTER OPENS NEW CENTRE

In December, CWU Solent Branch opened its second Learning Centre – the Southampton Learning Terminal – with accredited courses commencing this January, and John Denham, MP joined the grand opening

John Denham MP, Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, officially opened the Southampton Learning Terminal on Friday 5 December 2008. This is the second union Learning Centre to be organised by CWU Solent Branch and is an historic achievement for the Branch in the area of learning. The Southampton Learning Terminal is situated within the Nursling BT Telephone Engineering Centre and started to provide a range of learning opportunities for members in the Southampton area in January.

OFFICIAL OPENING

The event began with a speech and ribbon cutting conducted by the Minister. It

► **Above:** John Denham, MP joins the ribbon cutting ceremony

► **Below:** Dave Thompson, Solent Branch Lead ULR, organised the project

was followed by speeches from guest speakers, including: Billy Hayes, CWU General Secretary; Trish Lavelle, CWU Head of Education and Training; Brian English, BT Group Head of Employee Relations; Malcolm Hunter, BT Openreach General Manager; and, Lindsey Noble, Southampton City College.

All the speakers congratulated Dave Thompson, Solent Branch Lead Union Learning Representative, for his hard work organising the project over the past two years and commented on the importance of this work.

John Denham noted that: "The key issue is how to get people whose first experience has not been brilliant



back into learning. The single most important thing is someone you know saying 'give it a go'. There are now over 20,000 trained ULRs in the UK and that's 20,000 friends saying 'give it a go'."

Brian English voiced BT's support for ULRs, saying: "We wholeheartedly support ULRs. Sometimes it's logistically difficult but we always get there in the end with the help of people like Dave."

Billy Hayes also paid special tribute to Dave and Solent Branch, as did Trish Lavelle, who congratulated BT on recognising the importance of granting paid release for Dave.





ACHIEVEMENT

The official opening of Solent Branch's second Learning Centre marks a significant achievement for the Branch. The Branch has already shown a tremendous commitment to learning, having already provided over 300 learning opportunities for its members and the wider community through its original Learning Centre, The Learning Exchange in Bournemouth. Among the first of its kind, it was opened in 2004. This achievement is due to the vision and foresight of a number of past and present Branch Officers, including Lee Wakeman (Education and Training Department Policy

Assistant), Gary Williams (Branch Secretary), Bob Hope (Branch Chair), Kevin Maidment (Assistant Secretary) and Dave Thompson (Lead ULR).

LEARNING TERMINAL

Following the success of the original Learning Centre, members lobbied the Branch for a similar facility in the Southampton area. A room became available in late 2007, which has since become the Southampton Learning Terminal.

Lead ULR Dave Thompson researched and organised all aspects of the project. The new Learning Centre includes 10 new computers. Funding

for this equipment has been provided in part by CWU Solent Branch, matched by funding from the CWU Sustainability Fund. BT provided the room, which it decorated and supplied with broadband.

Dave arranged for tutors from the Southampton City College to deliver accredited courses at the new Learning Centre, and these started in January. The first course, which is free, is helping learners to brush up on their maths skills through digital photography. 

● For more information on courses, contact: Dave Thompson, Lead ULR, Solent Branch. Tel: 01202 525376. Email: learning@cwusolent.org

“
THE SINGLE
MOST
IMPORTANT
THING IS
SOMEONE
YOU KNOW
SAYING
'GIVE IT A
GO'
”

THE KEY 2 ESOL LEARNING IN GLASGOW



ESOL courses at the new Key 2 Learn Centre in Glasgow are giving learners the chance to improve their communication skills with no cost to the learners

The first English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses to be organised by the CWU at the Glasgow Royal Mail Centre are currently being delivered at the new onsite Learning Centre (The Key 2 Learn Centre).

The courses are being delivered by the Workers' Education Association (WEA), which provides the courses at no cost to learners and at suitable times.

INFORMATION DAY
The CWU Union Learning Reps (ULRs) and Archie

Campbell, ESOL Development Worker for the WEA, were assisted by Shaheen Safdar, Diversity Manager, in promoting an information and assessment day in December 2008 to promote the new ESOL courses.

From information gathered by the ESOL Tutor at the information day, the local ULRs were able to involve the onsite Dignity & Respect At Work (DRAW) group to assist the WEA in providing a course to meet the requirements of the learners.

From the identified needs of the learners, the course has

been designed specifically to incorporate elements of workplace terminology and abbreviations as an addition to the standard basic ESOL course that is provided by the WEA.

WHAT LEARNERS SAY

The first seven learners to attend the course are all employees working for Royal Mail at the Glasgow Royal Mail Centre. At the moment we have two separate shift-friendly classes with four learners attending an afternoon class and three attending the evening class.

The courses have been extremely well received, and the following comments have been made by learners attending the afternoon class: **Muhammad Nadeem:** "I started the English class to improve my English. I hope this class gives me the confidence for understanding speaking and listening. I am very grateful to the CWU for arranging this class at my workplace so that I can save time and also the course is free, which saves me money."

Kalpana Maddi: "The reason I am doing this course is to improve my skills with English, such as speaking to my workmates and the managers."

Ananthi Velnayagam: "I want to feel confident when speaking to my workmates and in understanding the instructions of the managers and to be able to express myself."

Shammi Akhter: "I want to be more confident in my understanding of things and improve my

◀ Courses at the The Key 2 Learn centre in Glasgow are being delivered by the Workers' Education Association

conversational skills."

The WEA ESOL Tutor, Bryony Russell, said: "It was nice to work with such a group of well-motivated and dedicated students. Although the course is relatively new in the Mail Centre, all the people concerned with the course feel that it is going well and that it is good fun."

The ULRs believe this course will continue to be in demand as the number of different nationalities employed at the Mail Centre continues to increase.

TERMINOLOGY

The course has also opened the eyes of many people to the sometimes complex world of workplace terminology and abbreviations. It is well known that on a couple of occasions long-serving employees have not known themselves what some of the abbreviations being used in the workplace stand for, never mind new employees who are attending the ESOL course. **c**

The Key 2 Learn First courses a success

The KEY 2 LEARN Centre in the Glasgow Mail Centre opened its doors to staff in September 2008. The team of seven ULRs, with help from CWU National Project Worker Craig Anderson, were able to offer courses to early, late and nightshift staff. The courses were provided through the Trade Union Education Department at STOW College in Glasgow. Three accredited Level 1 IT courses and an accredited Spanish Level 1 course were hugely over subscribed. Thirty learners attended the IT course and 14 the Spanish course. Following the initial four courses, the ULRs conducted interviews with learners interested in using the Key 2 Learn Centre to gauge demand for new courses.

In January 2009, 60 learners started three accredited Level 2 IT courses, two accredited Level 1 IT courses and an accredited Spanish Level 2 course. The courses are proving popular, with the majority of learners wishing to progress to Level 2 and Level 3 courses. The Key 2 Learn Centre has around 400 registered users at present, and will be able to offer a variety of different courses in the near future.

“
I AM DOING
THIS
COURSE TO
IMPROVE
MY SKILLS
WITH
ENGLISH
”



Students at the Glasgow centre



1ST CLASS LEARNING

From skills for life courses to heavy goods vehicle licenses, the 1st class learning centre has it all. **Ray Atkinson**, explains how it continues to flourish

“
 FREE HEAVY
 GOODS
 DRIVER
 TRAINING
 WAS
 SECURED
 FOR FIVE
 MEMBERS
 ”

Like most parts of the country, the North West has spent the past 12 months under a cloud of uncertainty, office closures, relocations, potential job losses and so on. One of the offices at the centre of the upheavals is the APC at Copperas Hill, Liverpool, yet despite all this the 1st Class Learning Centre continues to flourish.

SUCCESSFUL YEAR
 Considering the economic situation and a lack of tangible interest in what we are trying to do outside the

union, the level of success the centre has had over the past year is remarkable.

Using the funding they have secured through meeting student completion targets, the centre’s staff have managed to keep the cost of courses at the level they were two years ago. They have also managed to provide many courses free of charge.

In addition to the success of the centre, two of the centres ULRs have been successful in applying for positions on projects in the North West: Paul Allen with Solve and Carl Dalton with the Digital Divide. These

projects have been funded through the North West Learning & Skills for All Fund and U-net (formally learndirect). With Paul and Carl at the helm I’m sure they will achieve all we want for CWU members.

TUC RECOGNITION
 This year the centre held events for International Women’s Day and Learning at Work Day, both of which received national recognition from the TUC – although not from the employer. One of the main achievements of the year was securing FREE Class One and Two heavy

goods driver training for five members. This included the theory test, the medical, practical instruction and the driving test itself. Congratulations to all five, who passed.

Another significant achievement was to resurrect activity at the Parcelforce depot. Billy Butterworth, Lead ULR, worked closely with the depot manager, Andy Elliot, and between them they managed to thrash out a match time-off agreement. Andy has agreed to give people who sign up to an ITQ course match time-off to complete the course by July 2009. This is an encouraging step forward and acknowledgement of the benefits to all concerned when people work together.

100TH CERTIFICATE

In addition, the centre has run the following courses: ITQ, CLAiT, Skills for Life, PC Maintenance and a Basic Computer course. They have worked with the community to open the centre to a local scout group, which used the facilities to pass their computing proficiency badge. They also have three ULRs undertaking an IAG Level 3 qualification. The year also saw the centre celebrate the presentation of its 100th national certificate.

So with all that activity and success it is no wonder that Unionlearn, after a through examination process, decided to nominate the 1st class learning centre for a prestigious Quality Award.

Well done to Billy and all the ULRs, past and present. 

◀ Despite the upheavals, the Learning Centre at the APC at Copperas Hill, Liverpool, continues to flourish

ULR SAVES CENTRE

Just weeks after attending a ULR Stage 1 Course, Kevin Murray was able to relaunch the threatened Learning Centre in Maidstone

Two weeks prior to attending the CWU Union Learning Reps Stage 1 Course, Lead ULR Kevin Murray (Kent Invicta Branch) was told that their workplace Learning Centre was under threat of closure. Within weeks of completing his ULR course Kevin put his new skills to good use and staged a successful relaunch of the Learning Centre at Maidstone Mail Centre.

Learning event

Previously, there had been no ULR based at the Mail Centre but with Kevin on site, as the new Lead ULR, he was able to organise a special learning event with Kent Adult Education Services. The event aimed to raise awareness of Skills for Life issues and to promote new courses that could be delivered onsite. Over 100 people took part, with 36 people expressing an interest in courses, six Skills for Life assessments were completed, and enough learners engaged to start two new courses. At the same time, Kevin managed to recruit eight new union members, a significant achievement by any standard.

Centre secure

Within a month, new courses were being delivered onsite and the future of the Learning Centre was secure. The courses provide an opportunity for workers to improve their English and computer skills, while at the same time obtaining a nationally recognised literacy qualification. Courses are delivered in the

workplace Learning Centre by tutors from Kent Adult Education Services.

Minister informed

Denise Oliver, Business Development Manager from Kent Adult Education Services, attended the event and was hugely impressed by Kevin's work as ULR. At an event the following day, attended by Jonathan Shaw MP, who is South East Regional Minister, Denise cited Kevin's work as an example of the difference that Union Learning Reps make. Having a rep onsite has inspired workers to take up learning opportunities.

Project success

CWU Regional Project Worker Tracey Bent attributed the success of the project to the special relationship that Kevin has built up with his fellow workers and the sustained effort that he has put into promotion.

● For more information, contact Kevin Murray, Lead Union Learning Rep, Kent Invicta Branch, tel: 01622 77759 or by email kevmurray2@yahoo.co.uk



NEW A&L COURSES

Successful promotional event leads to new learning opportunities organised by the CWU at Alliance and Leicester call centre in Ashford, Kent

New workplace learning opportunities have been organised by the CWU at the Alliance and Leicester Call Centre in Ashford, Kent as a result of a workplace learning promotional event organised by the CWU. This event was supported by funding from Unionlearn's Learning at Work Day Fund. The new courses include a free course in English Using Computers and a free Holiday Spanish Course. These courses are being delivered to workers at the call centre through Kent Adult Education Services.

WORKPLACE EVENT
To prepare the way for new courses, Hayley Slater, Lead ULR Alliance & Leicester Giro South Branch, got things going by staging a workplace



learning event in conjunction with Kent Adult Education Services. The event aimed to raise awareness of Skills for Life issues and to promote new courses organised by the CWU, including a course in English using Computers. It was a huge success, with around 100 people participating, 57 people completing Skills for Life quizzes and 10 people signing up for the first course.

Site manager Karen Witty gave her support to the event and helped present prizes to the quiz winners. Although there is no room onsite for a workplace Learning Centre, Karen has agreed that courses can be run in the training suite.

RAISING AWARENESS

Interviewed after the event, Hayley was delighted with how things had gone. "We were very fortunate to have funding from Unionlearn," she said. "This funding was used to buy prizes for a quiz. The quiz was used to raise awareness of Skills for Life and it certainly did the job. Our first course is already full up and it leads to a national qualification in literacy."

Denise Oliver from Kent Adult Education Services,

“THE EVENT AIMED TO RAISE AWARENESS OF SKILLS FOR LIFE ISSUES”

◀ Hayley Slater, CWU Lead ULR, with Alliance & Leicester Call Centre worker and quiz winner Janet Edge

who assisted Hayley on the day, was impressed with Hayley's hard work and commented that this was the best-organised workplace learning event that she had ever attended. ☐

● For more information, contact Hayley Slater, Lead Union Learning Rep, Alliance & Leicester Giro South Branch, tel: 01233 212462, email: Hayley.Slater@alliance-leicester.co.uk

The Midlands

Breaking the 200 barrier

With a further 12 ULRs trained at the Regional ULR 1 course in Worcester in October, there are now 208 ULRs in the Midlands. They came from a wide range of branches, covering employers such as Parcelforce, Royal Mail, BT and Airwave. A number of the ULRs are new activists, keen to assist their branches in establishing a learning culture in their workplaces. "The course was my first experience of unions and I felt that it was a good step in to the trade union family," said Steve Rivett, new ULR for Worcester and Hereford AMAL. "I found the issues around Skills for Life very informative. I'm now keen to assist our members overcome these barriers anyway I can."

"The Midlands now has over 200 ULRs in place who will consolidate learning at the 40 Learning Centres," said Dave Condliffe, Midlands Regional Project Worker. "The branches are working hard to deliver a robust and combative ULR structure that will deliver educational opportunities to their membership."

LETTER OF THE MONTH



“
SO WOULD
I DO IT ALL
AGAIN? YES,
I WOULD
”

Taking the first step on a rewarding journey

They say the first step in any journey is the hardest. That has been an apt truism during my first foray into being a trade union activist.

I stood for and was elected in August 2007 to the role of ULR in Leicester, mainly as I thought I could help my colleagues better themselves educationally as I too developed. December saw me taking the ULR 1 and after that the work really started in earnest.

Blood, sweat and tears – not quite, but it certainly opened my eyes to what an opportunity we had to help fellow members and empower them. After a lot of hard work on the part of the branch we managed to get rooms secured at the Campbell Street delivery office, and a room at the Mail Centre. Unfortunately the room they offered at the Mail Centre was no bigger than a shoe box, so we had to push ahead with the main centre for learning at the delivery office but with the aim of providing learning to all our members.

After a lot of hard work, both mental and physical, the first course at Leicester's first CWU Learning Centre opened its doors to members on their first course.

On 26 September the first lesson in 'Getting on with IT', a basic computing course with embedded Skills for Life, was

given. It saw an empty room turned into a place where people could learn in a relaxed environment with no one sitting in judgement of them for doing so.

That course is now in its third week and everyone seems to be enjoying themselves and, most of all, learning and talking about what they'd like to do next when this course ends.

So would I do it all again, all the struggles and challenges and butting of heads with management? I'd like to say I would wholeheartedly. Hard work? An emphatic yes. Worthwhile? Oh yes, definitely. I'm learning a great deal of things along the way and, as I wished, I am taking others on that journey with me. Rewarding? Yes, even though sometimes you feel like throwing your hands in the air and giving up. Seeing the look on someone's face when they learn something new or do something they never dreamt of doing is reward enough for me. Yes, the first step is a hard one, and a big one, but the destination is what it's all about. I for one am looking forward to the trip.

Martin Norton,
Lead Union Learning Rep, Leicester (postal)

Send your letters to:

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