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# COMMUNIQUE



THE MAGAZINE OF THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING DEPARTMENT CONFERENCE 2010 WWW.CWU.ORG



**TOP OF THE CLASS**  
CWU triumphs at Union Learning 'Oscars'

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**Published on behalf of CWU**  
 by  
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 Alban Row, 27-31 Verulam Road  
 St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL3 4DG.  
**T:** 01727 893894  
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# GOOD SHAPE FOR FUTURE

**BILLY HAYES**  
**GENERAL SECRETARY**



Welcome to this the conference edition of *Communiq  *. In the past year the CWU's union learning project has once again made some big steps forward. With the help of the regional secretaries, the regional learning committees are really becoming integral parts of their regions and are producing regional learning strategies that work towards a sustainable future for union learning.

Matrix accreditation of our union learning project across the whole country means that we can now unequivocally say that our ULRs provide information, advice and guidance at a standard recognised by BIS as the benchmark for quality.

Along with a successful bid for further ULF funding this leaves us in pretty good shape to face a challenging future.

## World wide web of access online

**TRISH LAVELLE**  
**HEAD OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

Welcome to this special Annual Conference issue of *Communiq  *. This week in Bournemouth, branches will once again discuss and debate the issues that matter to our members and activists. And once again, education and learning in the CWU will be on that agenda. The big factor that may well influence all our decisions this week is how, in financially and industrially tough times, we can focus our resources most effectively to continue to provide the support and assistance that our members need – including in training and education.

It is imperative that we consider new and different ways of providing training and lifelong learning opportunities that are flexible, cost effective and accessible to our members. Making the most of what new technology has to offer will become increasingly important, both in terms of online learning in our 140 learning centres across the UK and also in terms of developing more online courses to support our activists. And there is genuine demand for this sort of course; in a recent survey, 98 per cent of branch secretaries stated they would be interested in learning online and many of our members have opted for online courses in our learning centres in the last year alone. In centres like Bradford Mail Centre and Coperas Hill in Liverpool, online learning is one of the most popular forms of learning for our members.

What is very clear is that there is a great opportunity for us to increase the numbers accessing learning through delivering some courses either wholly or partly in an online environment. The challenge will be to do this without losing the quality and benefits of learning collectively as trade unionists. We don't underestimate that this may be very testing, but nor can we afford to ignore the real benefits in terms of access and cost that this can offer to our members and activists, particularly the generation of activists who are already comfortable accessing and using online services and networks in many areas of their lives.

The reality in the current funding landscape is that with more cuts on the way in terms of adult education, we have a real duty to our members to continue to fulfil our obligation under rule to provide access to educational opportunities. Online learning will be one of the ways that we can do this.

T. Lavelle



NEW ACTIVIST  
COURSESAIM TO SUPPORT  
AND DEVELOP  
SKILLS

## CWU EDUCATION &amp; TRAINING DEPARTMENT COURSE DEVELOPMENT

The Education & Training Department is constantly improving and updating the courses on offer to members

# KEEPING ON COURSE

The CWU Education & Training Department has been busy updating the core CWU education programme and developing new activist courses over the past couple of years. This crucial piece of work has been central to the union to ensure it meets the requirements of both the newer and more seasoned CWU branch representatives.

### New courses include:

- CWU Capita Reps course
- CWU/Virgin Media Health & Safety Reps course
- Treasurers'/Financial Secretaries course
- Branch Secretaries course
- Romec Cleaners' Representative Skills course
- CWU Women's course
- Chairing Meetings Effectively course
- CWU Environmental Awareness course

Continued tutor and student feedback is constantly analysed and every course within the programme has now been updated and improved.

New short courses, in conjunction with the CWU youth project officer and Solihull College, are also now available. These bespoke courses include themes such as "Trade Unions and Civil Liberties", "Generic Skills including Public Speaking" and "Developing Model Unions", and are aimed at supporting and developing the role of branch youth officers, activists and youth networks throughout the union. The courses can be delivered during weekends at Alvescot Lodge or in the regions.

Work with CWU's Organising Department, looking at ways in which the union can broaden out the successful Organising Ambassadors course has led to the



design and delivery of a successful "Leading in Organising" course aimed at senior activists within the union. A generic pilot "Organising in Telecoms" course is also now ready for rollout.

Trish Lavelle, head of education and training, said: "CWU Education & Training Department is well placed to develop appropriate courses to meet the ever-changing needs of our reps and furnish them with the skills and knowledge required to deal effectively with the demands that being a rep involves."

She added: "The hard work our reps put in

when attending our courses, and their constructive feedback, makes dealing with these new initiatives all the more worthwhile!"

For more information on our CWU course programme and delivery or development of CWU activist courses please email Lee Wakeman at [lwakeman@cwu.org](mailto:lwakeman@cwu.org), or go to [www.cwueducation.org](http://www.cwueducation.org). For those delegates going to the Annual Conference; Lee will also be available during the week at the Education Stall.

● Learn more about the Education Centre at Alvescot Lodge by logging on to [www.cwu.org](http://www.cwu.org). Click on CWUTV for a virtual tour!



## Collaboration is key to success

### RECRUITMENT

Working alongside the Northern Ireland regional secretary and the organiser for the telecoms sector, the Northern Ireland learning committee has produced a leaflet designed to help in recruiting.

The leaflet brings to the attention of workers in organised and non-organised companies, the benefits of being a member of the CWU.

The leaflet invites potential new and existing members to visit the regional website, where they are asked to participate in a short educational survey. On completion of this they will be entered into a draw for an iPod Shuffle.

The Northern Ireland learning committee hope this is a successful initiative where everyone reaps the rewards.

## Forensic eye for detail in Plymouth

### LEARNING

Plymouth members had fingerprint dust and magnifying glasses at the ready at an unusual but "brilliant" forensic event.

Ten members of staff at RM Plymouth MDEC were able to take advantage of a local funding initiative with City of Plymouth

College to attend a Forensic Science for Learning event, which went behind the scenes of criminal investigations.

The event was organised by CWU ULRs Mandy Dewdney and Chris Newby and Sean Gibson of City Plymouth College. The event attracted great interest, and

allowed staff to see how forensics is used in practice.

Just like the television series *CSI*, members were able to see examples of evidence that had been collected and how it would be treated in an investigation.

Describing the event as "brilliant", ULR Chris Newby said the session was well received by staff and reps with

lots of questions during the event and plans to run something similar in the future.

In a dramatic turn of events, the feedback forms from the day also mysteriously went missing, and ULRs were put to the test; utilising their new-found forensic skills to bring an early resolution to the case!

[ [www.cwu.org](http://www.cwu.org) ]



## New appeal for Alvescot furniture project

### DONATIONS

The Alvescot furniture appeal is nearly half way through reaching its target of £4,000.

Thanks goes to all

those branches that have contributed.

The project was set up to replace the (somewhat rickety) furniture in the main teaching room at the union's Education

and Training Centre at Alvescot Lodge.

Further donations would be deeply appreciated. Any amount, small or large will help – £70 will buy a chair, and

£200 will buy a new desk.

● Those wishing to contribute can contact [flavelle@cwu.org](mailto:flavelle@cwu.org) or send a cheque to Tracey Wheeler at Alvescot Lodge marked 'Alvescot Furniture' made payable to CWU.



Alvescot Lodge

# Cycle to show solidarity this September

## CYCLO-SPORTIVE

The CWU will be holding its fourth annual Cyclo-Sportive to raise money for the CWU

International Solidarity Fund.

The event, on Saturday September 18, supports unions in countries such as Colombia, Zimbabwe and the Philippines where human and trade union rights are constantly under threat.

As usual, the event will start from the Union's Education and Training Centre at Alvescot Lodge and there will be a 20-mile and a 75-mile route through the Cotswolds, with a free barbecue, free camping and lower-cost B&B charges for all taking part. Add to this the chance to cycle

“Cycle through some of the UK's most beautiful countryside”



through some of the UK's most beautiful countryside, and this is an event not to be missed.

Cyclo-Sportive is open to members of all trade unions so book a place now by contacting Maxine

Todd at Alvescot Lodge, or pick up an entry form at the Education and Training Stall at the CWU Annual Conference in Bournemouth.

● Call Maxine on 01933 843 373 or email her at [mtodd@cwu.org](mailto:mtodd@cwu.org)

# Introducing two new learning project workers

## Joe Showler

(right) is the new CWU learning project worker for the south east.

Joe has been the lead ULR for the Meridian branch for the past three years and the South East regional learning secretary for the last two.

He passionately believes in lifelong learning, especially through the CWU, and has worked hard to establish the learning agenda not only within his branch but throughout the south east as well.

He believes the CWU's education



The south east CWU learning project worker  
**Joe Showler**

policy is his mission statement: promote, organise and facilitate access to adult education to enable members to advance their skills for life. He can personally testify to the benefits of union learning and he is passionate about getting as many members involved so they can reap the benefits too.

● Joe can be contacted on: 07872 511 418, or email: [jshowler@cwu.org](mailto:jshowler@cwu.org)

## Steve Ratcliffe

(right) is the new CWU learning project worker for the Midlands.

Steve has been a CWU member since 1994 when he joined Royal Mail as an indoor postal worker aged 17. At 23, he became involved in the union as a local IR shift rep and shortly afterwards became substitute area rep at Preston Mail Centre, where he remained for eight years.

In 2003, Steve became the lead ULR for the Mail Centre, establishing an on-site learning



Lifelong Learning project worker  
**Steve Ratcliffe**

centre and local ULR committee before moving on to concentrate on other areas of the CWU.

Since April 1, Steve has been the Lifelong Learning regional project worker for the Midlands and, over the coming months, will be contacting branches and local ULRs to introduce himself formally.

● Steve can be contacted on: 01772 256 600 or mobile: 07703 795 902, or email: [sratcliffe@cwu.org](mailto:sratcliffe@cwu.org)

## InBrief

### Nine Elms Update

Following a successful open day at Nine Elms Royal Mail, where 120 learners were recruited, the branch and Vic Paulino LPW are in negotiations with Royal Mail to open a dedicated learning centre. In the interim, Basic IT is already being rolled out in Royal Mail training rooms until the learning centre is open.

### Six Book Challenge

Anita Forrester has been the newest ULR at Mount Pleasant to be tasked with launching the six book challenge. Working alongside Westminster Libraries, she now has 12 eager learners engaging in various levels of reading. Anita said: "It's been so rewarding to see the learners grow in confidence in such a short space of time."

### Informal Learning

As of 1st April 2010 informal learning outcomes count towards our national total. This is an important recognition of the role informal learning can play in personal development. More informal learning resources will be published at Annual Conference. Contact your learning project worker for more details.

# STANDARD BEARERS

## IMPRESSIVE FIRST

Members celebrate as the CWU becomes the first union to receive Matrix Awards for all English regions



**T**he CWU has notched up another impressive first in learning. As *Communiqué* went to press the CWU heard the fantastic news that all its English regions have now achieved the Matrix Standard for the quality of learning services.

It's the first union to receive the award for all its English

regions, which demonstrates how much ULRs have developed in skills and confidence over the last few years.

This prestigious award is widely recognised by employers, funders and government agencies as the benchmark for high quality, consistent and accessible information, advice and

guidance (IAG) to adult learners. It's great recognition for the work that ULRs and branches have done since 2002 in delivering almost 30,000 learning opportunities to members and their families.

Applicants for the Matrix Standard have to go through a rigorous assessment process, including interviews with ULRs, regional learning committee

Kathy Leahy from Ento, Steve Hackford and Jacky Morrey getting their Matrix award



## DEDICATED TO LEARNING

Commenting on the news, head of education and training Trish Lavelle said: "This represents a fantastic achievement by all involved. Our ULRs are already highly regarded in the labour movement as some of the most capable and experienced hands in the union learning field, and, as far as I am concerned, this only goes towards cementing our enviable reputation for our hard-working, well-organised, skilful and talented CWU representatives."

Learning co-ordinator for the North Lancs and Cumbria branch Paul Newsham added: "In the North West the Matrix Award formalised the good work that the ULRs do with our members on a daily basis, as well as doing their full-time jobs. We didn't have to change too much of what we already do to meet a professionally recognised standard. All the North West ULRs and, in particular, the ones that were actually assessed over the two days, are delighted that their

hard work and dedication towards helping members has been formally recognised by an outside agency."

Nick Bury, secretary for the London regional learning committee said: "Having been involved in the recent Matrix accreditation process as one of the learning centres assessed for the standard, it was a really useful process to spend time preparing for the assessment by revisiting areas such as surveys and learners' opinions as well as updating processes and policies. We are now able to provide another valuable service to our members through our network of learning centres and trained ULRs in the workplace, which is fantastic."

The CWU Education & Training Department would like to thank all the ULRs involved in the Matrix accreditation for their outstanding contribution to the learning agenda. The CWU achieved the Matrix Standard first time because the assessors could clearly see the dedication and professionalism shown in delivering IAG to all members. Well done to all.



officers, CWU members, branches and CWU staff; examining how records are kept and how the union communicates with its members.

This process started last summer in the Midlands and this year, the North East, North West, Eastern, London, South West and South East regions have all been successful.



THIS ONLY GOES TOWARDS CEMENTING OUR ENVIABLE REPUTATION FOR OUR HARD-WORKING, WELL-ORGANISED, SKILFUL AND TALENTED CWU REPRESENTATIVES

Trish Lavelle, head of education and training



# LEARNING HOW TO ORGANISE

The Learning & Organising Project is developing 'good practice' methods to link up CWU strategies and embed 'organising' into ULR training. Encompassing findings from 500-plus activists across 130 branches, this report shows how Union Learning can help branches organise



## What works?

At Vodafone, Stoke-on-Trent the CWU gained access as IAG providers.

The branch used the fact that over 50 per cent of workers had Skills for Life needs in order to prove its requirement with the remaining workers, cementing its presence within a workplace where it previously had no access.

The field organiser said: "Vodafone is a great example of where Learning & Organising has worked together to further a campaign.

At this point it is difficult to quantify the learning contribution for a number of members and activists. However, what learning has brought is increased activity from activists, greater visibility to the company and employees, and development of activists. In the future I would like to see a full ULR function in Vodafone with all the activity that goes with it, including notice boards."

**L**earning is embedded into many branch structures, but less than a third of branches have branch organisers. Organising needs to be more embedded.

The Education & Training Department has trained more than 1,300 ULRs and organised courses at 145 learning centres. ULRs recruit members and possess similar key skills used in organising, especially 'organisational', 'people', 'communication' and 'union' skills.

Learning has enabled a new wave of activists to enter the CWU, and they have gone on to undertake diverse roles within the union. Learning events raise the Union Learning profile in a positive way, and joined-up-thinking occurs when learning is referred to at recruitment sessions.

Union Learning has learning centres across the UK; providing learning from Edinburgh to Truro, and from Strabane to Norwich. These centres exist not just in CWU and employers' premises, but also in the wider community.



Union Learning has 30 learning centres in the Midlands alone, some located at football and boxing clubs, and one at a Sikh temple, and new learning centres are in development.

## Who can use the centres?

When we asked members; the top three answers were:

- All employees at a workplace
- Friends and family of members
- CWU members from other employers

This shows the potential for learning centres in the wider community and in emerging areas of membership, where Union Learning endeavours to organise.

However, since the beginning of this research, a number of negative comments have been made. For example: "Learning is not what we are about, we are an industrial union and learning has taken IR reps away from what they should be doing".

Although anecdotal evidence exists to substantiate this, research proves



Learning at Work events enthuse our members

otherwise. Indeed the research shows only six per cent of respondents have stopped being industrial reps since becoming a ULR, while 39 per cent of respondents did not hold a post before becoming a ULR, and 41 per cent have gone on to further reps roles since becoming a ULR. This argues that rather than being a drain on resources Union Learning actually makes a net contribution to our reps network.

### What does 'union organising' mean?

A study of 123 branch secretaries and ULRs, which asked what trade union organising meant and what an "organising union" is discovered that a number of

important words and phrases were repeated in the answers;

- Recruitment
- Active
- Collective
- Power
- Retention
- Future
- Represent

This shows some consistency in themes and understanding.

### The information challenge

The research also recognised the ever-increasing role of 'new' technology and a side study, entitled *Capability and Capacity in Society and Activism*, revealed that 87 per cent of activists consider themselves IT friendly, with 97

87%

percentage of members that see computers as 'vital'

per cent using computers on a daily basis and 87 per cent considering them vital.

Up to 79 per cent said they needed some level of training, and 80 per cent would be interested in training online (if the course was relevant), with 47 per cent interested in learning via phones or handhelds.

Emails and mobile phones are considered vital, with 64 per cent using them for CWU related messages.

Google (79 per cent) and Yahoo (16 per cent) were the most popular search engines, while Facebook (95 per cent) was the most popular social networking site, with 25 CWU based groups and an Education & Training department 'Unionbook'.

### What's been done so far?

■ Organising has been integrated into regional learning strategies.

■ Organisers are working more closely with regional learning committees.

■ Joined-up-thinking is emerging at Learning @ Work Days.

■ Organising is being built into ULR training.

■ The synergy between Learning & Organising has been highlighted:

- At Annual Conference
- Fringe meetings
- Two annual national learning workshops
- Various regional learning committees

■ Scoping Union Learning potential to deliver in emerging areas has started.

### South East Case study – Learning @ Work Day 2009

Event	Direct contact	Completed surveys	Activists identified	Non-members recruited
1	70	68	0	0
2	250	200	3 (ULRs)	2
3	300 (half under 25)	200	0	6 (all BT Call Centre agency workers)
4	170	150	3 (ULRs)	7
5	10	20	0	0
6	106	60	3	2
7	200	200	35 interested in becoming ULRs	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1106</b>	<b>898</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>20</b>

# LEARNING NEEDS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

[SKILLS]

The learning requirements of young workers in the communications industry are being overlooked. The UKCES argues raising employer ambition is the answer

**E**mployers fear that UK competitiveness could be damaged by a “significant skills gap”, referring to young workers as “high maintenance and needy.” Research into the learning needs of young workers suggests more to it than that.

Inequality leads to poor educational performance, rather than the other way round. Children from wealthy families testing low on ability quickly overtake those testing high on ability from poor backgrounds.

## The knowledge economy?

Those who would have taken apprenticeships are now directed towards service industries. This is softened by talk of a “knowledge economy” of highly skilled jobs projecting the UK economy into a high-tec future – but the UK Commission for Education & Skills (UKCES) says “The UK has too few high performance workplaces, too few employers producing high quality goods and services... we need to invest as much effort in raising employer ambition and stimulating demand, as in enhancing skills supply.”

Graduate recruitment programmes

are hugely over-subscribed. BT received 4,800 applications for 130 graduate jobs last year – before closing the programme altogether. BT found that apprentices are £1,300 more profitable than other recruits and that people would be more likely to use a business if it offered apprenticeships to young people. However BT has 75 applicants for every apprenticeship. In 2009 they were approximately 0.7% of the workforce. The percentage of apprentices employed in Royal Mail is just 0.15% - about the number of workers who leave them every week. Applicants to the BT apprenticeship complained that, “They changed my IT (apprenticeship) to customer service after a telephone interview without telling me, because I don't have A-Levels.”

## Untapped resources

The UKCES argues we have a skills mismatch rather than a skills gap. Many workers feel their jobs under-utilise their skills, suggesting that employers are sitting on an untapped resource that they should be celebrating rather than downplaying.

The CBI wants education to be driven by employers' needs rather than politics, but employer-focused education has failed to address either skills gaps or transferable skills.

75

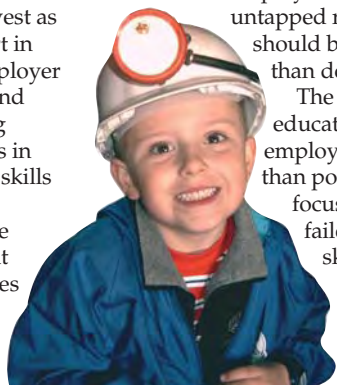
The number of applicants that BT receive for every apprenticeship

Many graduates are looking for work and many young workers are seeking apprenticeships.

## Government intervention

It is possible that the free market is structurally incapable of delivering the knowledge economy. The Leitch report says that Government should intervene in the event of “market failure”. In times of economic hardship, Government responsibility should not be seen solely in terms of public spending. Legislation to enshrine collective bargaining rights on skills would encourage the best possible return for public investment in skills. Employers have already admitted the benefits of apprenticeships. The principles remain true for training the existing workforce. Many companies that claim to be unable to afford this are highly profitable – perhaps they should invest a larger portion in workforce development. Will Hutton argues that the financial crisis was caused by undercapitalisation of the banks. In a knowledge economy undercapitalisation in workforce skills could similarly damage the long-term health of the UK economy. In this instance perhaps it would be advisable to act in advance rather than to be wise after the fact.

Left: Bright with ambition, but will this ambition be matched by employers?



# IN THE KNOW

CWU members are on the road to learning in London thanks to regular courses

## UNION LEARNING IN LONDON

Providing courses close to where workers live and work is essential, says London Regional Secretary John Denton. Now the challenge is to ensure that we expand the programme to meet the needs of today's reps



**Paul Moore, Linda Kietz, Nick Bury** and I are all keen to promote education and training for our representatives wherever the need arises. We are particularly eager to utilise the facilities on offer at the regional offices at Dallington Street.

With the assistance of Trish Lavelle, Lee Wakeman and Vic Paulino, we have embarked upon a regular programme of courses, starting in February with Postal Procedures and Agreements followed by Union Skills 1. The same two courses are to be repeated again in May and June.

So far, all the courses have been full and we have had no complaints. Key to success is making sure everything, as far as possible, is provided on-site so representatives can utilise their time learning and not going shopping or waiting around.

I must say it is a pleasure to deal with Maxine Todd from the Union's Education & Training Centre at Alvescot Lodge. Maxine

is so organised and efficient; everything is arranged on time and arrives on time. There's no messing around. Please never let her move to Wimbledon and let her become infected with the 'can't do' attitude permeating so many of the departments there!

Many reps can't go away for a week on courses, so providing courses near to where they work and live is essential if we are going to make sure all our representatives have the knowledge and experience to perform

their roles. It's not a question of knowing everything but knowing where to look it up when the need arises. There's nothing worse for a member, who is facing serious problems in the workplace, than to be confronted by a union rep who does not know what to do or where to look.

We hope to be able to provide other courses on more niche subjects as time goes on and as we all get to know each other better and learn to trust and depend on each other to provide and deliver courses that

“It's not a question of knowing everything but knowing where to look it up when the need arises”

fit the bill; courses that are designed to be just what our reps require when they are back in the workplace. Long may we continue to fulfil their needs.

The London region is helping members on their lifelong learning journey



# TOP MARKS FOR CWU AT LEARNING 'OSCARs'

Head of education and training **Trish Lavelle** reports from the Union Learning Fund Awards ceremony in London and pays tribute to hard working members

**P**ersonally, I'm not a great fan of awards ceremonies and all that back slapping; they can be a bit too smug and self-satisfied for my liking. But since CWU were not only receiving a National Award for the quality of its ULRs but also an additional award for its learning centres, I couldn't refuse!

So, myself and two of our regional learning committee secretaries, Sean McGough from the South West and Jacky Morrey from the Midlands, duly scrubbed up for the star studded gala dinner and presentations at Congress House.

## Outstanding achievement

The evening started with Pat McFadden, Minister for Innovation, Business and Skills, meeting with our ULRs to talk 'learning'. Sean – clearly an old hand at speaking with MPs – was very soon giving a clear explanation of just how much we have achieved in our learning centres.

However, once seated, it was very unfortunate that the Minister chose this event to publicly criticise the BA strikers. On what should have been a night of celebrating the best and most positive work in the labour movement and great achievement by the Labour Government, he chose instead to state that he agreed completely with the views of

both the PM and Lord Adonis with regard to the BA strikers!

Stunned silence followed his statement, but those present did not dignify the comment by jeering or throwing bread rolls – Chumbawamba and John Prescott style – however tempting it seemed.

Things did improve. Topping the bill was Lenny Henry, who gave a very funny and inspirational speech about his own learning experiences at school in Dudley, and his recent return to education and graduation from the Open University with a degree in English. Shamelessly pleasing the crowd with supportive statements about the BA strikers, it put everyone in a better frame of mind.

The CWU received two awards – the only union do so – with the main award for 'Outstanding Achievement for ULRs' and a highly commended award for the learning centres.

There was also a lifetime achievement award for Liz Smith; who is to union learning what James Brown is to soul music, in effect, the 'Godmother of Learning'. Without Liz's commitment to the learning cause, first through the TUC and latterly through Unionlearn, there wouldn't be a Union Learning Fund, or ULRs, and thousands of union members



**Above:** Trish Lavelle, Jacky Morrey and Sean McGough

would not have had the opportunity to return to learning.

## Pride and honour

Despite feeling mildly cynical at the start of the evening, by the end I felt very proud that our union had been recognised by the wider trade union movement.

To go up and receive the awards on behalf of ULRs and learning centres was a great honour too, because, ultimately, this is all about the hard work they do year-round.

Though there wasn't an opportunity for a tearful and excruciating Oscar-style acceptance speech, I would like to now thank every single ULR and branch that has supported learning for members, the regional learning committees, who work so hard, our learning project workers past and present, and our team at HQ and Alvescot Lodge. Please give yourselves a big, self-satisfied slap on the back from me.

**Below:** Trish Lavelle celebrates the CWU award with comedian Lenny Henry



[CLIMATE CHANGE]

CWU JOINS THE  
FIGHT AGAINST  
CLIMATE CHANGE  
WITH ECO  
SOLIDARITY



## GREEN CAMPAIGNING

Support the environmental movement and the labour movement and set up a Climate Solidarity action group

# ECO ACTION FOR ALL

It is estimated we waste as much as 25 per cent of the food we buy, burn fuel in vehicles unnecessarily and spend 20 per cent more on home heating than we need to. Forming an action group is a great way to save money, as well as reducing the environmental impact of our lifestyles.

“Climate Solidarity training sessions are an ideal way to promote union learning”

The CWU, along with three other trade unions; NUT, PCS, UCU and a charity called COIN (Climate Outreach Information Network), have secured funding from Defra, to run Climate Solidarity.

Climate Solidarity aims to set up a large number of action groups, which will hold short meetings, once a month, for a

maximum of six months, and will take part in simple activities designed to reduce waste, energy, carbon emissions and save money. Topics include reducing food waste, reducing electricity usage, getting more miles per gallon from vehicles and simple DIY to reduce home heating bills.

A number of CWU activists have already been trained and have started setting up action groups. Liverpool Clerical is in the process of setting up a group in BT's Warrington call centre. The group will meet in the 'second chance' learning centre, and it is hoped Climate Solidarity will also help raise awareness of union learning.

The project has been met with a very positive response from ULRs who hope to be able to work with Climate Solidarity in pursuit of a joint agenda. Northwest

regional learning project worker Ray Atkinson explains: "Using learning centres to hold Climate Solidarity training sessions and meetings is an ideal way to promote union learning and establish a Climate Solidarity presence in the workplace."

The Climate Solidarity team are in the process of producing a Climate Solidarity kit, to assist ULRs in running events in their local learning centre.

For more information regarding

the Climate Solidarity project, or the materials available to ULRs, please contact CWU Climate Solidarity project worker Maeve Kennedy at [mkennedy@cwu.org](mailto:mkennedy@cwu.org), or on 07590 245 269.

● Further information on the project can also be found at: [www.climatesolidarity.org.uk](http://www.climatesolidarity.org.uk)



# TRAIN TO PROGRESS

Giving ULRs the ability to train helps them give other members access to learning, says **Ray Atkinson**, Learning Project Worker for the North West

One of the main aspects highlighted in the recent Matrix assessment was the support and progression routes given to ULRs. In the early years of the Lifelong Learning Project this was an area that was neglected as ULRs concentrated on helping members.

In the North West we have a number of ULRs with various qualifications, and, in nearly all cases, these qualifications have been obtained since they became ULRs.

We have people who are qualified to assist tutors in our learning centres when they are delivering Numeracy and Literacy courses, and they have done this through the Adult Learner Support Programme Levels 2&3. We also have ULRs who can deliver IT courses, including Basic IT, Intermediate IT and ECDL, and are able to assist tutors who deliver ECDL advanced and ITQ.

There are more than 20 ULRs who have gained qualifications in Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) Level 3&4,

which enables them to give independent advice on learning, education and careers. In addition, we have three ULRs who are fully-qualified tutors.

We were one of the first unions to see the value of our members receiving advice from their peers rather than an outside body, and, ultimately, we are becoming less dependent on local colleges to deliver our courses.

## Independent learning

A further sign of our independence is the fact we are looking at training a number of ULRs to carry Dyslexia Workplace Assessments. This is an important development as it's estimated five out of ten working people have Dyslexic tendencies.

We also have two ULRs taking a Level 5 diploma in Subject Specialism: Numeracy and Literacy, which means that rather than assist in the classroom they can deliver courses themselves.

Our ULRs have numerous other skills that don't require paper qualifications of course, such as good listening and organisational skills, and, above all, confidentiality.

Lifelong Learning is exactly what it says: 'learning for life', and our members can rely on support from a dedicated and well-trained team of ULRs.

## New learning centres for the North West



More award-winning learning to be available in the North West

Two quite different learning centres are due to open in the North West this summer.

The first, located in the new North West Regional Distribution Centre, in Warrington, will have approximately 600 members, and the second, in the West Derby Delivery Office Liverpool, will have around 100 members.

The negotiations for the opening of the RDC Learning Centre are nearly complete, with an opening date set for Thursday May 20, which is Learning @ Work Day. The lead ULR for the North West Central Amal branch, Graham Kingston, has been briefing the staff at WTLL sessions over the past few weeks and running a competition among the staff to name the centre. The RDC manager, Dave Roberts, has been extremely supportive of the project and is looking forward to seeing this valuable asset open.

The learning centre in the West Derby Delivery Office has been discussed for more than two years, but for various reasons it has taken this long to come to fruition. We are planning an opening in early June.

A couple of courses have been run here in the past so there's definite interest from members. Opening this centre is all the more significant now with the closing of the Liverpool Mail Centre later this year. West Derby ensures we will still have a learning facility for our members to use in Liverpool.

There will be no difference in the quality of provision provided in each centre or in the Matrix Standard of support given by our excellent team of ULRs.



Billy Hayes and Vic Paulino meet ULR 'progressors' George White, Dave Thompson and Graeme Brinded

## ULR progression is key to CWU future

Training is vital to sustainability, says **Eamonn Cooke**, chair of the Northern Ireland regional learning committee



The Northern Ireland regional learning committee welcomes the new partnership agreement between the National Union and the North West Regional College.

It's a very positive step to have the ability to deliver all union training for activists within the region, and using CWU local tutors.

Our committee is keen to develop progression for ULRs and it has become this committee's key objectives.

We view this partnership as an opportunity for ULRs and other activists within

the union to develop themselves and hopefully, in turn, become specialist tutors in Literacy, Numeracy and I.C.T.

We believe having a pool of specialist tutors within our union is a key way of creating the long-term sustainability that will allow the union to continue to deliver on its learning agenda, long after the current funding has ended.

Fundamental to developing this sustainability is for ULRs to be trained up to a level where they can give advice on a whole range of issues that affect members.

This will allow us to provide a one-stop-shop of information advice and guidance.

ULR training would also be a major asset in the recruitment and retention of members within the organised and non-organised industries, and would have particular benefits for migrant workers.

In order to make this idea a reality, however, the CWU needs to work closely with other unions involved in the Northern Ireland Union learning fund, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and with the North West Regional College.

## CONFERENCE ACTIVISM IN EDUCATION



The CWU Education and Training Department attended the inaugural Activists Conference held in March for representatives in companies where CWU does not (yet) have recognition. The conference was attended by more than 70 delegates and was a huge success.

Learning, education and training opportunities were highlighted, and immense interest was shown in:

- Continued and ongoing reps skills training
- Employment law education
- Language courses

Delegates were also interested in having formal Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) interviews and more than 90 per cent said they would consider blended learning approaches or learning online.

Learning researcher Simon Massen said: "Over the years, and throughout our trade union's rich history, we have been very successful in delivering in core areas for our members. These findings show that we must be equally successful in emerging areas, which can lead to greater organising opportunities for our union."

● For more information on Learning & Organising Simon can be contacted at [smassen@cwu.org](mailto:smassen@cwu.org)



# MINORITY REPORT ON LEARNING NEEDS

The 'superdiverse' needs of minority workers and migrants in the communications industry are being met by inclusive and integrated learning opportunities at CWU



**Above:** The CWU promotes a culture of equality, says a University of Hertfordshire report

**D**uring 2009 the University of Hertfordshire conducted research into the learning needs of migrant and minority workers in the communications industry.

One key finding was that migrant workers are not an easily identifiable group; coming from many countries and having different lengths of stay in the UK. A positive finding was that when it comes to learning within the CWU, migrant workers are treated indistinguishably from second or third generation minority workers, or indigenous workers.

Furthermore, the demand for skills development is generic to all workers and not specific to migrant or BME (Black Minority and Ethnic) workers. The study found that CWU learning centres are proactive in meeting the learning needs of workers and generally promote a culture of

equality and inclusiveness, reflecting the strongly embedded anti-racism practices of the CWU.

## Fostering integration

It was also apparent to the researchers that the culture of union learning within CWU workplaces is extremely valuable for fostering social integration. The main focus in the learning centres is on learning for learning's sake, the enhancement of transferable skills, and development of social and family links; with little evidence of conflict between learners.

Defining migrant workers as a specific group is less important to ULRs than including all workers in learning activities of some sort, regardless of ethnicity and origin. In this environment, meeting individuals' learning needs is the key principle, and there is a recognition that skill and qualification levels, and learning needs, cut across ethnicities; such that workers from across the range of recent migrants to indigenous (white British) origins, can include highly-educated people and those with basic skills needs, including English.

During the visits the team spoke with workers from diverse backgrounds with regards to ethnicity and formal education. Some were BME workers born in the UK while others were migrant workers

whose residencies varied from more than 20 years to less than five years. What emerged was that it is inappropriate to utilise the generic term 'migrant worker' as there appear to be no clear patterns of migrant workers across the organisation; there is, in fact, a 'superdiversity' of workers who not only originate from a number of different countries, but represent a multiplicity of ethnicities, cultures, religions and educational backgrounds.

## Areas to work on

One more worrying finding was that minority and migrant workers are disproportionately on late and/or night shifts, where courses are more difficult to arrange, and in support and ancillary roles where agreements with employers were not as common.

Commenting on the report, CWU project manager Paul Dovey said: "I would like to thank Professor Jane Hardy, Dr Moira Calveley and Dr Steve Shelley for a very interesting report. Generally it provides us with a picture of well-integrated learning at CWU that is responsive to learners needs whatever their ethnicity. But, it has also identified areas that we need to work on."

