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COMMUNIQUE



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MENTAL HEALTH AND LEARNING

How to ensure that members receive the support they need

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SKILLS FOR ALL LEVELS

BILLY HAYES
GENERAL SECRETARY



I'm currently taking an Outlook course at our U-Learn centre, in Wimbledon. I'm not the only officer who has taken advantage of the courses offered to all our activists and staff there – and I only comment on it because it's important for us to all remember that, with the pace of change in modern society, we all have something to learn. Union Learning has enabled around 10 per cent of our members to take up new challenges and

learn new skills. This is a great achievement – but it also shows that we still have a long way to go. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our ULRs at Wimbledon for arranging the courses for us – and to thank all of our ULRs up and down the country who are arranging courses for our members at a time when gaining new skills has never been more important.

Dream more, learn more, do more...

TRISH LAVELLE
HEAD OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

It has been a really busy first quarter for education and learning in the CWU with a number of new courses developed and delivered. Notably, our bespoke courses for Virgin Media, Sitel and ROMEC, which have been extremely well received, and our brand new modular training programme for Branch Secretaries is heavily oversubscribed with applications. The popular new organising and leadership focussed Advanced Skills programme, and specialist training for Branch Treasurers and Financial Secretaries is also helping us to develop the next generation of leadership roles.

We have seen an unprecedented increase in demand for all our activist training courses recently, and have received consistently good feedback on their effectiveness. The department started the year by providing a TUC Education briefing to a number of CWU tutors. So, combined with our new CWU tutors in Northern Ireland, Jersey and Scotland, this latest tutor development initiative is strengthening our ability to respond to Branch needs and we are able deliver more regional courses, more cost effectively, when and where they are most needed across the UK.

On the learning front, the excellent news that we have received a further year's funding to support our work in Northern Ireland, England and Scotland is more than welcome and will help us continue the process of strengthening our Regional Learning Committees and further embedding learning.

The Union Learning Fund has also in the last week bestowed a National Outstanding Achievement Award on the CWU for the quality of the work done by our Union Learning Reps – greatly deserved recognition from the wider movement for our very hardworking and very talented ULRs who have delivered almost 28,000 learning opportunities to our members in the last four years.

And as we go to print, we have received the fantastic news that two more of our Regions have been awarded the Matrix Standard for the quality of our advice and guidance for learners. It is great to get credit for a job well done and demonstrates the quality of our branches and our ULRs who are really leading for us on the learning agenda. John Quincy Adams said: "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader," and in many ways that sums up the aims of the Education and Training Department in terms of our activist education and union learning.

T. Lavelle



GOVERNMENT
DRIVE TO GIVE LOW
INCOME FAMILIES
ONLINE SKILLS
HOME ACCESS



HOME ACCESS PROGRAMME – DO YOU QUALIFY?

Home Access Grants are allowing low-income families to be a mouse click away from the World Wide Web

CLICK FOR HOME ACCESS

Home Access is a government drive that helps low-income families get access to a computer (and the internet) so they can get online at home. Home Access provides grants to low income families to buy a computer and/or internet package so they can learn safely, have fun and achieve more at school.

Following the successful pilot, the Home Access programme is now available nationally across England.

Those families in receipt of certain benefits could qualify for a grant to buy a computer and/or a minimum of

one year's internet access. The programme is aimed at those that need it most and targets families that do not have access to a computer or the internet at home.

“...learn safely... and achieve more at school...”

Depending on what is needed, the grant allows all eligible applicants to buy one of the following packages:
1. Full package (a computer, one year's

internet access, service and support).

2. A computer with service and support only.

3. One year's internet access only.

Eligibility check

Families that think they qualify can take a quick eligibility check below. They may be able to qualify for a Home Access Grant if they can answer YES to:

- Three questions in Section one, and...
- At least one question in Section two.

Section One

Are you a parent or guardian responsible for and living with a child;

- who is in school years three to nine?
- who attends a state-maintained school in England full time?
- who has not already had a computer from a Home Access Grant or similar programme, such as Computers for Pupils?

Section Two

Do you receive at least one of the following?

- Free school meals for your child
- Income based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income support
- Child Tax Credit but not Working Tax Credit, and an income of less than £16,040
- Guaranteed Pension Credit (not Savings Credit)
- Income-based Employment Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

For carers and foster parents

If you are a foster carer for Looked After Children in years one to 13 then you could also get a Home Access Grant.

● Do you qualify? If you think you qualify for a Home Access Grant please call the Home Access Grant Helpline on 0333 200 1004* to get an application form. For more information visit www.homeaccess.org.uk





CTC London regional programme

IT COURSES

Being declared as 'surplus' and placed in BT's Career Transition Centre can be very stressful for members – and, in London, ULRs have been working hard to ensure members have a more positive experience during what can be a very trying time.

“...it's good to be able to offer members some meaningful training and support...”

The CWU has negotiated with CTC managers so that members can attend IT courses at Level 1 (Introductory) and Level 2 (Intermediate). All those attending cover both courses regardless of any previous knowledge and experience in order to allow them to progress to higher level courses.

Members attend during work time on full pay and each course is delivered over two weeks (two x three days,

9.30am to 3.30pm). The course covers Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint.

The college supplies the course materials and the manager of the CTC staff supplies a USB memory stick to each member attending (which the manager orders through BT).

Feedback from both members and BT has been very positive and the CWU is now trying to run ITQ courses for all those who have completed IT

Skills Level 1 and Level 2.

The good news is that many members have now found jobs and this means that fewer are now available to take these courses, however, it is good to be able to offer members some meaningful training and support when it's most needed.

● For further info contact:
Vic Paulino, CWU London
project worker, on 07949
122 193

[WWW.CWU.ORG]

Reaching out from Goonhilly

LEARNING OPS

CWU members at BT's Goonhilly site will be enjoying new learning opportunities from April.

Geoff Hodge, the Lead ULR, has managed to secure a number of IT courses for their benefit.

After a recent open day, 24 members applied for the courses, based on ECDL and ITQ units. Most will be evening classes but some members will also be studying from home. This flexibility has meant that *all* staff, from managers to security staff have been able to take advantage.

An additional bonus is that the courses will attract funding through the Convergence Fund; European Social Funding managed locally through Unionlearn to benefit learners in the Cornwall area (which recognises the special economic status of the county).

Geoff is now keen to spread the word by bringing courses to the BT Call Centre in Truro, and planning open days with the colleges to promote future courses.

A life in the day of an 'ordinary' postman

BOOK REVIEW

A Huddersfield postman has put pen to paper to record his 10 years working at the coal face of the postal service.

In this collection of vignettes, set alongside photographs by the prize-winning Shaw and Shaw team, Kevin Boniface gives an insight into a postman's everyday working life and manages to bring humour to

the monotony of life for a delivery post person.

Kevin paints a matchless, and hilariously recognisable, portrait of weekday life in an ordinary English town.

“...manages to bring humour to the monotony of life...”

Anyone who enjoys the quirkiness of everyday life – and has a love of

photography – should take the time to read this book, though it's not for the faint hearted!

Fellow colleague Diane Gledhill said: “As a union learning rep I would like to say

that if you feel inspired by Kevin's achievements then don't let it go, see your work place learning rep and find out what we have to offer in our learning centres that could help you.”



Influence your future by embracing the digital age

WEB POWER

The American, the French and the Russian revolutions have all influenced their respective countries both economical and socially. Now it is the digital revolution that is having a profound impact.

As a relative new kid on the block (it's some 20 years since Tim Berners-Lees invented the world wide web, which enabled online communication on a global scale), we sometimes need to sit back and take

stock of its impact – and how, for better and for worse, the digital revolution is reshaping all our lives.

75% ...number of people still 'offline'

Technology is never neutral; it is always influenced by the people and societies in which it develops, and it can change those people and societies.

The digital revolution challenges us to think about what it

is we've made, what it can do, what it is doing to us and the world we live in. With only a quarter of the planet connected: what exactly lies ahead as the remaining 75 per cent of the world's population comes online?

The world wide web has created unimaginable wealth, yet encouraged millions to work for nothing; it has helped spread democracy and challenged authority, yet allowed regimes to spy and censor as

never before; it has been blamed for creating a generation of web addicts, yet has opened up new realms of knowledge.

For good or bad, the digital revolution is here to stay. That is why everyone involved in CWU learning is pro-actively encouraging members to engage in this revolution.

Through e-learning and ICT computer courses members can influence their own development and that of future generations.

InBrief

B.S.L courses

The CWU – through dialogue with its ULRs and members – is aware of the social isolation deaf members experience in the workplace. The union is trying to address this issue by getting employers to fund British Sign Language courses for members and managers. This will ensure the workplace becomes an open and inclusive place for people with a disability.

New London Learning Centre opens

North East London is currently well on its way to opening a second Learning Centre in its catchment area in Ilford. With the branches blessing, members John Porter and Colin Carter hope to have a grand opening in March.

>For further info contact Vic Paulino on 07949 122 193.

Local teaching, local learning

The School of Everything is a website that puts people in touch with local teachers and lessons.

>For more information visit www.schoolofeverything.com

TIME OFF TO TRAIN

YOUR RIGHTS TO LEARN

Get the low down on requesting Time to Train with our quick guide to the legislation and employer responsibilities



From April 6 2010 (2011 for SMEs), workers will have the legal right to request Time to Train.

To make a statutory request for time to train individuals must:

- be an employee
- have worked for their employer continuously for at least 26 weeks

Basic principles

According to the new legislation, there is no limit to the length of time requested but the training should help improve business performance and personal effectiveness. The training could be:

- in an area directly related to current work
- something that will enable progress within the business
- something that will enable progress in a different area

Although individuals can make more than one request, the employer only has to consider one request per worker in any 12 month period. One request can cover more than one type of training, but the request should be seen to be reasonable.

Individuals can ask the employer to cover course fees but should make it clear in their request. Alternatively, the employer can propose that Time to

Train is unpaid or that the time is made up later.

Request stipulations

Requests must be in writing, and dated, and include:

- that it is a request under 'Section 63D of the Employment Rights Act 1996'
- the subject of the course
- where and when the training would take place
- who will provide or supervise the training
- the name of the qualification (if any)
- an explanation of how this training will improve effectiveness or performance

“The employer has a duty to consider the request. They can only refuse it if they have a good business reason”

Individuals can be accompanied by a ULR, other union rep or friend. They are entitled to paid time off to do this. During the discussion, the employer may suggest different options or different ways to meet the training need.

The employer has a duty to consider the request. They can only reject it if they have a good business reason.

If an employer agrees to a request they must do so in writing. The individual should keep a copy of the letter. If the individual fails to attend the agreed training without telling the employer, this could result in disciplinary action.

If the employer rejects the request, they must also do this in writing. They should explain accurately why they have rejected the request. If the individual is unhappy with the employer's decision they have 14 days to appeal. The employer must arrange a meeting to discuss the appeal within 14 days of it being sent. Afterwards, the employer must give their decision in writing within 14 days. Once again, the employee has the right to be accompanied.

The CWU and Unionlearn will be rolling out more information on time off to train in the coming months.

What to do if a time to train request gets messy

If a Time to Train request takes a long time to be resolved then it could be raised through the company grievance procedure. If all other ways of resolving the issue have been attempted, there may be the possibility of making an Employment Tribunal claim if the employer:

- failed to follow the procedure properly
- rejected a request on the basis of incorrect facts

An Employment Tribunal claim has to be made within three months. ACAS may be able to offer its 'pre-claim conciliation' service before a complaint to an Employment Tribunal is made. The law protects employees against dismissal or suffering detrimental treatment because of:

- applying for Time to Train
- being granted a Time to Train request
- complaining about the right to request Time to Train

Detrimental treatment could be, for example, that an employer has refused someone a promotion or training. If this happens, they may have the right to complain to an Employment Tribunal.

Advice on training is available from ULRs (who will be briefed on the new rights) and further support is available from the CWU Education and Training Department.



- whether a previous request has been made

Employer responsibilities

Within 28 days of receiving your request an employer must either:

- accept it and give their decision in writing
- arrange a meeting with the employee to discuss it and within 14 days of that meeting inform them of their decision

One-to-one discussion

If the employer wants to hold a meeting this should be arranged at an appropriate time for everyone attending.



Mental health problems affect one in four people. Union reps can offer members support

MENTAL HEALTH AND LEARNING

One in four people will experience some kind of mental health problem in the course of a year. How can union reps ensure that they offer appropriate support?

Everyone has mental health in the same way as they have physical health. It can be good or not so good; it can change by the hour or less.

Official figures reckon that one in four of the population will suffer from a mental health problem in the course of a year. For some it may be a short term problem, for others it can be a lifetime sentence.

So how does it affect you?

Anyone who works in a College, University or Adult Community Learning organisation is required by law to ensure that people with mental health difficulties are not discriminated against. Discrimination can take many forms and the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001) – and their accompanying guidelines – cover the responsibility of employers to ensure that discrimination doesn't take place and that reasonable adjustments are made where necessary.

The biggest issue for ULRs is that the majority of people

with a mental health problem aren't going to tell anyone about it. Mental health issues still have a stigma attached to them that is unlike that of almost any other illness.

What can you do about it?

It's important to have some understanding of the issues.

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) has done a lot of work on this area with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). In March last year, the LSC produced a Mental Health Strategy and a Learning and Mental Health Guide. NIACE has a specific director and web pages for mental health called 'One in Four', as well as a series of guides, and it is due to produce the final report on the work of the Mental Health Partnership programme in April this year.

It might sound strange, but it's worth treating everyone as if they have a mental health problem. This doesn't mean being over-attentive or overly-considerate, but when you meet a new learner or potential learner just offer them your support. Let them

Work and mental health

Helping people with mental health problems to retain their employment is vitally important. Too many people who develop mental health problems lose their jobs, and with them a source of income, social status and self-esteem. Work is often an important part of the recovery process for someone with mental ill health.

CWU Education & Training Dept. can deliver our 2 Day CWU Mental Health Awareness Course for CWU Representatives. Issues covered in the course include:

- Images and Impacts of Mental Health
- Mental Health Problems Their Symptoms, Treatments and Impacts
- Discrimination in the Workplace
- Disability Discrimination Law
- Mental Health Case Studies
- Stress
- Issues for Trade Union Representatives when Representing Members with Mental Health Problems
- Trade Unions and Employers Working Together to Create a Mentally Healthy Workplace

For more information on the course or how this can be delivered, please contact Lee Wakeman in the Education & Training Department.

TO FIND OUT MORE GO TO
 INFO@JOURNEYSONLINE.ORG.UK /
 WWW.JOURNEYSONLINE.ORG.UK

► know that if they have a problem of any kind that you are there to deal with it and help them to the best of your ability, and in confidence.

If they do identify that they have a mental health issue, acknowledge the information, confirm that you will not discuss it with anyone else without their permission and verify what their needs may be. Assure them that they can raise any learning issues with you without any worry or embarrassment, remind them that all learners have issues and they are not alone.

However, don't be over solicitous and keep asking how they are; check on how their learning is going in the same way you would other learners so that you don't draw attention to the individual.

Just remember to treat others as you would want to be treated in the same position.

Recognise the signs

On February 23 and 24, CWU ULRs and USRs attended a Mental Health First Aid (Wales) course in Port Talbot. This was a multi-union course run in conjunction with the Workers Education Association by Journeys.

MHFA (Wales) is a two-day course that improves mental health literacy and helps people to recognise the signs and symptoms of someone with mental health problems: to respond to various mental health crises; and to engage with, signpost and support people in their quest for appropriate professional help. MHFA (Wales) is for

everyone. It helps individuals who want to raise their awareness and learn new skills, as well as organisations or businesses that want to improve mental health practices in the workplace.

The frequency of mental health disorders in the UK is thought to change slightly every year, but nobody can know the exact figures as many cases go unnoticed for such a long time. Surveys have collected figures that show it is possible for one in six of the British population to be affected by a life-disrupting mental illness at any one time.

Data has also been collected that shows a quarter of individuals in the UK can suffer from a mental disorder at the same time; this does however include less serious illnesses as well.

Understanding how to recognise these issues and what effective treatments are available is not widespread. With greater community awareness, people will be able to recognise their own and others' problems and feel more comfortable when seeking assistance.

CWU reps who have attended this course know how to respond in a mental health crisis situation. Through training they have learnt how to approach the situation calmly and confidently and to respond in a way which will best assist the individual concerned.

Participants have found the course to be very informative and reflective

of situations they and their colleagues meet on a regular basis. They will all receive certificates of attendance and a 'Journeys' course manual.

Mental Health Action Week 4-10 April 2010

Statistics on mental health

- 1 in 4 people will experience some kind of mental health problem in the course of a year
- Mixed-anxiety and depression is the most common mental disorder in Britain
- Women are more likely to have been treated for a mental health problem than men
- About 10 per cent of children have a mental health problem
- Depression affects 1 in 5 older people living in the community and 2 in 5 living in care homes
- British men are three times as likely as British women to die by suicide
- The UK has one of the highest rates of self harm in Europe, at 400 per 100,000 population
- Nine out of 10 prisoners have been diagnosed with a mental disorder

● Useful links: www.mind.org.uk
www.niace.org.uk/current-work/area/mental-health
<http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/yorkshireandthehumber/yr-learningandmentalhealth-gn.pdf>
<http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nat-mentalhealthstrategy-mar09.pdf>



COLLEGE LINK UP
BOOSTS LEARNING
OPPORTUNITIES
ACTIVIST TRAINING



New agreement will train CWU leaders of tomorrow in Northern Ireland

A ground-breaking partnership between North West Regional College and the CWU will provide training for all

ACTIVISM PARTNERS



The CWU have signed a new ground-breaking agreement with the North West Regional College in Northern Ireland to provide its Activist Training requirements in the region – for all. The agreement, which is modelled on its extremely successful agreement with Solihull College in England, will provide a wide range of courses for activists across the region, which will be delivered by CWU tutors.

Signing the Agreement for the CWU at the union's Education Centre, at Alvescot Lodge, Trish Lavelle, head of education and training, was enthusiastic about the new partnership.

“...this is a relationship that we expect to be successful for all parties...”

“At a time when supporting reps and growing our union at

grassroots level is the main priority this will provide our activists in Northern Ireland with access to a high standard of learning to support and sustain them in their role,” she said. “Our local reps of today are the leaders of tomorrow and we have a responsibility to ensure they get training of the highest quality. I would like to place on record my appreciation of the work done by Lawrence Huston, our regional secretary in Northern Ireland who has put an enormous amount of work into getting this agreement in place.”

Representing the North West Regional College, John Hueston welcomed the new initiative, saying:

“We are delighted to be working with the CWU, who share our vision in terms of progressive high-quality learning for

trade unionists. Combined with our state-of-the-art training facilities and the CWU's track record on learning – this is a relationship that we expect to be successful for all parties.”

Lawrence Huston added: “This innovative agreement gets vital training out to all our activists across the region but it also helps us develop our own pool of CWU tutors. We look forward to seeing this partnership grow and develop over the next 12 months.”

The CWU Education and Training Department is now finalising a Spring/Summer programme for activists in Northern Ireland, which will be advertised soon.

● For more information contact tlavelle@cwu.org or keep up to date with regional courses at www.cwueducation.org

[TO FIND OUT MORE GO TO]
WWW.CWUEDUCATION.ORG



COLINDALE STUDENTS GET I.T. NVQ LEVEL 2

‘Commitment level and high-quality work’ of ITQ students is recognised at an official certificate presentation ceremony at CWU Learning Centre

The official presentation of certificates for all members who successfully completed the ITQ/ECDL course was held at Colindale House this spring.

Andy Park, BT Group employee relations manager, and Lee Wakeman, CWU education and training policy assistant, presented the certificates.

Tony Holding, CoNEL course co-ordinator, and Geraldine Richards, one of the course tutors, also attended the presentation held on February 4, as did Vic Paulino, the London regional project worker.

Andy and Lee praised the work done in the Learning Centre and praised the opportunities that were

being provided for members, which enabled them to take the ITQ/ECDL course and gain worthwhile qualifications.

Recognising talents

Andy recognised the lead taken by CWU in establishing Learning Centres in BT buildings, which provided training courses that benefited the staff and the company.

The event was arranged to recognise the achievements of all those who completed the ITQ/ECDL course – an advanced level IT Skills programme that involved taking ECDL module tests, and also completing supporting evidence for assessment for the mandatory ITQ module.

Vic Paulino commended

Above: Colindale students receive their certificates

the students for their hard work, saying: “Each student has individually based the evidence on their own day-to-day work scenario or other personal interest or activity with other organisations.

“The commitment level shown by all those who completed the course needs to be highlighted and commended. The level and content of the work produced was also of a very high quality,” he said.

“All those who persevered and completed the course worked very hard to gain the qualification. That is why it was extremely worthwhile to recognise this and arrange a presentation event. I’d like to say well done to all!”



WRITE STUFF

Budding novelists get guidance on penning their first stories

CWU UNION LEARNING REPRESENTATIVES

Glasgow Mail Centre workers hone their skills in a CWU-organised short story competition and get inspired at creative writing workshops at their Key2Learn Centre – where special guest crime writer Allan Guthrie read to guests and shared tips



L-R: Stevie McGrath (2nd) Michael Gribbin (1st) and Tam McCoid (3rd)

Three Glasgow Mail Centre workers have proved they are budding Dan Browns after winning a short-story competition organised by the CWU.

Postman Michael Gribbin clinched first place for his winning story, *A Boys Night Out*, while second place went to colleague Stevie McGrath, and third place to Tam McCoid.

The competition was organised by the Key2Learn Centre in the Glasgow Mail Centre through the CWU ULRs.

Open to all staff working at the Mail Centre, the competition was used to promote creative writing classes provided by the Workers Education Association (WEA). These classes lasted for 10 weeks and

Attendees of the short story prize giving event in the KEY 2 Learn Centre

were run at two different times to accommodate shift workers in the Mail Centre. At the prize giving event, held in the learning centre on November 18, the judges provided feedback on the entries.

Following this event, the CWU – in partnership with the WEA, Glasgow City Council and Royal Mail – ran a workshop where Scottish crime novelist Allan Guthrie shared his writing secrets.

The author, who is also a literary agent, spent an afternoon at the centre reading from his 2007 novel *Kill Clock* and set writing exercises to help people get their creative juices flowing.

“There’s a lot of smart people here who are interested in

writing, so it was great to have Allan in,” said CWU learning rep Brian Regan.

“One thing he commented on was how pleased he was to see so many men in the workshop, which you don’t usually see in creative writing classes.”

“...it was great to get guidance on writing from a published author like Guthrie...”

The workshop, which was part of Glasgow’s ‘Aye Write!’ Book Festival was organised for colleagues who’d completed a creative writing class last summer at the Key2Learn Centre in the mail centre.

First place winner Michael, who was

among the workshop attendees, had never written fiction before he started the course but now hopes to pen a novel: “The workshop was very useful,” he said. “It was great to get guidance on writing from a published author like Guthrie.”

During the book festival, learners from the Key2Learn Centre also exhibited some examples of their writing at the Mitchell Library in Glasgow. Some learners and ULRs attended the event to talk about their experiences surrounding the creative writing courses. Royal Mail provided time off to attend the event and the workshop delivered by Guthrie.

More than 300 people have now completed a course at the Key2Learn Centre since it opened in 2008.

As well as creative writing, there are classes in managing money, computing, English for speakers of other languages, Spanish, Italian and sign language.



[MATRIX
STANDARD]

NORTH SECURES MATRIX STANDARD

With the North West and North East achieving accreditation, lifelong learning and regional project worker for the North West, **Ray Atkinson**, outlines what it means

Following six months of planning and preparation – and some sweat and tears – the North West and North East regions have achieved Matrix Accreditation.

The Matrix standard is the benchmark required by almost all funding bodies and is used by many professional organisations to show that the Quality of Service they deliver is the highest it can be.

CWU is no stranger to gaining the standard: first achieving it in Preston in 2003 and then being successfully reassessed in 2006. It also gained the standard in the Live & Learn Learning Centre in Middlesbrough and the Come With Us & Learn Centre in Northallerton. The Live & Learn Centre is also a Centre of Excellence. Last year, the Midlands Region also gained the standard, and it is hoped that later this year all the regions in England will have achieved the Matrix Standard.

“The inspector saw examples of some of the feedback and advice CWU gives and confirmed it was “second to none”

The process in the North was quite in depth. Over the last 18 months, CWU has trained more than 40 ULRs, across both regions, to Level 3 or Level 4 in Information,



Above: Six months of hard work has paid off for the North West and North East regions

Advice and Guidance (IAG). It had to ensure that learners were given good quality advice, that the advice was impartial, and it had to keep secure, up-to-date records.

Although the Learning Centres are not being assessed, it had to make sure all the information a learner might need is available and it has policies displayed that the learner can refer to if they have a problem.

The primary role of the IAG-trained ULR is to conduct one-to-one sessions with members who are looking to undertake a course, or who may be looking for a complete change of direction in their careers.

As part of the assessment process, the assessor visited a number of different locations. In this case he looked at two mail centres, Liverpool and Leeds, the community Learning Centre

in BT Northallerton, a Learning Centre based in CWU-owned premises in Stockport and a Delivery Office, Preston CDO – where no permanent on-site learning facility is possible. All five locations impressed the inspector to the extent that he had no hesitation in informing CWU it had gained the standard.

The inspector was particularly impressed with the work the ULRs do – much of it in their own time – which is still delivered to a high standard despite doing it alongside their ‘day job’.

The inspector also saw examples of some of the feedback and advice CWU gives and confirmed that it was “second to none”.

I would like to thank all the ULRs, Learners and Partners who took part in the assessment, and for all the hard work they put in to gain the standard.

EASEL DOES IT

Swansea art students bring Mail Centre Learning Centre to life!

THE LEARNING CENTRE AT SWANSEA MAIL

Local A-level students are bringing their brushes and easels to the aid of Women's Officer Vanessa Taylor and Office Manager Stacey Parvin to help brighten up a plain wall in their recently renovated Learning Centre



Vanessa Taylor
and Stacey Parvin

The Learning Centre at Swansea Mail Centre

has recently been given a face-lift with freshly painted walls and state-of-the-art wireless broadband installed – but it will now be given an even bigger splash of colour, thanks to the local secondary school!

The Mail Centre's back wall was looking very plain and was in need of brightening up. After considering what could be done, centre staff decided that it would be a great idea to involve

the local secondary school. An invitation was sent, with Royal Mail approval, and the A-level students were invited to design and paint a large mural for the wall.

The students are currently working with their teacher on the

“This is a great way to involve the local community and heighten the profile of the Centre”

design and the CWU are hopeful that the painting will start in the not too distant future.

Kim Johnson, CWU project worker for Wales said: “This is a great way to involve the local community and heighten the profile of the Learning Centre, I can't wait to see the finished work.”

On February 16 and 17, an open day was held to help make everyone aware of the recent changes – and the fact that the centre was able to offer a much wider range of

courses and activities.

All workers were encouraged to attend and learning questionnaires were completed to ensure that everyone had the chance to project their views regarding courses. It also gave them the chance to enter a free draw, for a chance to win wine and chocolates.

Richard Veale, from Coleg Glan Hafren, was on site to answer questions and queries regarding IT courses and qualifications. Lead ULR Steve Gibbins, ULR Gary Williams, Women's Officer Vanessa Taylor and Kim Johnson were also on hand to give advice, information and guidance.

Courses in Welsh and IT are due to start after Easter.

● Contact CWU's
Kim Johnson on
07841 922 986 for
more information

[www.cwu.org]



LETTER OF THE MONTH



Scholarship fund gone missing

Whatever happened to the CWU scholarship fund? As a recipient of the said fund I was able to do an Open University course last year, earning 30 points towards a degree. This year, it seems to have disappeared off the CWU website.

Of course, in these cash strapped times, the fund may have been a victim of cutbacks but it seems a pity that a route to higher education for our members had to be sacrificed.

Maybe it will make a comeback and the CWU education policy (rule 2.1.7) stating that our union shall promote, organise and facilitate access to adult education shall remain as strong as previous years.

Martin Mc Mullan

N.Ireland Combined Branch union learning rep

CWU Education and Training Department comment:

The link to information relating to the CWU Scholarship Fund was only very recently removed from www.cwueducation.org while a review took place on how it was administered.

A decision has now been endorsed by the National Executive Council to divert the funding from the scholarship fund and support the collective approach of funding CWU members' fees and other associated costs to study up to degree level on the BA in Labour & Trade Union (BALTUS) course, in partnership with London Metropolitan University.

CWU under the auspices of its various lifelong learning projects, its activist training and all existing Scholarship Fund beneficiaries continues to support thousands of reps and members.

More information on exact numbers of CWU supported adult learners can be found in this year's annual report and the latest on the Scholarship Fund and BALTUS was sent out in letters to branches 155/10 and 156/10 dated February 23, 2010.

CWU Education and Training would like to take the opportunity to thank Martin for taking the time to highlight this issue by way of his letter. The union is wholeheartedly committed to Rule 2.1.7. and we hope he agrees that the figures bear testimony to the fact that we are promoting, organising and facilitating access to adult education more than ever before!

Global community

Hi, it's Gemma here from Meridian Branch. Just writing to see how you all are? As some of you know, I'm travelling at the moment and about three weeks ago I was on Waiheke Island, just off the coast of Auckland New Zealand, where I managed to find a community-based learning centre that helps adults to learn how to read and write. I found it amazing that even on the other side of the world people are putting things in place to make a difference! I am currently in Tokyo for a week or so and I have my eyes open for something here too.

*Gemma Banks,
Meridian Branch*

CWU Education and Training Department comment:

Thanks Gemma, it's nice to know that our ULRs don't necessarily stop being ULRs once they leave their current employer. It's also fascinating to get updates from around the world that remind us that the skills agenda is worldwide – and that employers (and governments) ignore it at the risk of the UK's future competitiveness.

**SEND YOUR LETTERS TO:**

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