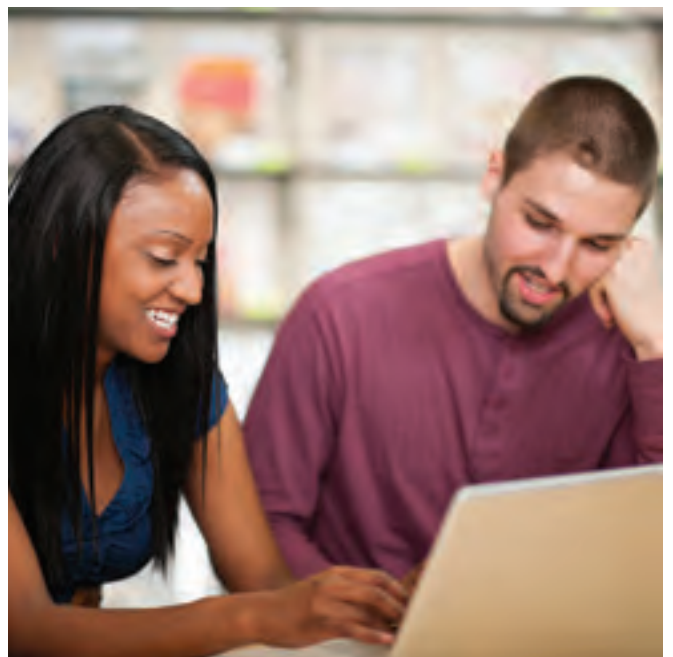




Supporting learners

A guide for union reps



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Introduction



Why it is important to support learners

Unions, their union reps and union learning representatives (ULRs) are now established as key players in the drive to improve skills due to their unique position in the workplace.

As a union rep you understand the organisation that you work for and have the trust of members, which means that you are often the first port of call for advice on learning in the workplace. You have a key role in motivating and encouraging members to become learners, fulfil their goals and cope with change at work. You will also be aware that the economy needs a skilled technical workforce with people able and confident enough to move jobs and roles as the labour market demands shift. So, the role of the union rep is about helping members find personal fulfilment and security at work, but also has a wider societal role in contributing to an equitable, fair and prosperous nation.

However, although you have an important role to play when supporting learners you are unlikely to be a professionally qualified careers adviser. This guide will help you to provide learners with the right level of support that encourages their learning and progression and helps them to develop skills to manage their own careers.

The term 'supporting learners' is used instead of 'IAG' (information, advice and guidance) or 'careers advice' to describe the activities of ULRs. Their most important role is in mentoring, coaching and signposting.

A vital time for ULRs

We live in times of inequality, lack of social mobility, a rapidly changing and uncertain labour market and skills shortages. These challenges face people in employment as well as those who are out of the labour market. Learning and skills development has never been more important.

In recognition of this, the government has introduced a number of policy initiatives, such as the post-16 technical skills reform, the National Retraining Scheme, reform of apprenticeships, English, maths and digital skills development, the Industrial Strategy and the Careers Strategy.

The Careers Strategy: making the most of everyone's skills and talents

Published in December 2018, the Careers Strategy sets out the government's ambition to raise the quality and quantity of careers provision, so that people of all ages can fulfil their potential and have rewarding careers.

In particular the Careers Strategy states:

- All adults should have access to free face-to-face advice, with more bespoke support to those who need it.
- The importance of developing the skills of those already in the workforce.
- That careers advice should be well positioned to support local economic growth and skills shortages.
- The need for a growth in apprenticeship provision.

The full policy can be downloaded from www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-strategy-making-the-most-of-everyones-skills-and-talents





The unionlearn Strategy for Supporting Learners: providing quality information, advice and support for learning

In recognition of the distinct and important role that unionlearn plays in contribution to the learning and skills landscape, it developed a Supporting Learners Strategy. It has six themes:

- 1. promoting apprenticeships**
- 2. supporting the union approach to English, maths and digital skills**
- 3. helping disadvantaged learners**
- 4. supporting learning and progression for all ages by facilitating access to quality, impartial information and advice about learning and work**
- 5. supporting older workers**
- 6. working with key partners and stakeholders.**

At the centre of this strategy is the work of ULRs, who are ideally placed to support learners as they speak the same language as their members and have their trust. Learners then feel supported in accessing the right learning and courses for them.

The ULR role is important. This guide will help you to make the case, develop your skills, support learners and build a network so that the benefits of increased learning and skills will be realised by all.

The government report *The Adult Skills Gap: is failing investment in UK adults stalling social mobility?* published in January 2019 noted that the poorest adults with the lowest skills are least likely to access adult training – despite being the ones who need it most. This is especially the case for men in routine and manual occupations. The digital revolution and globalisation are transforming the labour market. Building a skilled workforce is key to a thriving economy and to supporting individuals.

The learning and skills agenda and policy area is moving fast, and it is likely that we will see more initiatives to upskill young people and adults. The unionlearn Learning and Skills Policy update will help you to keep up to date. Visit www.unionlearn.org.uk and register to regularly receive the Learning and Skills Policy update.

Making the case: the benefits of supporting learners

The following information is not intended as a comprehensive list of the benefits to be gained from supporting learners but it does provide you with some examples that you can draw on.

Unions will receive some of the following benefits by supporting learners:

- learners may join a union
- learners may become union ULRs
- access to more funding, e.g. the Union Learning Fund (ULF)
- providing added value to members at a time of economic uncertainty
- access to a range of resources for union reps from unionlearn, e.g. the union learning Climbing Frame website
- demonstrable commitment and contribution to developing the workforce
- opportunities to develop partnership arrangements, e.g. local providers, National Careers Service advisers
- improved profile as a learning organisation.



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Union members will gain the following benefits from receiving support:

- collective access to services and opportunities
- access to support from union reps, who have a unique understanding of their colleagues and workplace
- the chance to find out about opportunities for learning in the workplace
- identification of their learning and skills needs
- agreement on realistic learning goals and actions
- direction to the right course or training, which might be in the workplace
- ongoing reviews and support as required during learning
- the opportunity to consider what to do next to develop skills further
- a boost to confidence, wellbeing and the ability to cope with change
- the chance for reps to negotiate reduced fees for learning from providers.

Employers gain benefits when employees are supported to learn:

- The organisation shows a commitment to workforce development and being a learning organisation.
- It can help address challenges such as skills gaps and the gender pay gap.
- Staff motivation, health and wellbeing may be improved.
- There is potential for increased levels of production.
- Staff are more likely to respond positively to structural change or change within their jobs.
- A culture of lifelong learning is promoted.
- A contribution is made to achieving national standards, e.g. Investors in People.

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Principles for supporting union learners

The important role of ULRs is founded on some key principles and values. Working to these principles and values underpins everything you do in your role.

Unionlearn and union values

As a union rep you carry out your role in a way that fits with the shared values of unionlearn and trade unions. These are:

- justice and fairness
- equality and equity
- democracy
- unity
- working together.

Added to these, there are two other important principles that apply to your role in supporting learners, and which should also be observed by organisations that you signpost learners to. They are:

Impartiality

This means that you support learners in an unbiased way, and in the interests of the learners. The ways in which you can make sure you do this are:

- Find out as much as you can about individual needs, requirements, interests and abilities so that you can help learners to make the best decisions for them.
- Know where your limitations and boundaries are – be clear about what you don't know! If you are not sure that you have the full range of information needed then check or signpost learners to others who know more.
- Help learners to find out more and check for themselves before deciding on a course of action, and don't advise them to do something because it is the thing you know most about.

You can work towards this by working with other organisations and by taking up training opportunities yourself and keeping up to date.

Confidentiality

You should as far as possible respect the confidentiality and privacy of learners. It is important to agree with learners what this means. Before you work with others to help learners, you must get the learners' consent to share information about themselves that they have given you. If you keep written records or computer records you must ensure that learners know who else will be able to see these, and that they are happy about that.

If it is not possible to be completely confidential, this must be made clear when you first talk to learners. It is an important part of what is known as 'making a contract'.

In May 2018 the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) came into force. You need to make sure you are aware of your union policy and practice on the Regulations. Find out about training on GDPR, for example the 'Preparing for GDPR' webinar, which is available on the TUC Education website: www.tuceducation.org.uk

Equality, diversity and inclusion: supporting every learner

As a ULR it is important to ensure that all learners have fair and equal access to, enjoyment of and success in learning.

The Equality Act 2010 sets out what employers and employees have to do to make all work environments fair and aims to advance equality across the nine protected characteristics – age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, race, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership. ULRs have a vital role in ensuring equality of access and also to advance equality by promoting learning as means to progress in life and overcome disadvantage.

Other factors can impact on a person's ability to access and succeed in learning, such as part-time or agency working, caring responsibilities, medical conditions, English not being the first language, class and socioeconomic background, confidence and mental wellbeing or negative experiences of initial education. It is therefore important to take a broader social inclusion approach.

The nine protected characteristics and the social inclusion factors will overlap for many people, which is often referred to as intersectionality. While the intersectional nature of our identity makes us unique, it also highlights the multiple barriers and disadvantages that some people face. For example, what barriers to learning might an older woman with caring responsibilities and whose first language is not English have?

ULRs also need to be aware of unconscious bias. This is when we make assumptions based on stereotypes, without being aware we are doing it. For example, we may assume what people may, or may not, want to learn based on factors such as age, gender or disability. We all have unconscious bias: we need to check ourselves and reflect upon it for our own professional development and be vigilant where we see it in others. As a ULR, your skills in giving people opportunity to talk about what they want to do and to really listen to them will help check against any unconscious bias.



Using their experience in supporting learners, ULRs can draw out the unique skills and experiences of learners and help them overcome barriers and challenges they may face in accessing and succeeding in learning.

Unionlearn has many resources that can help ULRs to do this:

- **The union learning Climbing Frame** <https://climbingframe.unionlearn.org.uk> has a learning theme on ‘Equality, diversity and learning’ that provides ideas on how to support equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace and on specific equality and diversity issues. It also includes links to other resources on subjects such as young people and apprenticeships, supporting maths and English and mental health.
- **Opening Doors to All: How union learning tackles disadvantage** www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/opening-doors-all-how-union-learning-tackles-disadvantage provides case studies and links to other resources on issues such as lack of confidence, dyslexia, cancer and vulnerable employment.
- **Valuing the skills of older workers** www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/valuing-skills-older-workers-how-do-mid-life-development-review is an information pack with tips on how to do a mid-life development review and support mid-life development.
- **The unionlearn website** www.unionlearn.org.uk provides lots of useful information, including information on ‘barriers to learning’ and ‘widening participation’.

This guide has eight sections:

Getting started as a ULR

An overview of the role of the ULR and of the processes involved to be effective.

The skills of ULRs

The skills and techniques you will use as a ULR to support learners to make informed decisions and move into learning and work opportunities.

Supporting learners – providing information and advice

Information about learning opportunities, applying for courses and writing CVs.

Sources of information and support

All the information that is available from unionlearn and from other organisations to help you support learners.

High-priority areas for learning and work

In-depth information on higher learning, maths, English and digital skills, mental health and wellbeing, and apprenticeships.

Personal development for union reps

Opportunities for your own learning and development.

Websites for supporting learners

Glossary of commonly used terms.

Getting started as a ULR





The role of the union rep

What is the role?

The role of the union rep and in particular the union learning rep (ULR) is central to bringing together the two interrelated elements of work and learning. The skills and qualities that you have play a key part in changing people's lives and making a real difference. You may have become a ULR because you know how important lifelong learning is – perhaps because you returned to learning as an adult so know what an impact it had on your own life. Your passion and enthusiasm for learning is a key strength in engaging learners, particularly those who for many reasons may be anxious or nervous about taking up learning.

Learners may need help to think through and decide:

- how to cope with change at work
- what learning or training they would like to do
- how and where they would like to learn
- what practical things they need to sort out to start learning
- how to plan the best pathways
- what steps to take next.

What does supporting learners mean to a union rep?

The term 'supporting learners' is used by unionlearn to describe the activities of reps when they are working with learners to help them make choices about learning, to take up learning opportunities that are right for them and to help them to progress in their jobs and careers. While these activities involve some elements of information and advice, they also include mentoring, coaching, signposting and facilitating learning.

Providing information

This is probably the most important part of the careers information and advice process for union reps.

Information may be about:

- local learning opportunities (e.g. union and other work-based learning centres, trade union studies centres, colleges of further and higher education, community learning centres, work-based providers)
- online learning opportunities
- opportunities for higher-level learning
- apprenticeships and other work-based learning
- learner incentives and entitlements
- particular learning interests and needs or job-related skills development
- accessing more specialist advice or fuller in-depth professional career guidance
- arranging a skills health check, dyslexia assessment, or an English, maths and digital skills assessment
- disability and employment issues, including support for specific disabilities and current government schemes.

There is a whole section in this guide on sources of information and support on pages 33-44.

Making information accessible

Some learners will be able to make decisions about the learning path they want to take simply by accessing the information you provide, without any discussion.

Others will need you to work with them. You need to consider the quality and accessibility of the information you offer, bearing in mind that some learners may have literacy needs, some may have learning difficulties and for others their first language may not be English.

Information can be provided through:

- Printed materials – leaflets, prospectuses etc.
- Online resources – websites that provide information, skills checks, apps, courses etc.

Signposting/referral

Signposting/referral means redirecting people to other sources of information, professional guidance, specialist advice or a particular course or learning programme.

It may involve:

- referring learners in their workplace or union for specialist information or advice
- signposting to other external provision or specialist help
- finding out about the Equality Act (2010) and other relevant legislation

- showing learners how to access free services for learning and work, including the National Careers Service and, where appropriate, Jobcentre Plus.

Advice and guidance

Advice means helping people to understand information and decide on the most suitable course of action for them. Advice must be impartial and centred on the needs and interests of the learners. It may involve signposting/referral as described above.

There are different levels of guidance: some parts of guidance may not be part of your role as a union rep because specialist knowledge and skills are needed. You may wish to talk to/negotiate with your employer about buying in access to some of these professional services for learners who require a more in-depth approach, or specialist advice or assessment.

Specialist advice and assessment

This may be part of the professional guidance process or separate from it. Sources of specialist advice include:

- local learning providers such as a college – they will be able to tell you about entry requirements and course content and also assess English, maths and digital skills, and any additional learning support
- sector skills councils and local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) – some will provide advice on particular jobs and requirements
- disabilities and learning difficulties – the organisations listed on page 44 can provide specialist advice
- becoming self-employed and business start-up advice – the www.gov.uk website provides useful information on these
- The National Careers Services <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk> provides in-depth guidance, a skills health check and information on occupations and courses.

Drawing up your own list of local contacts, with phone numbers, websites and email addresses, for specialist advice and assessment will prove invaluable.

Coaching and mentoring

Coaching and mentoring can be part of the ULR role. The terms ‘coaching’ and ‘mentoring’ are often used interchangeably, but the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) highlights the differences between them.

Despite the differences between mentoring and coaching, both can be applied in a ULR role through the following activities:

- building trust and rapport with learners
- listening to and asking questions
- providing objective, confidential and trustworthy support
- acting as a role model, using your own experience as a learner
- brokering access to a range of opportunities and support
- sharing ideas about learning and experiences
- providing information and feedback
- helping learners to gain confidence and take charge of their learning, stimulating and encouraging them to grow in their own way and within their own potential

- helping learners to think through issues, arrive at their own solutions and gain control of their own development
- helping learners to identify and clarify their learning goals and further opportunities for learning and development
- helping learners to plan and to review their achievements
- helping learners to prepare for any assessment they may have to undertake.

TUC Education has an eNote (electronic briefing) on mentoring: register to access this and other eNotes from TUC Education at www.tuceducation.org.uk/enotes

Many of the skills used to provide coaching and mentoring, such as active listening, questioning and challenging skills, are explored in the next section.

The differences between coaching and mentoring

COACHING

Relationship generally has a set duration

Generally more structured in nature: meetings are scheduled on a regular basis

Short term (sometimes time-bounded) and focused on specific development issues/areas

Coaching does not generally have direct experience of the client’s occupational role, unless the coaching is specific and skills- focused

Focus is generally on development/issues at work

Agenda is focused on achieving specific, immediate goals.

MENTORING

Relationship is ongoing and can last for a long period of time

More informal: meetings can take place as and when the client needs some advice, guidance or support

More long term and taking a broader view of the person

Mentor is generally more experienced than the client, often a senior person in an organisation or with knowledge they can pass on

Focus is on career and personal development

Agenda is set by the client, with the mentor providing support and guidance to prepare them for future roles.

Identifying needs

As a ULR, you will have undertaken either the TUC's or your own union's learning rep course(s) and will have found out about learning and organising. You will also have received information about using different approaches to identifying learner needs through a survey, quiz or questionnaire approach. If you are looking at the workforce as a whole, it is important to get some initial feedback from members about what they would like to learn so that you can arrange for one-to-one interviews or group sessions to find out more. Further information about identifying learners' needs and a sample questionnaire can be found in your learning rep training manual, and in the eNote on Supporting Learners. Visit www.tuceducation.org.uk and register to view this e-learning module for lots of practical help.

Starting discussions with learners about their training and learning opportunities is covered fully in the next section on pages 15-16.

Empowering learners

Helping learners to use other agencies such as the National Careers Service or to research information for themselves is a very important part of your role and can empower learners to take control of their own learning, progression and careers. Knowing that they can get help and that they have your continued support will give them confidence to take the next steps.



The skills of ULRs



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Meeting with learners

A lot of your contact with learners may be informal but, if you are able to spend more time with them, there are five key steps to setting up a successful discussion about their training/learning opportunities:

1. preparing learners
2. preparing yourself
3. setting up the meeting
4. agreeing how to work with each other
5. building rapport

Preparing learners

- It is important that learners are told in good time when you are planning to see them so the meeting isn't just sprung on them.
- Be clear about the time and place for the meeting as well as telling learners about anything they may need to bring along, e.g. an individual learning needs assessment or course information.

Preparing yourself

- Spend some time, even if it is only five minutes, planning for the discussion.
- Consider what information you will need and, if necessary, where you will find that information as this will help you think about some of the topics you might want to talk to learners about.

Setting up the meeting

You may not have a choice over the meeting environment but, if you have:

- Choosing the right time and location is important in terms of setting the scene.
- You may need to book a meeting room in advance or check a space will be available for the time you need to use it.
- If you are using the union learning Climbing Frame <https://climbingframe.unionlearn.org.uk>, you will need internet access, and space to sit together at the computer, with a tablet or your phone.
- Learners may prefer a place where there will be no interruptions – they may find it easier to open up if there is privacy.
- Make sure the meeting space is comfortable and the seating not too formal. Provide drinks if possible.
- Avoid talking across a desk as this puts up an immediate barrier.
- Allocate double the amount of time you think the meeting will take and then you will not be under pressure to rush through and you will have time for record keeping or writing up your notes.

Agreeing how to work with each other

We use the word 'contract' here to mean the agreement you make with learners about the way you will work with them.

- A contract should be made with learners when you start; it need only take a short amount of time and can be quite informal.
- Some learners will approach you with very clear ideas of what they need to know: or, others will present more general queries about training and learning. Some will not know what they want.

Your contract with learners should cover:

- the amount of time available for the discussion or meeting
- an explanation of the level of support on offer from you and others
- agreement about the main focus of the discussion
- confidentiality issues
- whether any records will be kept
- information about what will happen at the end of the meeting, e.g. agree an action plan, and whether there will be a follow-up discussion.

Building rapport

- Building rapport is about developing a trusting relationship with learners so that they are comfortable to express their views and ask questions.
- Non-verbal rapport using your tone of voice, posture, eye contact and facial expressions is the quickest and most useful way to begin.
- One of the most effective ways of creating rapport is by having a genuine interest in the other person and what they have to say. Show this by using active listening and good questioning skills. This is covered on pages 17-19.

Interviewing learners

The first meeting

The first meeting with learners is critical. As a union rep you can use the initial discussion with colleagues to establish their interest in learning and to help identify learning needs and goals.

The interview may take place as the result of an informal discussion, following a learning needs survey or because of a more specific request from a learner. It may or may not be about workrelated learning.

Be well informed

Learners will have a range of questions and concerns and your positive response will make the difference in giving them a new start.

The kind of questions colleagues may ask could include:

“My job is at risk – how do I learn new skills?”

“What should I do if I am made redundant?”

“What’s the best course for me?”

“Where can I go to do my learning?”

“How do I take the next step?”

Make sure you have any information you need, or know where you can get it. The ‘Sources of information and support’ section on pages 33-44 looks at this area in more depth.

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Topics to cover

Every discussion with a union learner is going to be different, depending on the circumstances. To help you get to know learners, you may find it helpful to include some or all of the following topics:

Personal details

Keep these details for record-keeping purposes if the learner is happy for you to do this. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) became enforceable in May 2018. A learner’s personal details must be safeguarded. Make sure you are aware of your union’s GDPR policy.

Work history

Discussing past and present work history (including unpaid/voluntary work) will provide a picture of the learner’s skills and experiences.

Short-term goals at work

Establishing shortterm goals will help you identify the learner’s possible next steps. You will use these ideas to inform and develop their plan of action. You can record this on their own personal Climbing Frame: <https://climbingframe.unionlearn.org.uk>

Long term career goal

This information helps identify ambitions the learners may have for the future.

Learning history

This can provide you with valuable information about the learner’s previous experiences of learning and their level of qualifications.

Personal aims

Understanding the learner’s personal aims helps you to build up a full picture of them. For example, they might aim to learn to use spreadsheets for home finance, or to get healthier.

Learning preferences

It is important to know something about how an individual learns best as this may impact on the choices and decisions made – for example, learning in the evenings, or in a group, or online in their own time. Learners returning to learning after a long period may not be aware of all the different ways to learn now and how adult learning differs from schooling. Discussing this with them will help them understand what would work best for them.

Additional information

You may also want to discuss the following during an initial meeting:

Strengths

Always start with the positives and help people to identify their strengths. This is a good way to encourage learners who have low self-confidence. It can also provide you with information about the most appropriate learning opportunities. For example, a learner might be good at DIY and mending things, so they may need a very practical course to learn effectively. Sometimes it helps to talk about transferable skills – skills that they have in one context that can be applied to other situations.

Current concerns

This may be an opportunity for the learner to discuss workrelated, personal or more complicated concerns that need to be signposted elsewhere. Learners may find this difficult to raise or explore in a group.

Interests and previous experiences

This will help you get to know the learner and understand the kind of learning opportunities to discuss.

Any support needs

You will need to establish particular needs for learners who may, for example, have disabilities or childcare needs or who work shifts as these may impact on their ability to take up learning opportunities. Helping to overcome any barriers is a key aspect of your role.

You can use the union learning Climbing Frame to record personal details, workplace details and learning details. The website can also be used to set actions and goals and record achievements for your learners and for yourself. For more information visit: <https://climbingframe.unionlearn.org.uk>

During the meeting

Aim to create a relaxed atmosphere by starting in a friendly way. You should consider the effect of your own body language on the people you are talking to. For example, facing them, making good eye contact and nodding your head occasionally to show that you are hearing and understanding will all help to make less confident people feel at ease. Be aware that some body language can have different meanings in different cultures.

Your ability to create a relaxed and open atmosphere in the meeting will depend on your interviewing skills. Interviewing skills are covered on pages 17-19.



Developing key interview skills

We now turn to the skills you will use to help the interviewing process. Think of your skills as the oil that helps you to ease learners towards their intended goals.

As a ULR who attended the basic learning reps training, you will have participated in some activities to help you support people as learners. You will have covered active listening, questioning techniques, interviewing people and taking notes. In addition, you may find the following useful in developing your skills further when working with individual learners or with groups:

- The Supporting Learners eNote is an e-learning module that will help you develop these skills. Visit www.tuceducation.org.uk to register to access the eNotes.
- You can refresh your skills by logging onto the ULR One online course whenever you need to. This course is available on the TUC Education website: www.tuceducation.org.uk

Active listening

Active listening is much more than just hearing. It involves:

- understanding
- checking
- memorising
- selecting key points
- verbal responses and non-verbal signals
- summarising.

Active listening is important in:

- creating a good atmosphere and helping learners feel at ease
- receiving and checking information
- working out appropriate solutions to enquiries.

There are five steps to active listening:

- 1** Concentrate on what learners are actually saying, be perceptive but avoid making assumptions.
- 2** Recognise any positive or negative feelings you may have about the learner and try to set these aside.
- 3** Find ways of checking your own understanding directly with learners by summarising what has been said.
- 4** Try to keep your own speaking to the minimum – do not monopolise the conversation.
- 5** Learn to close down discussions satisfactorily.

Active listening skills

Active listening involves a range of skills, including:

Non-verbal communication

Appropriate non-verbal communication (sometimes called body language) shows that you are listening to learners and that you are not distracted by other things. You might encourage them by:

- nodding
- leaning slightly forwards
- keeping still and not fiddling with things
- appropriate eye contact.

Using short phrases or words

These are sometimes called ‘minimal encouragers’ and they help to keep people talking and indicate that you are listening. For example:

- ‘go on’ or ‘tell me more’
- ‘because?’ or ‘and then?’
- ‘umm’ and ‘uh huh’
- repeating key words or phrases
- restating a few of the learner’s words.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is used to clarify and confirm understanding. It is a form of summarising that involves reflecting back in your own words what a learner has said, to check that what the learner said is what they actually mean.

Paraphrasing can be used to:

- show that you are listening to and understanding what is being said
- summarise in a concise form what the learner is saying
- provide direction to the interview.

Paraphrasing involves:

- summarising
- focusing
- encouraging people to be specific.

Using silence

Silence, used appropriately, can be very helpful because it:

- gives time for people to think of the answers to questions
- indicates that you have time to listen
- allows time for you to think about what is being said.

Concentrating

- do not let your mind wander
- resist distractions
- listen to the content of what is being said
- watch for non-verbal clues.

You need to have an open mind so that you can hear what is being said and respond appropriately.

Not listening

What shows you are not listening?

- not concentrating
- getting distracted by outside things
- daydreaming or your mind wandering off on to other things
- hearing only the words, not the meaning
- accepting things the learner says at face value
- interpreting things wrongly.

Letting yourself get in the way

- putting your own views and opinions forward
- disagreeing with people
- speaking too much
- not allowing silence
- hurrying or rushing the learner
- responding to words that always trigger a reaction in you.

Showing negative body language

- fiddling
- looking out of the window
- looking bored
- looking at the clock or your watch
- not making eye contact.

Improve the way you listen

- find somewhere quiet
- be realistic about the time available and agree timing with the learner
- concentrate on the learner
- be open-minded and don't judge
- try to understand why someone has a different opinion to yours
- be aware that we all have unconscious bias and check any assumptions you might be making
- be aware of words and ideas that trigger a reaction in you
- make mental summaries of what people say to you
- make notes, if possible
- reflect the main ideas back to the learner to check your understanding of what has been said
- summarise the key ideas and action points.

Questioning and clarifying skills

The first question a person asks (sometimes called ‘the presented question’) may be exactly what it seems, or it may conceal a number of other issues that the person really wants to ask about. They may also not be very clear about what they want to talk about. There are a number of questioning techniques that can enable you to give effective help.

These are positive types of questions:

Open questions

An open question encourages a person to talk freely and is not likely to get a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer. Questions like these can help you obtain more information and assist learners to explore their ideas.

“Tell me about...”

“Could you give me a little more detail please?”

“What other alternatives have you thought of?”

“How do you feel about...?”

Paraphrasing and summarising

Paraphrasing involves putting briefly into your own words what the learner has just said to you. This helps to clarify what has been said and to encourage people to give more information. It shows you have been listening carefully and have understood what people are saying. Summarising is helpful in the same way.

“So, you’d like to change your course, but are a bit worried that your tutor may not agree?”

“You seem to have decided that... Is that right?”

“So far you have told me...”

Reflecting back

Reflecting back is the act of rephrasing a statement or question and sending it – reflecting it – back to the learner. It is especially helpful in clarifying points, obtaining more information and checking mutual understanding.

“You have enrolled on a course but now think the level is too high for you.”

Reflective questions help to identify how a person feels. For example:

“Are you pleased about...?”

“Are you worried about...?”

Closed questions

A question that is closed will most likely be answered by the person with just a ‘yes’ or ‘no’, or with simple facts. A closed question both summarises and helps to bring the conversation back to the subject if it has wandered. It can help you to close down one topic and move on to the next. It also helps to check mutual understanding quickly. But make sure you don’t use closed questions instead of open questions when you are still trying to obtain more information.

“Do you know how to get to the college?”

“When did you last go on a course in this subject?”

Specific questions

The use of specific questions can be a particularly useful approach when you have a very talkative person. In this situation the only way of being sure you get the facts you need is to be direct. There is only one correct answer to a specific question, for example:

“What qualification would you like to get in maths?”

Challenging questions

These can help to encourage people to think about all aspects of the question. It is better to avoid the word ‘why’ because it can be threatening.

“What would you do if you weren’t offered a place?”

“To what extent have you thought about...?”

It is best to avoid the following negative types of questions:

Leading questions

These are asked in a way that suggests the answer.

“You don’t like it at college, do you?”

Multiple questions

More than one question can be asked together, which is confusing and means that the person has to remember them all.

“Do you want to go on to higher education, what subject do you want to study, and full or part time?”

Critical questions

Arguing with the person or stating that what they have said is not true is not helpful.

“You seem to have made a mess of that, don’t you think?”



Information: finding and giving

Making sure learners have simple and up-to-date information is not as easy as it sounds. Your main role as a union rep is to signpost learners to other organisations, but often learners would prefer to get their information from you.

There are various problems involved in this:

- you may not know where to find it
- you may get it wrong
- the organisation or website you got it from may have got it wrong
- you may find what you think is needed but not all the possible options
- what you have found may be out of date
- what you have found may not be applicable locally or to the learner who has asked you
- it may be needed in a different language or format.

No one can be expected to have all the information needed about learning and work: information about courses and programmes, job profiles, careers, the labour market, funding and finance, childcare and travel – the range is enormous. Professional information and advice workers will always check that they have the right information before they pass it on, and there is a whole industry involved in producing and updating databases and resources for use by professional services.

Always be honest with learners about what you do and do not know. It may be necessary to signpost a learner to sources of information or to make a referral on their behalf. There are many sources of information and support that are covered in pages 33-44.

Goal setting and action planning

It is important to keep the meeting focused so that learners feel that they have an outcome and are progressing towards their goals.

Goals

These are short- or long-term aims, which can be very broad in scope and include lots of elements. They may be personal, to do with current work, or a learner's long-term career.

Targets

Targets need to be **SMART**

Specific – having a clear idea of what your aim is.

E.g. I will have completed a beginner's Spanish course before my holiday in August.

Measurable – being able to check if progress has been made. E.g. I will lose a stone in weight before my daughter's wedding in December.

Achievable – realistic and can be broken down into steps. E.g. I will cut down my alcohol consumption to 10 units a week by the end of September, then to 6 units by Christmas.

Relevant to the person, their goals and the time they have available. E.g. I want to attend an assertiveness training course before my next job review in June.

Timebound – identifying dates (short or long term), including steps and a plan to check progress. E.g. To plan a workplace language course, I will get quotations from three learning providers by the end of this month, report to learners, and aim to start the course a month later.

Setting targets can help learners to:

- develop problem-solving skills
- take responsibility for planning their own future
- be realistic about what they can achieve
- break goals down into manageable actions
- identify resources needed to take plans forward
- check on their own progress and adjust plans if necessary.

The union representative can help learners identify:

- existing and transferable skills
- possible areas for improvement
- where they want to go
- how they will get there
- who might help.

Problems in achieving goals and how to overcome them

PROBLEM

Learners are unsure how to go about achieving their goals.

The goals or targets were not specific enough.

The targets turned out to be unrealistic.

The goals were too ambitious for the time available.

The targets were too big to achieve in one go.

They were let down by other people.

Learners did not 'own' their goals or targets.

The learner changed their mind.

HOW TO HELP

- Ensure the goals are clear and understood.
- Help to set appropriate targets to achieve the goals.
- Talk about the action needed.
- Challenge goals and targets that are too vague.
- Challenge learners if they are being unrealistic.
- Encourage them to involve someone else who can help.
- Note down short-term as well as long-term goals.
- Encourage learners to be realistic about timescales.
- Help learners to consider the pressures they are under.
- Break down the targets into smaller chunks.
- Ensure that the targets are written down in a logical order.
- Be specific about the targets and whose responsibility they are.
- Allow them to set their own goals and targets, with support.
- They should identify how and when they will achieve their goals.
- Discuss what actions should be taken if the learner changes their mind.
- Help them identify a backup plan.

Keeping records

Why keep records?

All union reps should keep records about supporting learners but unions may have different arrangements. If you do not keep records yet, you may find it helpful to discuss whether this would be a good idea with your union.

- The extent of your record keeping will depend on whether it is helpful for both you and your learners to have a note of what has been discussed.
- You may also be working in a way that means you are required to keep a record in a certain way in order to provide reports of what you are doing.
- If you have access to a computer, you may also be using the union learning Climbing Frame, which allows you to keep records with learners and to print them out. You can download the Learner Forms as PDFs and use them manually.
- Keeping a record of learners' details and their plans can also be helpful if you are signposting them to another organisation, because they can take the record with them.
- Learners may find it helpful to use the records you have kept together as the basis for an individual learning plan drawn up with a tutor, a development plan drawn up with a line manager or an action plan or CV developed with an adviser from the National Careers Service.

Record-keeping procedures must take due account of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), which covers learners' contact details and the data you keep on them, such as their health. For further information go to the unionlearn Privacy Notice and get advice from your own union.

What are the key principles for record keeping?

- If possible, help learners to keep the record themselves, and make sure they have a copy or know where the record will be kept.
- Make sure learners know who else will see the record or have access to the information in it.
- Be aware of what information you need to log and how it will be used.
- Keep a pen and paper handy.
- Keep spare supplies of log sheets or enquiry forms, if you use these.

- Make sure you record information about learners accurately – read back the details you have noted to check they are correct and to reassure learners that you have understood them. Spell out details such as names and addresses if uncertainty is at all possible.
- Manage your time and allow enough for record keeping.
- Be aware of the organisational procedure for dealing with errors in record keeping and how to correct them.
- Be aware of the organisational procedure and your union GDPR policy for storing information and log sheets, and how the data is classified (e.g. alphabetically, numerically, date order).

What is bad practice in record keeping?

- not being aware of the key principles or GDPR policy of record keeping
- just keeping things in your head
- not bothering to log enquiries even if you have been asked to do so
- noting only some of the information and missing out details
- leaving your enquiry log for someone else to keep up to date
- collecting information for which there is no subsequent use.

What might be included in a record?

What is included depends on what the record is for. If it is simply for the learner's use you can agree between you what they would find helpful.

You may have to use a set format for keeping a record of learners' details and their action plans. You could use the union learning Climbing Frame website to record information about the learners you are working with and to help them develop action plans. You can do this in the Learner Management area of the website. For more information and to register to access the Climbing Frame visit: <https://climbingframe.unionlearn.org.uk>

Providing advice and guidance



Helping learners decide what they want to do

Learners usually have an idea about what they want to do and by using your interview skills you will help them to progress from ideas to taking action and moving towards their goals. However, sometimes learners don't know what they want to do and in these situations it can be helpful to use some tools to provide ideas and prompt discussion.

The unionlearn website

The unionlearn website is a good place to start looking at some of the available learning opportunities, particularly ones that are free, online and provide a taster for further learning. www.unionlearn.org.uk

TUC Education website

The TUC provides training for union reps and ULRs. You can develop your skills or refresh your knowledge. Explore classroom courses, online courses, webinars and eNotes. www.tuceducation.org.uk

Value My Skills cards and online tool

Value My Skills is a transferable skills activity. There are 56 cards which with the help of their ULR a learner can sort into piles according to the skills they feel they have, can demonstrate or want to develop. They can be particularly useful with older learners who may underestimate how many skills and how much experience they have. It is also a visual and interactive way to work with learners. You can find the cards at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/careerzone

You can also make use of the Value My Skills interactive online tool by visiting: www.tuceducation.org.uk

icould Buzz Quiz

Aimed at young people, this quiz is based on the Myers Briggs personal indicator and provides information on the type of jobs that someone may prefer based on their personality type. It is fun and interactive, though the findings should never be taken as fact as they are open to interpretation. The tool can be found at <https://icould.com>

Personality Pathways

This website enables people to take the full Myers Briggs test for free. It is not a substitute for the full assessment with a trained Myers Briggs administrator, which can be expensive. However, it can provide 'food for thought' and be a talking point. Again, the findings should not be taken as fact as they are open to interpretation, partly because our responses change according to what else is going on in our lives. The test can be accessed at www.personalitypathways.com

Supporting learners into learning and skills opportunities

The learning, skills and work landscape is complex and constantly changing. On page 15 we highlighted the diverse range of topics that learners might want to talk to you about. We now look in more depth at the range of opportunities available to learners and how they might access them.

Getting on at work

These are developmental work-based qualifications to help adults progress in the workplace or to seek new employment prospects. They include units on subjects such as approaches to learning, managing study, getting the most out of training and planning for progression, as well as optional units in subjects such as adapting to change, working with others and writing at work.

These are available on the unionlearn website at www.unionlearn.org.uk/getting-work-course-materials

SkillCheck

This tool is designed to help engage learners by providing an initial assessment and a way to encourage further learning. There are assessments, for example in English, maths and ICT.

Learners can also gain digital badges – virtual awards for specific skills, ability, accomplishments and competency that a learner has gained. Further information on these is available at www.unionlearn.org.uk/skillcheck These assessments can be useful in introducing people to learning again in a suitable environment and at a time that suits them.

The Skills Network

Unionlearn has launched a training partnership with the Skills Network, offering funded qualifications via distance learning. They take just 12–16 weeks to complete. For more information visit: <https://unionlearn.theskillsnetwork.com>

The range of options for what, where and how to study is amazing but also very complicated. The Education and Training Foundation has produced a very comprehensive guide that provides information on types of learning organisations and the range and level of qualifications. You can download a guide from the Excellence Gateway at: www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2928



Different types of learning provision

You can learn in many different ways and in different places. As a union rep you may be organising learning in your workplace or in a learning centre and this may be in partnership with one or more other providers. Or you may refer learners to different types of providers. You will have a list of local contacts, who you can trust to work with you in a way that suits your learners.

Workplace learning

Many union members would prefer to do their learning in workplace learning centres, through courses organised by their union reps, their unions or their employer. Foundation Degrees can also be done in the workplace. Workplace learning centres can be convenient and accessible places for learners.

Adult and community learning centres

A range of daytime and evening courses and learning opportunities for adults is offered through community learning centres in most areas. Depending on where you live, these courses may be organised by the local education authority (LEA), a further education (FE) college, the Worker's Educational Association (WEA) or independent third-sector providers. As a union rep, when shopping around for providers to offer learning opportunities for members, it is worth contacting these local organisations to see how they can work with you.

HOLEX is the membership organisation for the adult and community learning sector and will be able to provide a contact for your local adult and community learning provider at <https://holex.org.uk>

Voluntary organisations

The WEA has a close association with unionlearn and with unions and provides trade union education opportunities. It has regional offices and local branches which you can contact. Further information can be found at www.wea.org.uk.

Other voluntary organisations provide courses or opportunities for learning through voluntary work.

Further education (FE) colleges

Traditionally, colleges offered work-related courses for young people but nowadays many of their students are adults. Courses may be part time, full time, day or evening and are often aimed at adults in particular. Some colleges run taster sessions to give you a sample of what a course is like, or general introductory or 'returner' courses that help people explore what they want to do. Many FE colleges offer higher education courses. Your local college may have a trade union studies centre. Colleges have regular open days to show you what they do, and information centres. Most college-based learning is delivered by general further education colleges but other types of colleges include sixth-form colleges, land-based colleges, specialist designated colleges and art, design and performing arts colleges.

Residential colleges

Specialist designated institutions (SDI) provide learning opportunities for adults, often without qualifications, with the aim to promote social justice and equality. Some colleges are residential and are often free. They have links with the TUC and trade unions and there are bursaries available for selected courses through TUC.

Universities and higher education institutions (HEIs)

Higher education includes advanced courses leading to degrees, diplomas and certificates. Courses are increasingly divided into modules, which means that you can do parts of a course and build up the modules and units into a full qualification over a period of time. Some universities and colleges offer short day and evening courses for adults. Unionlearn has a partnership with The Open University, which provides higher learning courses in a flexible way that suits many adult learners.

Adults who want to do an advanced course but do not have the required entry qualifications can do an Access course, which is usually flexible and includes help with study skills.

Independent training providers

Independent training providers (ITPs) provide vocational education. Often located in high streets or business parks, they provide training in classrooms or employers' premises. Of the 3.3 million adult learners in this country, over 20 per cent go to an ITP.

Digital and online learning

Some people may prefer to learn online. This can be done at home, at work or in a learning centre with help from staff. Open or distance learning may be online but also delivered through other methods, using books and specially designed materials. You can work at your own pace and usually have the support of a tutor by telephone, letter or email.

Visit the TUC Education website to see the range of online courses that are available:

www.tuceducation.org.uk

Visit the unionlearn website to see the range of free online Level 2 courses available from the Skills Network: <https://unionlearn.theskillsnetwork.com/>

Unionlearn is committed to providing online learning opportunities and has close links with providers including The Open University and the National Extension College, which offer multimedia learning.

There are many websites that include online learning tasters, for example in modern languages.

The Climbing Frame has a list of free learning websites: <https://climbingframe.unionlearn.org.uk/Content/freelearning>



The range of learning and skills opportunities available

People take up learning for a host of reasons. They may include:

- pursuing a hobby or interest, meeting new people, building confidence or to improve health and wellbeing. This may be non-qualification-based courses such as yoga or mindfulness, jewellery making or cooking for healthy eating; or it may be qualification-based courses such as learning a new language or history.
- learning new skills for personal reasons or to improve performance or promotion prospects at work. This could be short certificated courses such as learning to use Excel spreadsheets, health and safety or an introduction to mentoring; it could also be longer vocational-based courses such as accounting, management or construction skills.
- to have a complete career change. This could include shorter certificated vocational courses such as nail technology, aromatherapy or food safety courses: or it could include full-time courses such as an apprenticeship or full- or part-time higher education courses.

For adults wishing to take up learning years after last studying, the idea of qualifications and taking exams can be quite daunting. Non-qualification-based courses can be a useful re-introduction to learning, as are courses where learners are assessed on their ability to do tasks.

For many vocational courses learners are also required to study maths, English or functional skills. While this can be quite daunting, it is also an opportunity for learners to brush up on skills that are essential in everyday life but are increasingly sought after by employers and, along with digital skills, are key to success in the workplace.

Discussions with learners about courses should also cover costs and available funding. For people wishing to learn to pursue better career prospects or a career change, it can also be helpful to look at the local labour market information and future prospects. Useful information can be found at Careerzone:

www.unionlearn.org.uk/careerzone

How to find out about learning providers in your area

More information about learning providers is available from:

- **The union learning Climbing Frame website** has a Course Finders section where you make use of different course searching websites that are available. <https://climbingframe.unionlearn.org.uk/Content/Coursefinders>
- **The National Careers Service website** <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk> has a 'Find a course' section that enables you to search for a course by subject, provider or location. Alternatively, you can phone on 0800 100 900 (calls free from a landline). It can put you in touch with your local National Careers Service adviser or public library, who will have local contacts.
- **PEARL** (Part-time Education for Adults Returning to Learn) is aimed at adults aged 18+ looking for part-time and flexible learning opportunities. It also has an 'Advise Me' tool, which gives personalised learning options to suit a learner's individual circumstances. PEARL can be accessed at <http://pearl.open.ac.uk>
- **The unionlearn union learning centres directory.** Union learning centres are often located in workplaces and union offices, and also in local communities: www.unionlearn.org.uk/learning-centres
- **The TUC Education Course Directory.** Course information is available online: www.tuceducation.org.uk/findacourse
- **The government's public services website** has information about adult education and higher education. www.gov.uk
- Learning providers often leave leaflets and prospectuses in venues such as libraries, information centres and local authority buildings.

Pre-course checklist

This is a checklist of questions that you and learners may want to ask before enrolling on a course, taking up a learning opportunity or arranging workplace provision. Copy and adapt this list to suit the type of learning provision.

Making contact

- Who do I need to talk to about the course?
- How do I contact them?
- Are they a tutor or trainer?
- Can I speak to a current learner if I wish, and how?
- Can this course be provided in my workplace or learning centre?

Getting in

- Do I need prior experience or knowledge to do the course?
- If so, what exactly?
- What are the entry requirements for adults? (They may be different than those for young people.)
- Is there any pre-course assessment, such as maths and English?
- How many places are there on the course?
- How and when should I enrol?
- Will I need to attend an open day or interview?

What the course is about

- What will I learn on the course?
- Will I have the opportunity to do additional learning, such as maths and English?
- Can I have a copy of the full course programme?
- How is the course taught (e.g. in small/large groups, through self-study packs, online)?

Extra work

- Does the course involve any commitment other than the taught sessions (e.g. pre-course activity, homework, field or practical work, residential weekends or summer schools)?

Length and times

- How long is the course and when does it start and finish?
- What are the hours of attendance?
- Can meetings with the tutor or trainer be arranged to suit me?

Getting credit

- Will I get a certificate or qualification if I complete the course?
- How will my work be assessed (e.g. through coursework, examination, being observed, online)?

Costs

- What are the fees and extra costs of the course (e.g. registration fees, materials, examination fees)?

Help with costs

- Are there any concessions, fee remissions, bursaries or grants available, and how do I apply?
- Is there any help with transport or childcare expenses?
- Can I pay in instalments?

Getting there

- Where does the course take place?
- How do I get there?
- Can I have a map and directions?
- Can I park my vehicle or my bicycle?
- Can you help me plan a bus route?

Facilities

- What room should I look for when I arrive?
- Can I get my wheelchair in?
- Are there any facilities for learners with disabilities (e.g. hearing loops, learning partner schemes, software and equipment)?
- Is there a crèche or playgroup?
- Are there any student or recreational facilities for adults?
- How can I meet other learners socially?
- Will I be entitled to use the careers service and other support facilities?
- Is there a students' union?



Getting credit and qualifications

There are many different levels and types of qualification or credit, and it is important to know how to find the information if you or a learner need it.

Qualifications prove that you have gained knowledge and skills and can help you progress in your job or career or on to new learning opportunities. They can be academic, vocational or work-related, or skills-based. You may not need a qualification to prove that you have been learning, and non-accredited learning can be recognised in different ways. Sometimes it is possible to get credit for your past learning and experience through accreditation of prior learning (APL).

RQF (Regulated Qualifications Framework) is the reference system put in place and regulated by Ofqual to help people understand how qualification levels and types, such as awards, diplomas and certificates, relate and can be compared to each other in terms of the size and challenge of the qualifications they offer. More information can be found at:

www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean

The guide 'So what is the FE sector? A guide to the Further Education System in England', produced by the Education and Training Foundation, is a useful source of information and is available at:

www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2928

Gaining qualifications can be expensive and time consuming. It is important to get expert advice to ensure that you and your members are making the right choices to meet your goals, and that you know about any financial help that is available.

The National Careers Service can explain the different types of credit and qualifications available, and what financial help might be possible. If you or a learner have experience or qualifications from outside the UK, its Careers Service advisers can also help you find out how these can be recognised. You or your learners can phone on 0800 100 900 (telephone service is available in nine languages) or use the website at:

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>

Some of the Learning Themes on the union learning Climbing Frame website provide simple information and links about learning at different levels and how to get credit. Go to:

<https://climbingframe.unionlearn.org.uk>

TUC Education accredits its programme through NOCN (the National Open College Network). Further information about how you can progress with the TUC is available on the TUC Education website:

www.tuceducation.org.uk

Supporting learners to move up or move on in employment

We are seeing enormous changes in the labour market and will continue to do so with the growth and development of new technologies such as AI (artificial intelligence) and the need to develop green technologies, as well as the shift in more traditional employment opportunities such as in retail. Job security cannot be taken for granted and, even within growth employment sectors, there will be pressure to keep up with new developments, to keep learning and developing new skills.

ULRs have an important role to play in supporting learners to protect themselves against the challenge of change, and also to support them to take control of their employment prospects and to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence to upskill in their existing job sector or to move into other areas of work. It is likely that people will need to be more agile and self-determined in the labour market. The days of a job for life are long gone and young people joining the labour market now are likely to have six or seven careers throughout their working lives. We are also seeing the rise of the portfolio career, where people combine different roles combining part-time jobs, or with some self-employment. These types of careers can be combined with study, caring responsibilities or volunteering. For some people portfolio careers are a choice: for some they have come about because of a period of transition to another full-time career or to retirement: for others a portfolio career is a response to redundancy or because of limited other options.

The National Retraining Scheme

At the end of 2017 the government announced that it would be launching a National Retraining Scheme. A high-level advisory group – the National Retraining Partnership – was also established at this time to bring together government, the TUC and CBI to set the strategic direction and oversee implementation of the scheme. The government has committed to roll out the scheme fully across England by the end of 2022 and in the run up there will be a range of trials to test various aspects of the programme. The government's latest update on the scheme is contained in the 2018 Budget, which said the following:

“The government will work with employers to give workers the opportunity to upskill or retrain. The [2018] Budget allocates £100 million for the first phase of the National Retraining Scheme (NRS). This will include a new careers guidance service with expert advice to help people identify work opportunities in their area, and state-of-the-art courses combining online learning with traditional classroom teaching to develop key transferable skills. The National Retraining Partnership between the government, the CBI and the TUC will focus on job-specific retraining in phase two.”

However, the NRS has two early priorities that will be taken forward before the full programme is up and running. These priorities will initially target skills shortages in key sectors by developing much needed digital and construction skills.

As a ULR you will need to keep up to date with the development of the National Retraining Scheme and regular updates will be made available on the unionlearn website: www.unionlearn.org.uk

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Supporting learners with job search

Unionlearn is committed to supporting ULRs to work with learners to upskill and develop their careers, or to move into other areas of work. It has created, and continues to create, resources for ULRs to use with learners:

Career Kickstart Reviews: a guide for union learning reps

This resource outlines the underlying principles, context and IAG theory as well as tips and techniques for undertaking career kickstart reviews with young workers to support them in managing their careers.

Careerzone

This is part of the unionlearn website www.unionlearn.org.uk/careerzone and provides lots of information including:

- the career directory, providing information on hundreds of jobs
- comparison of jobs by pay, conditions and employment prospects
- videos of jobs
- the Mid-life Career Review
- information on the gender pay gap.

CV writing, job search and interview techniques

Looking for and getting a new job can seem like a job in itself, and one that requires skills, confidence and time. It will also depend on the type of work that is being sought: manual or technical job searches will be different from creative jobs, for example.

One of the first steps towards getting a new job is CV writing. Putting a CV together can be daunting – but seeing your accomplishments written down can also build confidence and be very motivating. As learners gain skills and qualifications it is important that they keep their CV up to date, which helps with being prepared as opportunities come up. Employers are increasingly asking for a CV as part of their selection process.

The second step towards finding a new job is to know where to send your CV. This can involve making speculative applications by sending out a CV to potential employers, by responding to vacancies or by networking through contacts.

Finally, there is the job interview to get through. Preparation and practising the answers to typical questions is very important.

There are numerous websites that inform, advise, recruit and support job hunters. This is just a selection:

My World of Work has helpful CV templates

www.myworldofwork.co.uk

BusinessBalls is a free and ethical website on leadership, management and personal effectiveness that has quick tips on CV writing and other career development tools and information

www.businessballs.com

Highly Effective Job Search highlights seven tips for job searches

www.highlyeffectivejobsearch.com

The Muse has five tips for job searches

www.themuse.com

Live Career has tips on CV writing and is particularly good on digital job searches

www.livecareer.com

Reed Employment Agency provides information on CV writing, interview techniques and job searches

www.reed.co.uk

Monster Employment Agency provides information on CV writing, job searches and interview techniques

www.monster.co.uk

LinkedIn is a professional network that enables people to upload professional information and build and engage with a professional network. Employers and recruitment agencies often use it to search for prospective candidates for jobs

<https://uk.linkedin.com>

Encourage learners to research sites that are suitable for them and the type of work they are seeking. Some learners may find it useful to use sites like **Pinterest** and to create a job search board where they can pin helpful advice and tips for reference

www.pinterest.co.uk

Sources of information and support



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Supporting Learners Network

One of your most important activities to help you support learners effectively is to use your network of colleagues, contacts and other organisations:

- for signposting learners to a range of services and information they can use themselves, or to learning opportunities
- as a resource and backup for you as a union rep to help you to find and organise information or to help you with specialist enquiries
- to keep up to date with priority areas for unionlearn, such as maths, English and digital skills.

These are the network organisations that are likely to be most useful to you in supporting learners:

- other ULRs and union reps, project workers, staff and websites
- the unionlearn website, learning centres and staff
- the National Careers Service telephone, face-to-face and online services
- workplace learning centres
- other learning and training providers
- other workforce development organisations
- employers
- sector skills councils (SSCs), industrial partnerships and local enterprise partnerships.

The union learning Climbing Frame

What is the Climbing Frame?

This is a free website for union reps to support learners and promote learning in the workplace. It is an invaluable and important resource that is kept up to date. It can be accessed at www.climbingframe.unionlearn.org.uk

It can be used in two ways: first, as a resource to develop and maintain your skills and knowledge as a ULR; second, to support and manage the career learning of your learners. The Climbing Frame can be used on the go if you are out working with learners online and with the free Climbing Frame app.

How the Climbing Frame can support you as a ULR

Being a ULR requires skills and knowledge.

Skills

You may have acquired many of the skills to be a ULR in other roles. It can be really helpful to review your skills by using the tools that you would use with learners. It not only enables you to familiarise yourself with all the tools, it also helps you to build rapport and understanding about how it feels for learners to go through this process and it will benefit your own personal development. One of the learning themes is on personal development and career planning and includes information of further learning for ULRs.

Knowledge

ULRs need to have broad knowledge and know about opportunities and resources that are available. The Climbing Frame has learning themes that provide information as well as links to key documents and sources of further information. It can help you with the challenge of keeping up to date and is a good starting point for finding out more about specific subjects.



The current Climbing Frame learning themes are:

- apprenticeships
- community learning
- digital skills
- English and maths
- equality, diversity and learning
- health and wellbeing in the workplace
- higher learning
- learning with your union
- making the case for learning
- personal development and career planning
- redundancy support
- supporting learners
- supporting mid-life development
- using the Climbing Frame
- youth employment

How to use the Climbing Frame to support learners

Learner management

This area of the Climbing Frame can be used to store information about learners. This enables you to keep track of your work with individual learners and what actions have been agreed, and to create an action plan and monitor progress towards a learner's goals. You can also use this section of the site to record your own learning and progression.

Links to websites

For free courses, skills checks, templates for writing CVs and completing application forms, course finders, news and updates.

Reporting

This helps you to collect data on the learners you have seen and supported so that you can report back to the union and the employer about the extent of your activity.

Building support and developing opportunities for learners

Making the case for learning theme enables you to be a proactive ULR. The theme includes information and resources on negotiating learning agreements, getting employer engagement, establishing partnerships with learning providers and setting up onsite facilities.

Unionlearn website, materials and publications

The unionlearn website at www.unionlearn.org.uk is a key source of information and links to further support. Visit the site to subscribe to receive regular updates and publications on the latest learning and skills news, developments and events. Specific pages will take you to further information such as:

About

This page has information about being a ULR, securing recognition and paid time off and a link to the *Learning Rep* magazine.

Blog

Browse the blog, where people from the world of workplace learning share their experience, advice, stories and insights.

News

This page provides updates on campaigns, projects and events.

Our Work

Provides information on different subjects such as apprenticeships, health and wellbeing, working with employers, widening participation and youth employment and skills.

Resources

This page has case studies, links to the Climbing Frame, National Careers Service, the matrix standard, SkillCheck, the Skills Network free online Level 2 courses and other publications, Supporting Learners News and information on national learning centres.

Courses

This includes online courses for union reps and eNotes, which are quick bite-sized learning on subjects such as apprenticeships, bargaining for skills and mentoring.

Careerzone

This section has a directory of hundreds of jobs, a comparison of careers by pay, conditions and employment prospects, information on mid-life development reviews and the gender pay gap.

Other unionlearn publications

Unionlearn produces a range of publications to help reps in their role of supporting learners. These guides are a key resource and are updated regularly. Available publications include:

- *Valuing the Skills of Older Workers: how to do a mid-life development review* A practical guide for union reps.
- *Supporting Learners at Mid-life* signposting guides to; Financial planning and pensions, Helping carers, Health and well-being and Mental Health.
- *Getting Active* A resource pack for union reps to support mid-life development.
- *Career Kickstart Reviews* A guide for union learning reps which provides underpinning principles and knowledge on IAG and tips and techniques for supporting young workers to manage their careers.
- *Working to Close the Digital Divide: how unions and union learning reps can support digital skills* A guide for ULRs supporting digital skills that includes information and checklists, examples of union successes, and signposts to lots of resources to help people develop digital skills.
- *Opening Doors to All: how union learning tackles disadvantage.*
- *Learning Rep.* The quarterly e-magazine that features articles on union projects, new resources and national learning campaigns.
- *Supporting Learners News.* The bi-monthly electronic publication produced to keep you up to date with news, developments and resources that will help support learners in the workplace.
- Policy updates. Provided to keep you abreast on policy developments in learning and skills, including developments in the National Retraining Scheme.
- *Tackling Apprenticeship Gender Inequality and Apprenticeships for Existing Staff* Information on apprenticeships.
- *Mental Health and the Workplace* A workbook from TUC Education that provides information on mental health and common mental health problems, information about the law and mental health in the workplace and explores the role of union reps in supporting and representing members with mental health problems. It also includes a number of activities and a list of useful contacts.

The National Careers Service

What does the National Careers Service do and who can use it?

The National Careers Service provides information, advice and guidance to help people make decisions on learning, training and work opportunities. The service offers free, confidential and impartial advice, supported by qualified careers advisers, to young people aged 13–18 (including apprentices) and all adults aged 19 and over.

The service can help people who:

- have been made redundant and are unsure of their next move
- have been out of work for a while and are looking for jobhunting tips
- have just finished a course and are considering their next move
- are unhappy in their current job and ready for a change, but are not sure what
- need to update their skills or qualifications.

Whatever the situation, whatever the barriers, the service aims to help people overcome them and achieve their potential, build on their strengths, improve their weaker areas, and find a job or career that suits their skills and personality.

A National Careers Service adviser can help a learner:

- develop a CV
- search and apply for jobs
- understand the job market
- search for courses and training schemes
- find funding to support any learning
- identify key strengths and skills
- explore career options
- choose training routes that fit their lifestyle
- develop an action plan to help with achieving goals.

As a ULR, you can help learners to make use of the service or use it yourself to check that you have the right information and have thought of everything.

Contacting the National Careers Service

Details of all the options are available on the National Careers Service website at:

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>

They include:

- **Webchat** This service is open between 8am and 10pm 7 days a week
- **Phone** Call 0800 100 900 to speak to an adviser between 8am and 10pm 7 days a week. Calls are free from landlines and most mobiles.
- **Webform** Use the form to ask a question and an adviser will reply
- **Callback** Leave your number and an adviser will call back
- **Face-to-face advice** Call 0800 100 900 to find out if someone is eligible for a face-to-face appointment
- **Text** Text name and the word ADVICE to 07766 413219 and an adviser will call back. This text number can also be used for information such as telephone numbers and addresses.
- **By post** To National Careers Service, PO Box 1331, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE99 5EB

Any calls can take up to 30 minutes. Here are some tips before you call:

- think about what you want to talk about
- set aside enough time for the call
- phone from a quiet place and when you won't be interrupted
- have a pen and paper for notes.

Speakers of other languages can also speak to an adviser in their own language through a translation service. The National Careers Service will arrange a three-way conference call.

Using the National Careers Service website

The service's website aims to:

- help with careers' decisions and planning
- support people in reviewing their skills and abilities and developing new goals
- motivate people to implement their plan of action
- enable people to make best use of high-quality career-related tools.

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>

Explore careers

There are over 800 jobs listed on the website, with essential information on each job including:

- what the work is like, such as day-to-day tasks
- what the typical hours are
- how much you usually get paid
- what qualifications you need to get in and get on, including links to courses
- who the main types of employers are
- links to industry bodies for further information
- whether apprenticeships are available, with links to vacancies
- the skills and knowledge required.

Skills Health Check

The Skills Health Check is a series of quizzes and activities designed to help you explore your skills, interests and motivations. Each quiz can take 15–30 mins to complete, but by creating an account the learner can save their progress as they go along. You can download your report at any time.

The report will also suggest industry areas the learner might be interested in and then the learner can browse through job profiles.

Find a course

This section enables the learners to search for a course by subject, provider (such as college, training provider or local education authority) or location.

Course information includes the qualification level, course description, entry requirements, equipment needed, assessment method and venue. Information is provided on funding and whether Advanced Learner Loans are available. It also provides information on learner and employer satisfaction.

Help to find a job

This section provides information such as:

- how to find advertised job vacancies
- networking: how to use it to find a job
- CV writing and tips
- how to write covering letters
- interview advice
- top 10 interview questions.

Speaking to an adviser

A learner can call the National Careers Service and speak to an adviser about any aspect of their career planning. The adviser will help them put together an action plan. This step-by-step approach helps people keep on track and working towards their goal. This can be emailed to the learner along with any information they might have requested.

Face-to-face appointments

For people living in England, an appointment may be able to be made for the learner to speak to a National Careers Service adviser in a local access point. A face-to-face session can take about an hour, depending on what a learner wants to talk about. This might include choosing a career, writing a CV, job hunting, choosing courses or finding out information on the local job market.

To get the most out of the session, learners might want to prepare beforehand by:

- thinking about what they want to talk about and noting down any questions they have
- thinking about any previous work or learning experiences, what skills they have and what their interests are
- thinking about their circumstances, such as any caring responsibilities, working hours, finances and transport
- taking any certificates or a CV with them
- knowing where they have to go and how to get there so they arrive on time.

The National Careers Service and unionlearn

Unionlearn wants to ensure that union learners make full use of the free services available to them through the National Careers Service. There are links from the unionlearn website to the National Careers Service website.

There is also a Toolkit for union learners produced by Careers Yorkshire and the Humber to support ULRs and learners in the workplace. It includes sections on:

- planning ahead
- know yourself
- next steps – goal setting and action planning.

For more information visit: www.unionlearn.org.uk/national-careers-service



The Open University

The Open University seeks to widen participation in higher learning by offering flexible and innovative teaching. It includes OpenLearn, which provides free courses in science, maths and technology, history and the arts, money and business, society, politics and law, education and development, health, sports and psychology, languages, nature and environment as well as skills for work.

You can find out more about the Open University at: www.open.ac.uk

The OpenLearn website is: www.open.edu/openlearn

PEARL (Part-time Education for Adults Returning to Learn) is a website aimed at adults aged 18+ years looking for part-time and flexible learning opportunities. For more information visit: <http://pearl.open.ac.uk>

The OpenLearn Create website hosts six free OU courses, which each take about 15 hours to complete and learners can collect digital badges. The six courses are:

- Planning for a better future
- Introducing practical healthcare
- Supporting children's development
- Caring for adults
- Taking part in the voluntary sector
- Starting your own small business

To access these courses, visit: www.open.edu/openlearncreate

You may also find the FutureLearn website useful. It offers a diverse selection of courses from universities and cultural institutions from around the world. These are delivered one step at a time, and are accessible on mobile, tablet and desktop, so you can fit learning around your life. For more information go to: www.futurelearn.com

Learning and training providers

What support do providers offer to learners?

Colleges, universities, training providers, workplace learning centres and adult and community learning centres may offer support to learners through student services, careers staff or tutors. Depending on the type of course learners do, the support they can provide is:

- information about learning opportunities in leaflets, brochures and websites, through open days and events, or in response to telephone calls
- the chance to discuss options with tutors and careers staff
- access to impartial and objective help to make decisions, with signposting to other services or referral, if appropriate
- access to learning support and other specialist services, if appropriate
- help with decisions at the end of a course
- careers education programmes and work experience.

Learners and potential learners can access this help and information before they choose a course, once they have started and at the end of the course to help with moving on. These services are available to any learner or potential learner.

A good provider will provide its services in a way that is impartial and focused on the learner's needs. Many learning providers are matrix-accredited (see page 59). Providers are usually members of local careers networks and will be able to make referrals.

The National Careers Service may be delivered on a college site.

Many ULRs are working with local and regional providers to ensure that union learners get access to learning opportunities, particularly in English, maths, functional skills and digital skills. ULRs can make sure that providers customise the learning opportunities to suit the learners and employers. Unionlearn can support ULRs to make sure they get the best agreements with providers to get the best deal for learners: there are template agreements, and guidance on things like assessments, learning support, minimum quality levels, financial arrangements and opportunities for progression. There is more information about this on the unionlearn website.

As a ULR it can be very useful to get to know your local learning providers. Arrange to visit them and tell them what you do. Getting to know staff in your local college and learning providers can really help when you want to refer learners to them. Get on the provider's mailing list, if they have one, so you are sent regular information on open days or other activities, and copies of prospectuses and brochures.

Contacting learning providers

Most colleges and learning providers have a telephone enquiry number and a website. If you are unsure who your local learning provider is, you can contact the National Careers Service or do an online search on its website.





Labour market information

One aspect of providing effective information on learning and employment opportunities is knowing about the local labour market – where the jobs are, which jobs are in decline and where there is growth, what the skills gaps are and the qualifications people need to work in growth industries.

Understanding and using labour market information (LMI) will become increasingly important. As resources become tighter it is likely that funding for learning and skills will be directed towards skills' shortage areas. Learners need to know where the jobs and opportunities for the future are, and what pay and conditions they can expect. This helps learners make informed choices about their future. This is particularly true for people who want to change career direction, which is likely to involve some financial sacrifice while they retrain. Because of this, there is good reason for ensuring learners are as well informed as they can be about the risks and opportunities facing them. It is important that learners are aware of salary comparisons, particularly if we are ever to tackle the gender pay gap and the salary discrepancies between what is traditionally seen as 'women's work' and 'men's work'.

The Careerzone job directory on the unionlearn website has extensive LMI on a range of job profiles covering salaries, qualifications, job vacancies, predicted job growth and the gender pay gap.

ULRs/union reps need to share and use this information with their learners as part of the decision-making process. Many learners may also find this useful to share and use with their own children, who may be making their first decisions on qualifications and courses. LMI can be a powerful tool to broaden and raise career aspirations across generations.

Sector Skills Councils and Industrial Partnerships

One of unionlearn's priorities is to support union involvement in the work of Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and Industrial Partnerships.

Sector Skills Councils

SSCs are independent, employer-led, UK-wide organisations established to define skills needs and skills standards in their industries. There are sixteen SSCs and five sector skills bodies working with over 550,000 employers.



Each SSC works in a different way, but these are some of the activities and services they provide:

- labour market information, including sector trends and skills shortages
- working with employers to define occupation standards and job competencies
- defining qualifications and providing advice to employers on the best qualifications for apprenticeships
- careers information
- mapping and quality marking career pathways
- promoting diversity and supporting under-represented groups to enter and progress with their sectors
- supporting development at every stage of a professional career, sometimes through mentoring and bursaries
- training, professional development and consultancy.

SSCs are supported by the Federation of Industry Sector Skills and Standards (FISSS). Further information on SSC's is on the website www.fisss.org

Industrial Partnerships

In 2015 the government established Industrial Partnerships, led by employers to look at their skills shortages as part of their wider business needs. Currently, there are eight in growth sectors: aerospace, automotive, creative industries, digital economy, energy and efficiency, nuclear, science and tunnelling.

Each Industrial Partnership will be working towards:

- building a talent pipeline by supporting more young people into careers in their sector
- keeping pace and growth by building the skills of the existing workforce
- driving up quality and setting standards, making colleges and training providers responsive to their needs
- shaping the skills landscape locally and nationally.

Union involvement and ensuring the voice of workers is included in this work are important. There is more information about working with SSCs and Industrial Partnerships on the unionlearn website.

National Guidance Research Forum

This website has a Labour Market Information – Future Trends section. It gives information on 25 sectors and broad occupational groups focusing on future trends in the labour market and skills. It covers information such as:

- sector profile, skills gaps and shortages, future employment
- regional and national dimension
- occupational information
- equal opportunities issues
- education and training
- links to further information.

The Education and Training Foundation (ETF)

The ETF is the workforce and development body for the further education (FE) and training sector. The Excellence Gateway www.excellencegateway.org.uk is the ETF's resources portal. It hosts over 7,000 resources for you to search and some of the more notable resources include:

Maths Pathway: free online modules and self-evaluation tools to develop personal maths skills at level 2, with some extension to level 3

English Pathway: free online modules and self-evaluation tools to develop English skills at level 2, with some extension to level 3

SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Exhibition Site: hosts resources on supported internships, employer engagement, improving access to apprenticeships and supporting learners with autism, dyslexia and hearing impairments
<https://send.excellencegateway.org.uk>

Career Learning for All: an online resource to help you develop the skills and knowledge needed to deliver the first level of career support
www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/eg5927

Learning and Work Institute (LWI)

LWI is an independent policy and research organisation dedicated to lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion. Its resources can be accessed at www.learningandwork.org.uk and include:

- Decision Making of Adult Learners
- Supporting People with English Language Needs to Access Apprenticeships
- Understanding the Under-representation of Women in Engineering
- Supporting Young Apprentices: Guidance for employers.

The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC)

The CEC was established in 2015 to prepare and inspire young people for the fast-changing world of work. It works with local enterprise partnerships to build a national network that links schools and colleges to employers. You can find further information at www.careersandenterprise.co.uk



Specialist and other agencies

Some learners may need specialist information and advice. These are some agencies that may be able to help. They may have local offices.

Action on Hearing Loss (was RNID)

www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Helpline 0808 808 0123

Textphone 0808 808 9000

British Dyslexia Association

www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

Helpline 0333 405 4567

helpline@bdadyslexia.org.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau

The CAB provides advice on work, benefits, debt and money, family and housing. It also has education resources such as consumer education, financial capability and life event interventions

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

National Advice line 03444 111 444

Text relay 03444 111 445

Disability Rights UK

www.disabilityrightsuk.org

Disabled students helpline 0330 995 0414

students@disabilityrightsuk.org

Mencap

www.mencap.org.uk

Helpline 0808 808 1111

MIND (mental health charity)

www.mind.org.uk

Infoline 0300 123 3393

Text 86463

info@mind.org.uk

Money Advice Service

www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk

Helpline 0800 138 777

Typetalk 18001 0800 915 4622

RNIB (Royal National Institute for the Blind)

www.rnib.org.uk

Helpline 0303 123 999

helpline@rnib.org.uk

High priority areas for learning and work



Supporting members into higher learning

The term ‘higher learning’ is used to describe any learning that leads to qualifications at level 4 or above. This includes degrees, foundation degrees, higher national diplomas, masters degrees, doctorates and other professional qualifications. They can be studied part time or full time at universities and colleges, or through distance and online learning.

Higher learning is for everybody and many opportunities are suitable for workplace learning. ULRs have a key role to play in encouraging and supporting learners to progress into higher-level learning, by working with providers to work flexibly and by working with employers to support their staff into this area.

The higher-learning landscape is complex, particularly for older learners taking non-traditional or work-based routes. Unionlearn is committed to supporting and developing pathways to higher learning for union learners and works with higher-education institutions and partners such as The Open University to make access to higher learning easier.

Nevertheless, taking up higher learning can be quite a commitment for learners in terms of time and costs and ULRs can be key to supporting learners make the right choices for themselves.

For information on higher learning visit: www.unionlearn.org.uk/higher-learning-work

For information about discounts for union members visit: www.unionlearn.org.uk/higher-education-discounts-trade-union-members

Unionlearn and TUC Education have developed the eNote ‘Supporting learners into higher learning’. You can access this from the TUC Education website: www.tuceducation.org.uk

The Climbing Frame

The Climbing Frame has a learning theme with a wealth of information on higher learning that you can work through with learners. This includes information on

- higher learning options
- higher learning qualifications
- choosing a course
- entry to higher-learning courses
- financing higher-level studies
- support from employers
- supporting learners into higher learning
- further help and advice on higher learning.

The Climbing Frame also has a section for ULRs in the Supporting Learners theme on supporting learners into higher learning.

The Open University

Unionlearn works in partnership with the Open University to ensure union members can access flexible higher-learning opportunities. Options include free online courses and the chance to achieve a Statement of Participation on completion www.open.edu/openlearn

The Part-time Education for Adults Returning to Learn (PEARL) website

This website is aimed at learners aged 18+ years who are looking for part-time and flexible learning opportunities across England. It provides information and signposts to sources of support and resources that will help learners identify vocational and academic pathways.

The website also has the ‘Advise Me’ tool, which gives personalised learning options to suit the learner’s circumstances. For further information visit <http://pearl.open.ac.uk>

National Careers Service

The National Careers Service can help with enquiries about higher learning, including higher apprenticeships and courses. Details of the National Careers Services can be found on pages 37 and 38 or on the unionlearn website. For further information visit <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk> or phone 0800 100 900.

Did you know?

There are many benefits to gaining higher-learning qualifications:

- Evidence suggests that people with a level 4 qualification will earn up to £500,000 more over their lifetime than their peers with lower-level qualifications.
- It is predicted that by 2022 half of all jobs will require a higher-education qualification of some type.

These statistics are from the Futureme website at <https://futureme.ac.uk>

English, maths and digital skills

With rapid technological advances and in an increasingly digitally connected world, the need for good literacy, numeracy and digital skills is essential.

Reading, writing, speaking and listening skills in English, using everyday maths and using everyday digital technology enables us to engage with the world around us. Whether that is communicating online with family and friends, helping our children with homework, reading and answering letters about tax, pensions and banking, making doctors' appointments, paying utility bills or just being able to do things online and get the best deals, we need these skills more than ever. The impact on our lives is immense.

The same is true at work. Nowadays over 90 per cent of jobs require some basic digital skills. Not having these skills means that people can become more and more isolated and excluded and held back from securing a better life for themselves. Not having these skills also has an effect on people's confidence and wellbeing and is related to increased vulnerability to anxiety and depression.

For ULRs, supporting learners to improve English, maths and digital skills is central to core union values of equity and inclusion. It is also about working with employers to understand that upskilling employees in these skills positively impacts on productivity and business success.

The term 'functional skills' is sometimes used. This includes the practical skills in English, maths and digital skills and is often thought to be more appropriate for adults and more relatable to work, education and everyday life situations.

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ULRs can work with learners by:

- encouraging and supporting them to take up English, maths and digital skills by doing the free online assessments and courses. These can be a useful introduction for learners that is accessible and non-threatening, and can help to build confidence and motivation to do more. Details of these courses are below.
- alerting them to learning and training providers that can also support learners with English, maths and digital skills. Learners, young people and adults may have to do English and maths (Functional Skills or GCSEs) alongside their vocational learning. This can come as quite a shock to some adults when they return to learning and it can bring up anxieties about learning subjects they thought they had left behind when they left school. ULRs play an important part in making learners aware of this, allaying anxieties and helping them understand the relevance of functional skills to their vocational studies and that this is a positive opportunity that will enable them to get on even more at work.

Did you know?

- 17 million adults have primary school-level numeracy skills
- 1 in 7 adults in England have the literacy levels expected of 9–11 years old
- approximately 12.6 million adults lack the digital skills essential for work, learning and life
- 63% of men and 75% of women with low literacy skills have never received a promotion at work
- 58% of men and women with low literacy levels have never been on a training course, compared to 20% of men and 30% of women with good literacy skills
- acquisition of level 1 literacy skills increases the probability of raised wages by 7 percentage points
- poor numeracy is costing the UK economy £20 billion per year.

These statistics come from the National Numeracy Trust www.nationalnumeracy.org.uk, the National Literacy Trust <https://literacytrust.org.uk> and the Learning and Work Institute www.learningandwork.org.uk

Support for ULRs on English, maths and digital skills

The following resources will enable you to support learners:

The Climbing Frame

The union learning Climbing Frame has a learning theme on English and maths and another on digital skills. Both these themes will provide you with comprehensive information on:

- the role of the union and working across unions
- levels and qualifications
- resources and initiatives
- websites, case studies and signposting to further opportunities.

You can access the Climbing Frame at <https://climbingframe.unionlearn.org.uk>

Unionlearn SkillCheck

Learners can log on to free SkillCheck assessments in ICT, literacy and maths. This enables them to assess their skills and gain digital badges, which are virtual rewards for specific skills, abilities, accomplishments or competencies that they have gained. They are an acknowledgment of a learner's achievements that can be shared and displayed for employment and education: www.unionlearn.org.uk/skillcheck

More information about digital badges: www.unionlearn.org.uk/digital-badges-skillcheck

TUC Education eNotes

TUC Education eNotes include:

- Working with figures
- Language support for workers
- Citizen maths
- Write now!
- Read now!

For more information visit: www.tuceducation.org.uk/enotes

The Skills Network

Unionlearn has launched a training partnership with the Skills Network, offering funded qualifications via distance learning. They take just 12–16 weeks to complete. For more information visit: <https://unionlearn.theskillsnetwork.com>

Wranx

Unionlearn is working in partnership with Wranx to provide free bite-sized functional skills and GCSE maths and English revision online. Learning can be done in as little as two or three minutes a day by logging in and answering 10 questions. More information on this is available at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/wranx

The Open University

The Open University OpenLearn platform has lots of free courses including skills for work, with options in money and finance, communication and digital. These are free courses and can be done at a time to suit the learner. They take from a few hours to 24 hours, spread over several weeks. On completion learners get a Certificate of Participation. Visit: www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses/full-catalogue





Mental health and wellbeing

Unions have a long history of campaigning for change in the workplace and beyond, not only on employment rights or safety issues but also on the way people are viewed in the workplace and in society. There is much stigma and discrimination around mental health and particularly mental ill health. These are issues of justice, equality and fairness – core trade union business.

With the impact of austerity, longer working hours and financial insecurity contributing to ever-increasing levels of workplace stress, there has been an increase in the prevalence of mental ill health. In response, unions have often taken the lead both in securing the best outcomes for individual members with mental health issues and in working with employers to develop ‘mentally healthy’ workplaces.

Did you know?

- In 2017 mental health problems at work cost the UK economy £34.9 billion, which is equivalent to £1,300 for every employee. This figure is up from £26 billion in 2007.
- 15% of people in work have symptoms of an existing mental health condition.
- 300,000 people with long-term mental health problems lose their jobs every year.

These statistics are from mental health at work report *Thriving at Work: the Stevenson/Farmer review of mental health and employers* (2017) www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk and from The Centre for Mental Health www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk

ULRs have an important role in promoting learning to raise awareness of mental health in the workplace and to help tackle the stigma and discrimination surrounding mental ill health.

The TUC has developed several resources to support ULRs:

Mental health awareness course for reps

This 18-hour course covers why it is important and how reps can deal with mental health issues. It is for reps who want to increase their awareness of how the workplace can affect mental health and who want to improve policies for their members.

The course will help reps to develop a better understanding of:

- mental health in general
- work-related mental health issues
- disability discrimination law and how it applies to people with mental health issues.

It will also help reps to:

- develop, through the use of case studies and role play, some practical skills for dealing with mental health-related issues
- produce an action plan to work with members and employers to develop a strategy for mental health issues.

Visit www.tuceducation.org.uk and search the course directory to find a course near you.

TUC union learning reps two online course

The follow-up online course for learning reps provides further learning for developing the ULR role, supporting learners with unique needs and how to work with key partners. Details can be accessed at www.tuceducation.org.uk

Mental health in the workplace online learning

TUC Education's e-learning modules (eNotes) are great resources to help reps keep up to date on key workplace issues. The Mental health in the workplace eNote raises awareness of the impact of mental health issues at work and how union reps can support members affected by issues associated with mental health. It describes common mental health illnesses and help reps recognise when colleagues may have mental health issues, addresses the law and mental health in the workplace and helps reps support and represent members. Visit www.tuceducation.org.uk/eNotes to access the eNote.

Mental health in the workplace workbook

This workbook is for all workplace reps and helps to explain what they can do to support those in the workplace with mental health problems. It is Mental health awareness courses for reps.

Webinars

Webinars are a great resource for reps to view and are available on a variety of different topics. Registering is quick and easy – you just need to enter your email address and choose a password. Webinars related to mental health that may be of interest to reps include:

- Mental Health
- Wellbeing in the Workplace
- Tackling Stress in the Workplace.

Visit www.tuceducation.org.uk/webinars to access webinars.

Learning, skills and mental health

While it is important to learn about mental health and signpost others to mental health awareness courses, ULRs shouldn't lose sight of the fact that in fulfilling the role of the union rep effectively you are also promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. Positive learning experiences improve mental health and wellbeing by building confidence and self-esteem, creating feelings of hope in the future and opportunities to meet new people, find new interests and have a distraction from negative thoughts and feelings.

Did you know?

In a recent DfE-funded project on community learning and mental health, 23,000 learners with existing mental health problems (in work and out of work) from across 62 providers participated in a range of learning opportunities, including anxiety management and mindfulness as well as general leisure courses such as painting and drawing, cooking, dance and IT skills. Of the learners:

- 11% reported improvements in their health and wellbeing
- 15% reported improvements in communications and relationships
- 16% reported improved opportunities to do things
- 29% reported improved learning and skills
- 49% reported improved confidence and positive thinking.

In addition

- 29% reported improvements in symptoms of depression
- 39% reported improvements in symptoms of anxiety.

Learners also reported feeling more relaxed and positive, a sense of achievement from learning something new and feeling less isolated.

The report on the Community Learning and Mental Health (CLMH) project can be found at www.mhfe.org.uk



ULRs promote positive mental health by:

- **providing good information, advice and guidance**
Supporting learners to get on the right course, at the right level and delivered in a way that suits them means they are more likely to stick at learning, thereby increasing confidence, motivation and a sense of achievement.
- **supporting learners to persist and succeed throughout their learning**
This may involve small things like asking how their learning is going, checking up to ensure everything is okay, helping to sort out any stumbling blocks or challenges that crop up, and recognising and celebrating their achievements.
- **helping learners to continue and progress in learning**
For learners who are doing short bite-sized learning as an introduction to learning, it may involve helping them to think about the next steps. A sense of achievement at having completed a short learning course can soon disappear if it doesn't help them achieve a longer-term goal.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are a key flagship policy for the government because they seek to ensure that, by bringing learning and work closer together, individuals learn the skills employers want and need. For individuals they offer the opportunity to earn while they learn and gain practical skills in the workplace. Apprenticeships are open to all from the age of 16 years, whether they are just leaving school, have been working for years or starting a new career.

ULRs have an important role for apprentices in the workplace by supporting their learning, by ensuring health and safety and in their mentoring. Unions also play a key role in negotiating with employers on apprenticeship programmes and setting up apprenticeship agreements.

Unionlearn has produced resources to help you support apprentices.

Unionlearn website

The website also includes information on:

- resources for apprentices
- rights for apprentices
- resources for union reps on apprenticeships
- higher apprenticeships
- the apprenticeship levy
- the charter for apprenticeships.

In addition, the website has links to eNotes, news and policy updates so that your knowledge of this important policy remains current.

This is all available at

www.unionlearn.org.uk/apprenticeships

The unionlearn Climbing Frame

The Climbing Frame has a learning theme on apprenticeships which covers:

- an introduction to help you understand what an apprenticeship is
- the role of the union and working across the union
- apprenticeship frameworks and standards
- apprenticeship levels
- the national minimum wage
- widening apprenticeship access to under-represented groups
- English, maths and functional skills in apprenticeships
- professional registration and apprentices
- traineeships
- case studies, websites and videos.

This can be accessed at

<https://climbingframe.unionlearn.org.uk>

Apprenticeship Essentials app

Unionlearn has created an Apprenticeship Essentials app that includes:

- key information about apprenticeships
- information about choosing the right apprenticeship
- apprenticeship vacancies
- the apprenticeship paycheck
- rate your apprenticeship
- information about joining a trade union
- interactive quizzes
- bite-sized e-learning modules.

For more information visit

www.unionlearn.org.uk/apprenticeships



Apprenticeships website

The government website contains lots of useful information about apprenticeships, including:

- What is an apprenticeship?
- How to become an apprentice
- What are the benefits to me?
- Find an apprenticeship
- Real stories.

For more information visit www.apprenticeships.gov.uk

Education and Training Foundation

The ETF online site has free modules on aspects of apprenticeship delivery, including:

- employer engagement
- end-point assessment
- preparing to deliver the apprenticeship standards
- equality, diversity and inclusion.

For more information visit: www.et-foundation.co.uk

Personal development for union reps



Your own professional development

Unionlearn aims to ensure that all union members have the help and information they need about learning and opportunities to progress. The role of the ULR in supporting, coaching, mentoring and signposting is a central feature of the unionlearn network model for supporting learners. Being a reflective practitioner and keeping up to date are key to providing the best support to learners.

The table below is not a complete list of the ULR's roles and skills – you may have many other responsibilities in the workplace and use a range of other skills. The table simply identifies some of the skills needed for supporting individual learners.

If, as a ULR, you have a specialist role in delivering careers information and advice, you will have developed and are using many of these skills. Which ones do you think are most important in your role? Are there any that you need to improve or develop?

Activity/task	Important	Develop further
Acting as a role model or mentor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encouraging and motivating learners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helping learners to gain confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Building trust and rapport with learners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being a sounding board	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Giving feedback to learners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Challenging unrealistic ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speaking up or advocating for learners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promoting equality and diversity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Listening actively	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asking questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identifying learning needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Preparing individual or group sessions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Addressing barriers to learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helping learners to set goals and targets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helping learners plan what to do next	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helping learners review their progress and plans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Celebrating and building on achievement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making contacts and networking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using resources, databases and the internet to find information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interpreting and understanding information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing information to learners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helping learners find and select information themselves	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Signposting learners to other sources of information or support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Storing information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Updating information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helping learners record information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helping learners keep a record of their plans and progress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Following up	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing continuing support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identifying limitations of my own role	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Managing my own time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delegating tasks to others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reflecting on my own practice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Planning my own learning and development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working to principles (confidentiality, impartiality)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complying with legislation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Training and progression for union reps

Basic training for ULRs

When you become a ULR, or within six months of your appointment, you should be able to undertake the two-stage online union reps' course. The course is interactive and full of useful information. It is self-study and you can access the course at a time to suit you at: www.tuceducation.org.uk

TUC Education online courses

Being a ULR is not simply about signposting people to learning or referring them to a careers information and advice provider. Training and learning are a continuing process and ULRs need to be there to support union learners every step of the way. TUC Education has developed a Supporting Learners module to enable ULRs to provide ongoing support in a workplace context. The module is available in the online ULR Two course at: www.tuceducation.org.uk/findacourse

TUC Education eNotes

These are bite-sized briefings that give union reps the help and support they need to strengthen their role in the workplace. Visit www.tuceducation.org.uk/enotes to log in and try these free e-learning opportunities. The selection of eNotes includes Apprenticeships, Supporting Mid-life Development, Union Learning Representatives – introduction and Supporting Learners.

Union courses

It is good idea to find out what courses your union offers and keep up to date with its learning publications or learning website, if it has one.

Progression opportunities

If you want to gain qualifications in careers advice and guidance, there is a range of options. It is important to think about: why you want a particular qualification; whether your aim is to learn more or simply to be assessed for what you can do; how much time you will be able to spend on gaining the qualification; and what it will cost.

Reasons for gaining a qualification might be:

- You are interested in increasing your knowledge and skills in this area.
- You are already carrying out most of the activities and want to gain credit for what you can do.
- Your union can access funding to deliver services through the National Careers Service but must have qualified staff and union reps and matrix accreditation.
- You would like a career in information, advice and guidance.

The Career Development Institute

The CDI was established in April 2013 with a vision to make the career development sector stronger and more coherent. To support career development professionals such as ULRs in their professional development, it has created a Career Development Progression Pathway: www.thecdi.net The purpose of the pathway is to help employers and practitioners identify the relevant qualifications that should be held for the different levels of the roles.



Career Development Pathway

EXAMPLE JOB TITLE	ROLE	EXAMPLES OF QUALIFICATIONS
<p>First contact</p> <p>Careers administrator</p> <p>Careers reception</p> <p>First contact adviser</p>	<p>Establish communication with clients for advice and guidance</p> <p>Support clients to make use of advice and guidance services</p> <p>Enable individuals to use and apply information for career development</p> <p>Enable individuals to access referral opportunities</p> <p>Monitor, evaluate and improve the effectiveness of the service</p> <p>Promote the availability, value and effectiveness of the service</p> <p>Reflect on, develop and maintain own skills and practice in career development</p>	<p>NOCN Advanced Certificate Level 3 Developing Information, Advice or Guidance</p> <p>NOCN Award and Advanced Award Level 3 for Trade Union Learning Representatives</p> <p>Level 3 Award in Supporting Clients to Overcome Barriers to Learning and Work</p> <p>Advice and Guidance Level 3 (NVQ) Certificate</p> <p>Level 3 Award/Certificate or Diploma in Employment-related Services</p>
<p>Support</p> <p>Career assistant</p> <p>Personal advisor</p>	<p>Build and maintain relationships with individuals to ensure a client-centred approach</p> <p>Support individuals to identify and explore their career development needs and aspirations</p> <p>Enable individuals to set appropriate goals and career development objectives</p> <p>Plan and deliver individual and group development through career-related learning activities</p> <p>Enable individuals to use and apply information for career development</p> <p>Enable individuals to access referral opportunities</p> <p>Provide ongoing support to help individuals achieve their career goals and development objectives</p> <p>Help individuals evaluate their progress and achievement and plan for the future</p> <p>Develop and apply understanding of theory and effective practice in career development</p> <p>Improve services to individuals by collaborating with others</p> <p>Promote the availability, value and effectiveness of the service</p> <p>Monitor, evaluate and improve its effectiveness</p> <p>Plan and undertake research on behalf of the service</p> <p>Reflect on, develop and maintain own skills and practice in career development</p>	<p>Level 4 Diploma in Career Information and Advice</p> <p>S/NVQ Level 4 Guidance (undertaken in a career context)</p> <p>S/NVQ Level 4 Advice and Guidance (undertaken in a career context)</p> <p>NVQ Level 4 LDSS (Young People /Connexions Pathways)</p>

EXAMPLE JOB TITLE	ROLE	EXAMPLES OF QUALIFICATIONS
<p>Practitioner Careers adviser</p>	<p>Develop and apply understanding of theory and effective practice in career development</p> <p>Build and maintain relationships with individuals to ensure a client-centred approach to career development</p> <p>Support individuals to identify and explore their career development needs and aspirations</p> <p>Enable individuals to set appropriate goals and career development objectives</p> <p>Plan and deliver individual and group development through career-related learning activities</p> <p>Enable individuals to use and apply information for career development</p> <p>Provide ongoing support to help individuals achieve their career goals and development objectives</p> <p>Help individuals evaluate their progress and achievement and plan for the future</p> <p>Lead and manage career development work in organisations</p> <p>Improve services to individuals by collaborating with others</p> <p>Enable individuals to access referral opportunities</p> <p>Represent individuals' needs to others through advocacy, negotiation and mediation</p> <p>Plan and design the service offer</p> <p>Promote the availability, value and effectiveness of the service</p> <p>Monitor, evaluate and improve the effectiveness of the service</p> <p>Plan and undertake research on behalf of the service</p> <p>Reflect on, develop and maintain own skills and practice in career development</p>	<p>Master's degrees</p> <p>Postgraduate diploma</p> <p>Diploma</p> <p>Postgraduate certificate</p> <p>BA Hons</p> <p>ICCI certification</p>

NOCN provides some qualifications in Information, Advice and Guidance. For more information visit their website: www.nocn.org.uk/

OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations) also has information on its website relating to these qualifications. Go to: www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/by-type/vocational-qualifications/

Fully qualified careers advisers usually have a degree, equivalent qualification or relevant experience to a postgraduate course called the Qualification in Careers Guidance (QCG). This is available as either one year full time or two years part time. Contact the CDI for further information about the QCG and other programmes.

If you are interested in careers in advice and guidance for yourself or for your learners, telephone the National Careers Service on 0800 100 900 (free from a landline) and talk to an adviser, or access the job profile section of the service:

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>

Mentoring, coaching and facilitating learning

Advice and guidance are only one of the progression routes for supporting learners. You may be interested in qualifications in mentoring, coaching or tutoring. Courses are available through The Open University www.open.ac.uk, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development at www.cipd.co.uk and the Institute of Leadership and Management www.i-l-m.com

The Climbing Frame has a learning theme that includes information about progression for reps – Personal Development and Career Planning. For more information visit:

<https://climbingframe.unionlearn.org.uk>

The Supporting Learners eNote forms a good basis for developing these skills, as does the mentoring eNote. To access these eNotes go to:

www.tuceducation.org.uk/enotes

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Continuing professional development

Continuing professional development (CPD) means finding opportunities to keep yourself updated on new ideas or information or taking short courses about different aspects of your work, for example working with vulnerable groups such as migrant workers or people who are recovering from mental illness.

The Open University offers a range of 30-hour online CPD courses that can be useful for developing specific skills such as mentoring or advanced interview skills. There is a cost associated with these courses. The OU will provide a certificate of achievement at the end of a period of study and on completion of a work-based activity. For more information visit: www.open.edu/openlearn/money-management/free-courses

Reflecting and reviewing your practice

Taking time to reflect on your skills and qualities and then developing them is time well spent. You may find it helpful to answer the questions below to identify areas where you could benefit from further skills development. You might want to look again at the activity list on page 54 to review the tasks you tend to do more often and the ones you would like to develop skills for.

1. What are your main strengths when carrying out interviews or carrying out meetings with union learners?
2. What tells you that either a one-to-one interview or group session with union learners has gone well?
3. What are the main organisations in the network that you signpost members to?
4. What do you still need to learn or find out about to help you support learners?
5. What skills, if any, do you need to improve to help you support learners?
6. What plans do you have to develop yourself further?

Using the union learning Climbing Frame

You can use the union learning Climbing Frame to plan your learning and development. There is a learning theme entitled Personal Development and Career Planning you could use, and the Climbing Frame learner management area to plan your own learning and record your progression. To register to access the website and for more information visit: <https://climbingframe.unionlearn.org.uk/Home>

Quality assuring your work

Quality standards can be a useful tool to help you to think about and review your work, and to decide how to improve it. Many standards also have an award or badge system so that organisations can show that they have met the standard, but you can always just use them as a reference point.

Matrix standard

The services you may refer members to for specialist help are likely to have achieved matrix accreditation, the national quality mark for organisations delivering information, advice, support and/or guidance services to support individuals in their choice of career, learning, work and life goals. Some unions have also achieved the standard, particularly those who are working with the National Careers Service.

The unionlearn Careerzone has produced resources for unions about the matrix standard and how to achieve accreditation, which can be downloaded from the website: www.unionlearn.org.uk/matrix-standard. It looks at each element of the standard in detail and explains how it applies to your role. The pack also includes a glossary of key words.

If you are not working in a context where it is practical to achieve the accreditation, you can still use the matrix standard as a way of thinking about the quality of your work and the service you offer to members. You are an important part of a network of services that combine to provide all the help that members need to make choices about learning and work. Carrying out very simple activities well can make all the difference. The standard is very relevant to your work as a union representative in supporting learners.

The standard is made up of four elements:

- **Leadership and management**
This is about the way the organisation is led and managed to develop an effective service.
- **Resources**
This describes the assets invested and applied in providing an effective service.
- **Service delivery**
This describes the way in which the service is delivered effectively.
- **Quality improvement**
This describes the way in which the service provided is reviewed and improved on an ongoing basis.

Further information can be obtained from:

<https://matrixstandard.com>

The Gatsby Career Benchmarks

The Department for Education Careers Strategy (www.gov.uk) has adopted the Gatsby Careers Benchmarks to define world-class careers guidance. Aimed at schools and colleges, the eight benchmarks are:

1. a stable careers programme
2. learning from career and labour market information
3. addressing the needs of each pupil
4. linking curriculum learning to careers
5. encounters with employers and employees
6. experiences of workplaces
7. encounters with further and higher education
8. personal guidance.

The roll out of the Skills Plan and Industrial Strategy puts technical education at the heart of learning and work and brings educators and employers closer together.

For further information go to: www.gatsby.org.uk



Websites for supporting learners

Access to Higher Education

www.accesstohe.ac.uk

Apprenticeships

www.apprenticeships.gov.uk

Campaign for Learning

www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk

Careerzone

www.unionlearn.org.uk/careerzone

The union learning Climbing Frame

<https://climbingframe.unionlearn.org.uk>

Department for Education

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education

Disability Rights UK

www.disabilityrightsuk.org

Education and Skills Funding Agency

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency

Education and Training Foundation

www.et-foundation.co.uk

Federation for Industry Sector Skills and Standards

<https://fiss.org/sector-skills-council-body/directory-of-sscs>

FutureLearn

www.futurelearn.com

Gov.uk

www.gov.uk

Learning and Work Institute

www.learningandwork.org.uk

Matrix Standard

<https://matrixstandard.com>

The National Careers Service

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>

OpenLearn

www.open.edu/openlearn

PEARL (Part-time Education for Adults Returning to Learn)

www.pearl.ac.uk

SkillCheck

www.unionlearn.org.uk/skillcheck

The Skills Network

<https://unionlearn.theskillsnetwork.com>

Skills Workshop

www.skillsworkshop.org

Trades Union Congress

www.tuc.org.uk

TUC Education

www.tuceducation.org.uk

unionlearn

www.unionlearn.org.uk

Glossary

Apprenticeship

An apprenticeship is a real job with training that allows trainees to earn while they learn. There are four levels of apprenticeship: Intermediate (level 2), Advanced (level 3), Higher (levels 4, 5, 6 and 7) and Degree (levels 6 and 7). Anyone aged 16 or over and not in fulltime education can apply.

CPD

Continuing professional development. Any process or activity that provides added value to the capability of the professional through an increase in knowledge, skills and personal qualities necessary for professional and technical duties.

Department for Education (DfE)

The government department responsible for education and training policy.

Digital learning or online learning

This covers a wide set of applications and processes, such as web-based learning, computer-based learning and virtual classrooms. It includes the delivery of content via the internet, often using apps, webinars and other digital platforms.

Education and Skills Funding Agency

The ESFA is the single funding agency accountable for funding education and training for children, young people and adults.

ESOL

English for speakers of other languages.

Foundation degrees (Fds)

Shortened degrees with a vocational bias.

Functional skills

These are essential skills in English, maths and information and communication technology (ICT). Functional skills qualifications are designed to improve literacy, numeracy and ICT to equip learners with the practical skills needed to live, learn and work successfully and the ability to apply these skills effectively to a range of purposes in the workplace and in other life situations.

GDPR

The General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (“GDPR”) is a regulation in EU law on data protection and privacy for all individuals within the European Union (EU) and the European Economic Area (EEA). It also addresses the export of personal data outside the EU and EEA areas.

Gender pay gap

The average difference between the remuneration for men and women who are working, and which takes into account hours worked, occupations chosen and level of occupation.

IAG

Information, advice and guidance. The term ‘supporting learners’ is often used instead.

ICT

Information and communication technology.

liP

Investors in People – the national standard that sets a level of good practice for training and development of people in the workplace.

Learning centre

A centre established at a workplace, library or other venue to provide learning facilities.

Local enterprise partnerships (LEPs)

Partnerships between local authorities and businesses to help determine local economic priorities and lead economic growth and job creation in a region. There are currently 38 LEPs.

NOCN

NOCN is an international awarding organisation (AO) and government-approved end point assessment organisation (EPAO).

Ofqual

The Office of Qualifications and Examinations (Ofqual) regulates qualifications, examinations and assessments in England.

RQF (Regulated Qualifications Framework)

RQF is the reference system put in place and regulated by Ofqual to help people understand how qualifications can be compared to each other in terms of the size and challenge of the qualifications they offer.

Sector skills councils (SSCs)

Industry-led sector bodies aimed at developing more effective sector strategies.

SEND

Special education needs and disabilities.

Workforce development

An approach to learning and training that actively involves the participation of the entire workforce, including those who often are missed out. It involves initial learning that meets learners at their point of need and offers ongoing progression for individuals and groups. It works best when unions and employers work together to agree what is needed by the workforce and the employer and what levels of support are required.

Notes

This title may also be made available, on request, in accessible electronic format or in Braille, audiotape and large print, at no extra cost.



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