

2017/18

BetterSkills

Better Work Better Lives

Union Learning Fund Annual Report

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Forward

Raising the skills level of the workforce is a key priority of the Northern Ireland Executive skills agenda and the support and endeavour of the Trade Unions has a key part to play in achieving this goal. The Northern Ireland Committee of Irish Congress of Trade Unions, plays a pivotal role in this by working in conjunction with the Department for the Economy to make the Union Learning Fund and all other aspects of union-lead learning a success. Since 2002, the Union Learning Fund has helped many people to transform their lives. The fund has opened up new opportunities through access to learning, enabling those who we have assisted to develop new skills to aid progression within the workplace and to succeed at everyday life.

Throughout the year ULF projects have continued to engage in the delivery of the broadest possible range of learning opportunities, tailored to equip workers with the knowledge, skills and confidence to thrive in the workplace. This year seen some projects extend their reach from the workplace out into the community, forming partnerships and opening up educational opportunities to various community group members.

It is a tribute to the work of all the unions involved that ULF projects once again performed above expectations and exceeded targets set. Important as they are, the numbers outlined in this report just tell one part of the story. Crucially the learners' stories and case studies demonstrate the impact on peoples lives and the wider role of unions in the workplace and communities.

The coming year will be no less challenging for the ULF projects than the last 12 months, however, I am sure that the projects will continue to work to strengthen and expand on the good work of 2017/18, ensuring all those we engage with achieve, Better Skills, Better Work, Better Lives.



Julie Gorman

Union Learn Development Officer

Union Learning Fund Projects 2017/18

During 2017/18 the Union Learning Fund supported the following 12 projects:

1. NIPSA
2. FSU
3. USDAW
4. BFAWU
5. AEGIS
6. RCM
7. GMB
8. UNITE
9. UNITE Construction
10. UNISON
11. INTO
12. FBU

Building relationships with employers

In 2017/18 ULF projects, have engaged with over 80 employers. This does not include the fact that many employers such as large retailers, government departments or health trusts operate at multiple locations, so the number of workplaces actually engaged in the ULF are many more than this. Sectors covered include:

- Banking
- Civil Service
- Construction
- Distribution
- Engineering
- Food production
- Health
- Manufacturing
- Retail
- Transport
- Education
- Emergency Services

The ULF has reached employers of all kinds, and of all sizes. It has engaged large multinational corporations and smaller privately-owned businesses. It spans the public and private sectors. This year has seen new employers join, with project managers regularly reporting new employers or new workplaces coming on board for the first time.

Relationships with providers

The 2017/18 ULF projects engaged with all six of Northern Ireland's Regional Further Education colleges as follows:

- Belfast Metropolitan College
- Northern Regional College
- North West Regional College
- South Eastern Regional College
- Southern Regional College
- South West College.

FE Colleges were the first port of call for Essential Skills Training in Literacy, Numeracy and ICT.

HE providers engaged with during 2017/18 included:

- The Open University
- University of Ulster

In addition, the ULF projects engaged with at least 20 independent providers from both the private and not-for-profit sectors, including:

- The Training and Recruitment House
- SYSCO
- Travelift Ireland
- London Institute of Banking & Finance
- Global Horizons
- British Sign Language
- National Numeracy Challenge
- Craft Training
- Tides Training
- Action Mental Health
- New Dawn Training & Development
- TLC Training
- MPS Ltd
- EPS Plant & Safety
- Julie Patterson Training
- Ballyfatton Training
- The Clinical Education Centre
- The Northern Ireland Practice and Education Centre
- NCFE

Independent providers were able to provide a range of customised courses, aimed at providing wider development opportunities for learners.

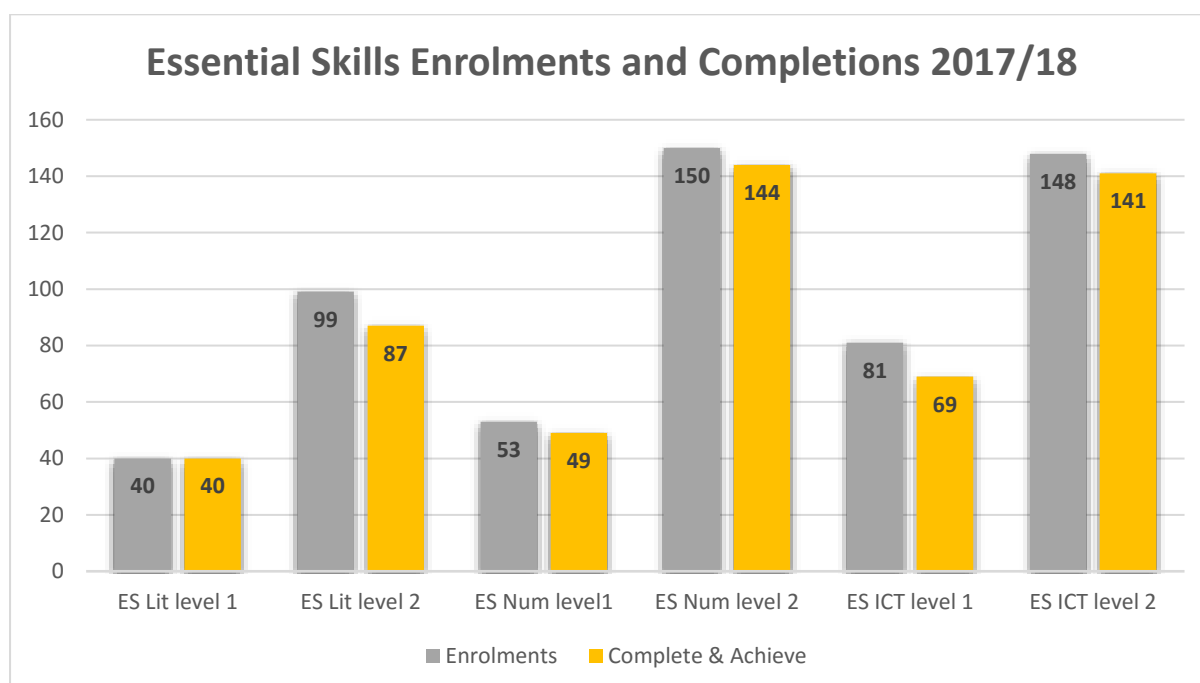
Union Learning Fund Performance 2017/18

In 2017/18, through 12 projects, a number of courses were delivered across both Essential Skills and non-Essential Skills subjects. In total, Union Learning Fund projects enrolled 4156 learners onto courses during 2017/18.

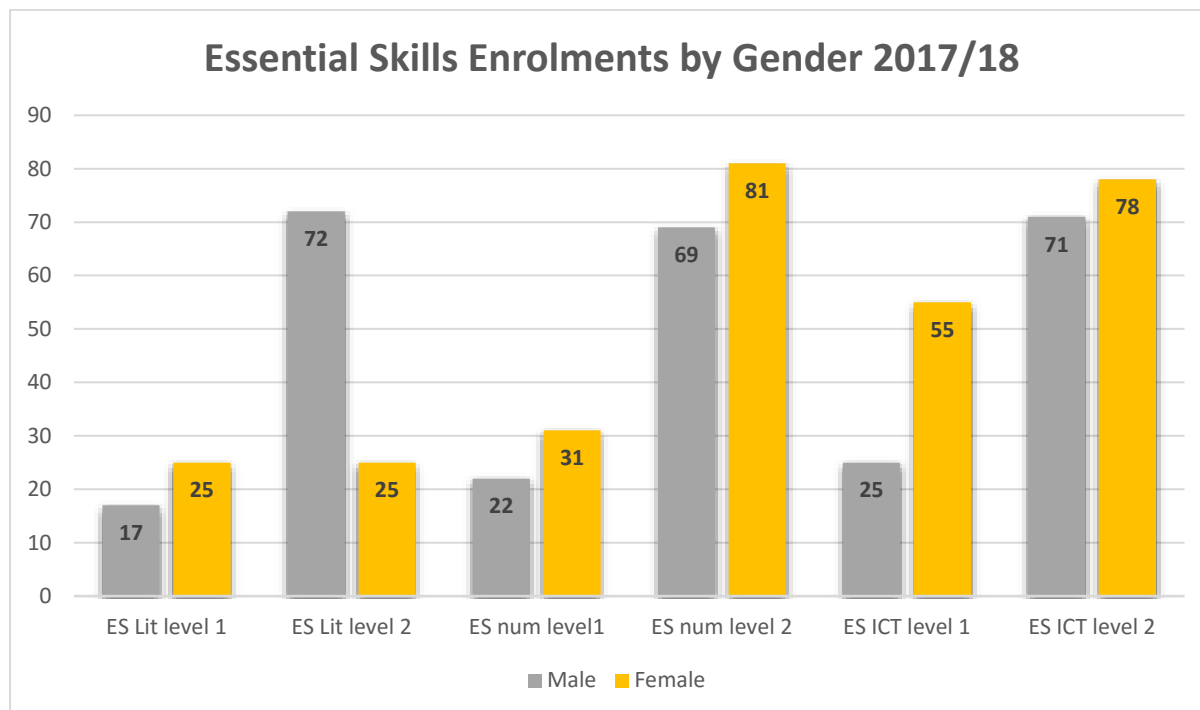
PROJECTS	ESSENTIAL SKILLS	OTHER ACCREDITED	ULR RECRUIT & TRAIN	ULR DEVELOPMENT	NON-ACCREDITED TARGET	CPD	TOTAL ACHIEVED 2017/18
RCM				3	140	196	339
INTO		10	11		60		81
NIPSA	77	48	17	4	260		406
UNISON	109	137	10			1237	1493
USDAW	138	162	10	3	221		534
BFAWU	47	177	1		112		337
FBU		59					59
AEGIS	16	104					120
FSU	37	50			61		148
GMB	11	62	3		117		193
UCATT	0	167	0				167
UNITE	136	32	7	80	24		279
TOTALS	571	1008	59	90	995	1433	4156

Essential Skills

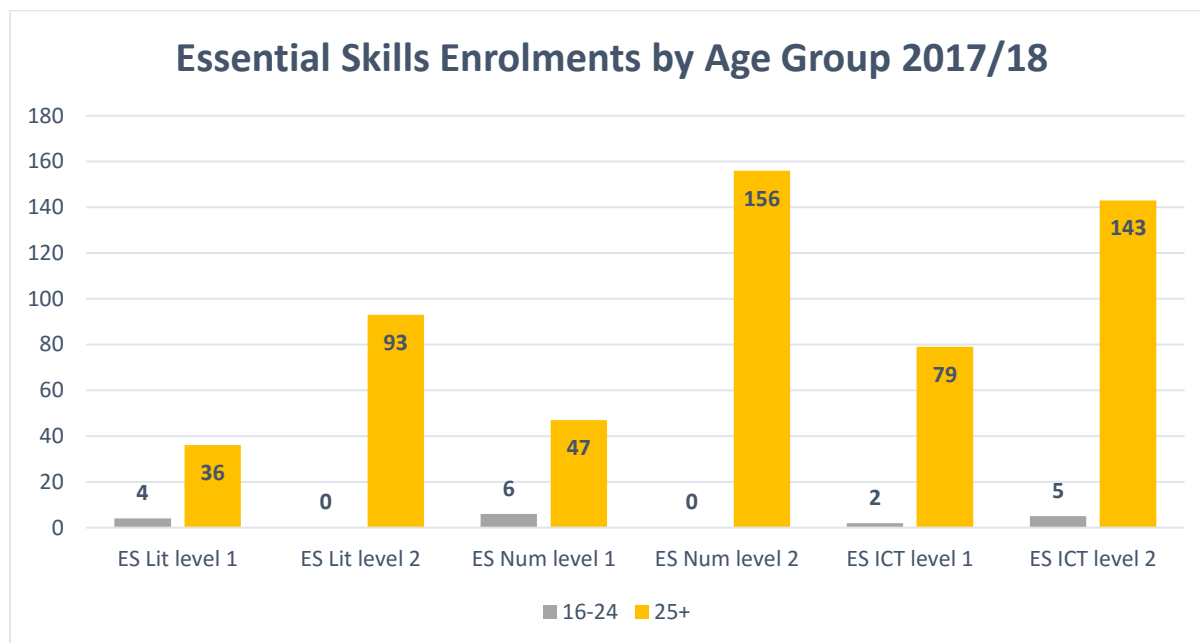
Against a global project target of 555, in total 571 learners enrolled and 530 completed and achieved Essential Skills qualifications at either Level 1 or 2 in literacy numeracy or ICT, during the period April 2017 – March 2018. A retention rate of 93% was achieved in 2017/18.



Of the 571 enrolled learners, 295 were female and 276 were male. The highest enrolments by male learners was for Literacy at Level 2. Highest enrolments for female was for Numeracy at Level 2.



Of the 571 enrolled learners 17 were aged 16 -25 years and 554 were 25 years plus.



Other Accredited Courses

Against a global project target of 790, in total 1008 learners enrolled for other accredited courses, ranging from Level 1 to Level 6. Many of these learners have progressed from Essential Skills. To date 855 learners have completed and achieved their qualifications. A further 140 are due to complete during the 2018/19 reporting period.

Courses covered a wide range of subjects and qualifications including, BSL, ESOL, CEMAP, NVQ Level 2-5 in Construction, ILM and Open University Access, Modules and K101.

69 of these learners enrolled and completed, accredited Trade Union Education courses provided by ICTU in partnership with SERC. The courses covered subjects such as, Managing Stress at Work, Negotiation and Communication and Health and Safety.

Non-Accredited Learning

During 2017/18, 2428 learners completed non-accredited courses, workshops, seminars, on-line courses and CPD.

For many of the ULF projects, non-accredited provision is used as the hook to get people back into learning. This type of learning has proven to be a useful assessment tool to ascertain what level a learner is at. ULRs and Project Managers have used this to map out progression pathways for learners. The Six Book Challenge, The National Numeracy Challenge and basic IT courses have been key to introducing people back into learning and has seen many learners progress onto Essential Skills courses.

Unison and RCM provided 105 Continued Professional / Personal Development (CPD) courses for 1433 healthcare staff. The CPD courses cover a wide range of subjects which are essential for the development of staff in nursing, midwifery or social care. The Unison project gave members who work in support roles within healthcare, such as cleaning, catering, portering, transport, home care and admin the opportunity to access these workshops for 'professionals' covering subjects such as dementia, palliative care, leadership, mental health or autism awareness. RCM targeted Maternity Support Workers (MSWs) who wouldn't gain access to this type of learning via their employer.

USDAW and FSU promoted FutureLearn courses provided by the Open University. FutureLearn courses have given learners the opportunity to experience University style education whilst studying at home at their own pace and time.

Non-Accredited provision is often used for professional development of learners within the workplace. INTO provided IPAD training for primary school teachers who have to use IPAD whilst teaching. FSU provided CV and interview skills workshops and refresher EXCEL to learners who work in banking.

Union Learning Representatives (ULR)

ULF projects have helped thousands of workers on their learning journey this would not have been achieved without the support of dedicated Union Learning Representatives (ULRs). ULRs work voluntarily to make a real difference within their workplaces, local communities and working in partnership help to improve productivity within their businesses, industries and wider economy.

The role of the ULR is key and critical to the success and impact of the ULF. ULRs are the key linkage and driver between union learning projects and learners. ULRs also act as a key player in the formation of partnerships between unions and employers, and the promotion of learning and workforce development.

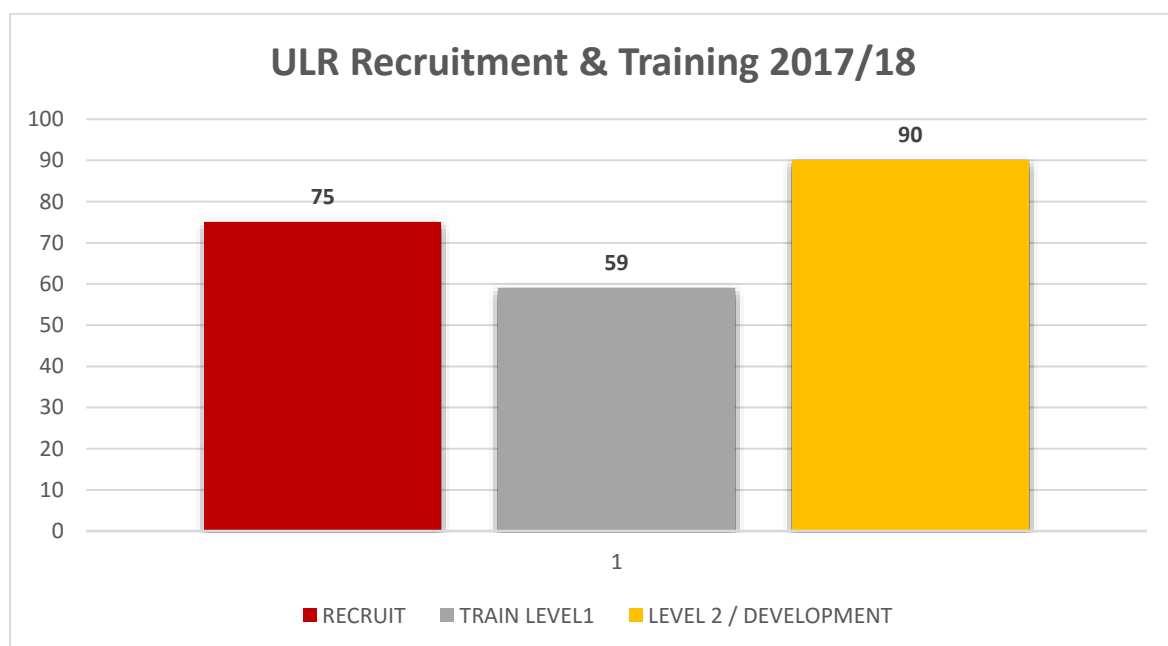
What do ULRs do?

The list below gives an idea of the range of activities a ULR might be involved in:

- Give information and advice about learning and training opportunities.
- Promote and arrange training.
- Supporting learners.
- Identify learning and training needs.
- Consult with the employer about learning and training
- Work with providers.

ULR Recruitment & Training

During 2017/18, 75 new ULRs were recruited. 59 ULRs completed Stage 1 accredited training provided by ICTU in partnership with SERC. 90 ULRs completed stage 2 or development training provided by their own unions.



ICTU ULR Conference 2018

Each year, ICTU hosts a conference with a specific theme, bringing together Union Learning Reps (ULRs) with partner organisations, including employers, learning providers, government departments and other interested parties. The aim of the conference is to offer people involved in union-led learning the opportunity to hear about and discuss current issues and opportunities.

In March 2018, the annual Union Learning Reps Conference was held in Mossley Mill, Newtownabbey. Over 90 ULRs attended and heard from key speakers addressing the theme of Better Skills, Better Work, Better Lives.

Jackie Pollock, Regional Secretary, Unite the Union, opened conference and presented awards to:

- Dwyer Henderson, NIPSA - Union Learning Representative of the Year
- Mark McClean, NIPSA - Essential Skills Trade Union Learner of the Year
- Laura Boyles, FSU - The Open University Trade Union Learner of the Year

The latest Union Learn publication, 'Better Skills, Better Work, Better Lives', was distributed at the conference. The conference heard first hand from learners and ULRs who have participated in the Union Learn project and in particular the impact it has had on their lives and work.

Speakers included:

- Julie Gorman, ICTU Union Learn – 'How & Why Union Learning Works'
- Owen Reidy, Assistant General Secretary, ICTU – Better Work, Better Lives Campaign
- Paul Mac Flynn, Senior Economist, NERI – 'A Low Skills Equilibrium in Northern Ireland'
- Alison Keenan, Community Planning Officer, Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council – Adult Learning in the Context of Community Planning
- Mark Devenney, Careers Advisor – Department for the Economy Careers Service

Better Work Better Lives
The Trade Union Campaign for a Fair Share for All

ICTU Assistant General Secretary, Owen Reidy, shared with delegates the objectives of the *Better Work Better Lives* campaign and highlighted the work that affiliated unions and activists are doing on the campaign across Northern Ireland. The Better Work Better Lives campaign policy paper outlines the skills deficit in Northern Ireland as key policy area that needs to be addressed. Delegates to the conference from a wide range of unions fully endorsed the objectives of the trade union campaign.

Better **Work** Better **Lives**

The Trade Union Campaign for a Fair Share for All

Better **Work** Better **Lives** is the trade union campaign for a *fair share for all* in Northern Ireland. Led by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, the campaign is supported by 30 public and private sector trade unions which together represent some 200,000 workers in communities and workplaces across Northern Ireland.

The Better Work Better Lives campaign believes that:

- We must develop and implement policies that tackle the scourge of low pay and insecure work across NI;
- We must campaign for improved investment in our public services to meet the needs of all of our citizens;
- We must end the 1% pay cap imposed unfairly on public sector workers which is driving public sector workers into poverty.

Pledge Support

Get involved in the campaign

Sign up to support the campaign and receive updates on our activities.



Take Action

Email your MP and MLAs

In 3 'clicks', let them know you want them to sign up to the campaign.



STRONGER TOGETHER
CONGRESS
Northern Ireland Committee
Irish Congress of Trade Unions

betterworkbetterlives.org
[@btrworkbtrlives](https://twitter.com/btrworkbtrlives) 

Better Skills Better Work Better Lives

How & Why Union Learning Works





The NIPSA Union Learn project not only met but exceeded targets set for 2017/18. Essential Skills ICT Level 1 and 2 ran for members working for the Department for the Economy. A recognition event was held in Netherleigh to celebrate the success of staff on the ICT Essential Skills Programme in October 2017.

During the year ULRs in Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council set up a Learning Pathways programme in association with their management. This work has been seen as a leading example and has opened up conversations with other Councils. Negotiations for a new Learning Agreement in North Down Borough Council are currently taking place, with the aim of setting up Essential Skills ICT classes for September 2018.

ULRs based in the North-West working in partnership with ICTU and the LRA organised a series of seminars. Nine seminars took place covering topics including; Employment Law, Managing Performance, Absence Management, Handling Difficult Conversations, Handling Disciplinarys and Resolving Workplace Disputes. The seminar series proved to be successful with 63 learners attending.

The Project Manager has been instrumental in the training of ULRs to Stage 1 and Stage 2. Continuous development of ULR skills has been the focus of the project and this is integral to ULR Network Meetings and the NIPSA ULR Conference.

At the NIPSA ULR 2018 Conference a Union Learn Committee was elected to take forward the work of Union Learn in NIPSA in conjunction with the UL Project Manager. The UL Committee designed, developed and launched a new handbook titled 'Negotiating Learning in Redundancy'.

TARGET - 95	LEARNER OUTCOMES – 406 Total
30 Essential Skills	77 Enrolled & Completed
Recruit & Train 10 ULR's	29 Recruited, 17 Trained to Stage 1
5 ULR development / Stage 2 training	4 Completed Stage 2 – Further classes structured for June 2018
50 Other Accredited / Non-Accredited Learners	48 Enrolled & Completed Other Accredited Courses 260 Enrolled & Completed Non-Accredited Courses

ULRs hold 'enjoyable and pertinent' conference



NIPSA General Secretary Alison Millar with successful ULR Of The Year Dwyer Henderson and union President Carmel Gates.

SOME 40 delegates attended this year's Union Learning Conference at Wellington Park Hotel, Belfast, in early March.

The event, which was opened by NIPSA ULR Coordinator Roisin Graham, was then addressed by ULR Committee Chair Janice Walsh.

Following this, General Secretary Alison Millar and President Carmel Gates spoke to the delegates, updating them on a range of issues. They took the opportunity to thank ULRs for their work and dedication and wished the incoming committee good luck in the year ahead.

The ULR of the Year award was presented to Dwyer Henderson from Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council, much to the delight of his ULR colleagues.

Dwyer is also chair of the new ULR committee. Joining him on the committee will be Karen Burch, Loughlinn Duffy, Kieran Farmer, Steven Harvey, Gerald McLernon, Gerardette McVeigh, John Rooney, Brian Smyth and Daire Toner.

Presentations of certificates were also made to those ULRs that had completed their training at Stage 1 or Stage 2 since last year's conference.

Conference then launched the ULR committee of 2017's work, entitled 'Negotiating Learning in Redundancy', which is available on the NIPSA website and by hard copy from Harkin House upon request.

In Session 1, Margaret McGuigan, of the Careers Service, spoke to conference about the relationship between learning and work and how this can have both positive and negative impacts on mental health issues.

She pointed out in particular that the service was not limited to school leavers or unemployed people but could be accessed by adults in employment either face to face, on the telephone or through webchats.

For further information check out the Careers Service website or speak to your Union Learning Rep.

In Session 2, two volunteers from Aware Defeat Depression charity spoke about their own experiences of depression.

Jarlath said that he had suffered from depression for 30 years – which ranged from simply having a bad day to being unable to get out of bed or to interact with any other person. He talked about his own coping mechanisms to deal with the condition – such as compartmentalising his day into small tasks: having a cup of coffee, then having a shave, then getting dressed and continuing to achieve small milestones throughout the day rather than set up the day as one big milestone.

Jarlath asked attendees to use all services available to them and seek to help as he cautioned that "a depressed mind takes very little to regress from any positives that may have occurred".



The new incoming ULR Committee with Roisin Graham (centre), attending the conference at Wellington Park Hotel, Belfast.



Union President Carmel Gates with ULR delegate Gerardette McVeigh at the ULR conference.

He also used the term, 'Big boys don't cry' and encouraged people – particularly men – to seek help as soon as is needed and not to put off in the hope of feeling better.

Session 3 was addressed by Inspire, the new name for Carecall.

The session started with some ballet dancing exercises conducted by the psychologist from Inspire.

This to set out the importance of work-life balance, something held dear by all union representatives. What followed was a discussion on balancing work and life.

The focus then changed to mind-body balance, such as eating right, getting quality sleep and enough exercise to give you more



Guest speaker Margaret McGuigan from DfC Careers Service addresses ULR conference

energy. The advice was to disconnect all electronic devices that are work-related, when not at work and to do more of that you enjoy or, indeed, take up some new activities or hobbies.

The term 'Big boys don't cry' was also used during this session with the point being made that Irishmen have a particular habit of not speaking to others about their feelings. It was pointed out that this was a learned outcome and it was emphasised that that showing emotions was not something to be ashamed of. Attendees were also asked to be 'mindful' but not 'mind full'.

Roisin Graham then closed the conference, thanking all the contributors for their input into an "enjoyable and very pertinent" conference.

NIPSA Case Studies

Union Learning Representative of the Year

Dwyer Henderson, NIPSA

Dwyer became a Union Learning Rep because he saw the huge potential that could be harnessed as a result of continuing Adult Education and in fact has been an advocate of it because he has benefited in the past from Adult Education. He wanted to give staff a voice on what they wanted to study and as a result has been able to develop these pathways with his employer.

Since becoming a Union Learning Rep in Armagh Banbridge Craigavon Council has taken on a huge task of informing the Council Management of the benefits of Union Learning and getting them on board with the initiative. He has along with his Branch Committee also got staff on board to highlight the benefits to them too.

Dwyer has been instrumental in securing a learning agreement in ABC Council where 3 councils have come together and amalgamated to form one of the super councils. In doing so, he has developed a 'Pathways Programme' in conjunction with their management and other unions like Unite and GMB in relation to all the job roles within the Council. This work is ongoing and will be rolled out to staff in the Council to develop their career path and development in the Council. Dwyer has gone the extra mile in pursuing this programme of work to enable his fellow work colleagues to progress, be more motivated and confident as well as developing 'home grown' talent within his own workplace to make their lives better.



Jackie Pollock, Unite the Union, Regional Secretary, presenting the award to Dwyer Henderson

Essential Skills Trade Union Learner of the Year

Mark McClean, NIPSA

Mark currently works as a Staff officer in Department for the Economy (DfE) and is educated to degree standard, however, he recognised the need to continue his education and better his IT Skills. With the help of NIPSA, Mark completed an Essential Skills ICT Level 2 course with his colleagues in DfE.

Doing the course has improved his knowledge of IT and IT skills. The course has been of great benefit to him in work and also in everyday life. He had never heard of cloud storage and now uses it regularly at home and has shared this with family members. Work tasks using IT have become easier, as he has put the knowledge he acquired on the course into practice.

“I went into the course thinking I had a good range of IT skills but soon realised just how limited they actually were. I suppose like most people I use a fairly basic range of applications and stick to what I know. I found the course to be enjoyable, at times challenging, and very valuable. The different modules were well structured, with good notes and adequate time to complete. The BMC tutor was great – very skilled, as well as being patient and approachable, and keen to promote an environment of self-learning. It was also easy to adapt exercises from the weekly sessions to use back in the office and I found I was better able to assist with related queries. I think the course is motivating and varied enough for people with different levels of ability and would recommend everyone to sign up.”



Jackie Pollock, Unite the Union, Regional Secretary, presenting the award to Mark McClean

ICT Essential Skills Recognition Event, 19th October 2017

A recognition event hosted by Wendy Johnston, Head of Central Services Division, was held recently in Netherleigh to celebrate the success of staff on the ICT Essential Skills Programme.

A total of 18 staff successfully completed the ICT Essential Skills Programme during the 2016/17 academic year on 2 separate courses, the first held at Millfield Campus from September 2016 to January 2017 and the second in Netherleigh from February 2017 to June 2017. The programme was delivered by tutors from Belfast Metropolitan College and covered a range of work-related skills, including: email, Word documents, Excel spreadsheets, PowerPoint and internet usage.

Wendy Johnston commended the efforts of the participants in successfully achieving their accreditation and acknowledged the support offered by Trade Union Side under the Union Learning Agreement.

Feedback from participants and line managers regarding the training and use of their new skills in the work place, has been very positive. A few examples of the comments received are as follows: -

"I found the ICT Essential Skills course very helpful, as I had not been on a recent ICT Related course since completing my ECDL Course..... because of technology constantly changing I thoroughly enjoyed this course..... Hopefully next year all being well I will try to complete the ICT Essential Skills Level 2."

"I went into the course thinking I had a good range of IT skills but soon realised just how limited they actually were. I suppose like most people I use a fairly basic range of applications and stick to what I know. I found the course to be enjoyable, at times challenging, and very valuable. The different modules were well structured, with good notes and adequate time to complete. The BMC tutor was great – very skilled, as well as being patient and approachable, and keen to promote an environment of self-learning. It was also easy to adapt exercises from the weekly sessions to use back in the office and I found I was better able to assist with related queries. I think the course is motivating and varied enough for people with different levels of ability and would recommend everyone to sign up."

"As a branch we are already benefitting from the skills developed on this course. We recently completed an exercise regarding a review of corporate returns within DfE and a number of IT solutions were identified that will streamline the process for all business areas within the Department."



The FSU Union Learn Project continues to cover all four main employments where FSU is represented and there are Union Learning Reps in each of the employments, Danske Bank, Bank of Ireland, First Trust Bank and Ulster Bank Ltd.

This year the project identified a demand and need for shorter accredited progression learning, to follow on from previous years when large numbers completed ICT Essential Skills. In partnership with SERC the project ran a number of project management courses (CMI Level 3) in FSU IT Learning Suite in Belfast.

The target for ICT Essential Skills proved to be extremely hard to reach due to difficulties getting sufficient numbers to participate in courses and difficulties getting tutors. For example, courses proposed to be held in Ballymoney and Enniskillen could not progress. Belfast proved to be the only place where sufficient numbers could be attracted to do undertake a course. However, following a concerted effort and with the co-operation of USDAW a course took place in Limavady on a joint basis, hosted by North West Regional College. In the end, the FSU managed to achieve 37 of the planned target of 40.



'Unions Working Together' – FSU and USDAW, ICT Essential Skills Class

70 learners completed short non-accredited courses in EXCEL, CV and Interview Skills and a small proportion enrolled onto Open University accredited programmes. All of the courses were directly relevant to upskilling for career and learning progression and reflected the results of a Learning Needs Analysis conducted by the project.

To mark the success of the project in 2016/17 an informal celebration was held in June 2017 in FSU Belfast. Certificates were presented to learners who completed CMI Level 3 in Project Management. A further event was held in March 2018 to celebrate the learners who achieved their Essential Skills and Open University qualifications.

One of the main highlights for the project during 2017/18 was FSU member Laura Boyles winning The Open University Trade Union Learner of the Year Award for successfully undertaking an Open University Access module through the FSU Project. She has now progressed to start a Psychology degree which she will complete in 2023. She has stated herself that she would never have done this without having had the opportunity and encouragement to do an Access course through the FSU.

TARGET - 120	LEARNER OUTCOMES – 148 Total
40 Essential Skills	37 Enrolled & Completed
7 OU Access	7 Open University Access Level 3 (2 Enrolled & Completed in 2017/18, 5 Enrolled in 2017/18 and due to complete in 2018/19)
12 OU Certificate/Diploma or equivalent	41 Enrolled & Completed CMI Level 3 Project Management. 2 Open University Certificate & Degree Modules Level 4 enrolled in 2017/18 due to complete in 2018/19
20 Career Development	21 CV & Interview Skills Workshop
30 EXCEL	36 Enrolled & Completed
10 Union-Link Courses	4 Enrolled & Completed Your Union and You online learning

Financial Services Union 22 March · 🌐

Immensely proud that Financial Services Union's Laura Boyles won the Open University 'Trade Union Learner of the Year' award today.

Last night in Belfast General Secretary Dermot Ryan and Training Manager Marian Geoghegan met Laura and other Financial Services Union members who completed Union Learning Fund courses.

Congrats Laura!! fantastic achievement!! 🍀🍀🍀



Financial Services Union added 3 new photos.

30 June 2017 · 🌐

Financial Services Union training manager, Marian Geoghegan was proud to host an informal celebration this week in Belfast to mark the success of the Union Learn project. Since its inception three years ago hundreds of members of the Financial Services Union have earned formal qualifications across a range of areas and many have also accessed third level courses. The programme continues to go from strength-to-strength. Thanks also to ICTU Northern Ireland for its support for the programme



FSU Union Learning Fund Project: From Strength to Strength

FSU's Project, funded by the Union Learning Fund, Northern Ireland has enabled hundreds of FSU members across the Financial Services Sector to gain formal qualifications in a range of areas and gain access to third level courses. The project has gone from strength-to-strength and continues to make a real difference in people's lives.

Courses on offer to FSU members include:

- **Project Management Skills** (CMI Level 3)
- **Management & Leadership Skills** (ILM Level 3)
- **ICT Essential Skills** (City & Guilds Level 2)
- **Open University Access Courses**
- **Open University Certificate, Diploma and Degree programmes**
- **Career Development Workshops**, e.g. CV & Competency Based Interview Skills, Microsoft Excel Refresher/Advanced Courses, Managing Stress in the Workplace, Progression Routes within the Financial Services Sector



FSU delegates pictured at the ULR 2017 Conference, which was hosted by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Northern Ireland. Congress manages and administers 12 trade union projects in over 80 workplaces under an agreement with the Department for the Economy.

Financial Services Union has recently partnered with the South Eastern Regional College in provision of courses which are attractive to members and which assist them in developing their careers. To celebrate the successful learners and the Learning Project generally, FSU is holding an informal evening in the Bankers' Club, Malone Road on Wednesday 28th June 2017.



Seáinín Ward completed an Open University Access Course through the FSU Union Learn Project. Seáinín, who works in Danske Bank, has said that as a result of doing this course she was well prepared to progress to completing a Professional Certificate in People Management, which she passed with flying colours.

ICT Essential Skills courses are held across Northern Ireland and provide learners with a City and Guilds qualification.

To find out more about the wide range of courses available for FSU members across Northern Ireland contact Zara Nealon at zara@fsunion.org



Lynda from Ulster Bank with Marian Geoghegan, FSU receiving her ICT Certificate from NRC in Ballymena

FSU Case Study

The Open University Trade Union Learner of the Year, Laura Boyles, FSU



Jackie Pollock, Unite the Union, Maggie Bates, The Open University and Laura Boyles, FSU

Laura completed her GCSEs/A Level in 2006. Since then she had wanted to attend a third level college but had to work to cover the cost of living and spent long hours working two jobs and did not have time to carry on with her studies. Following this, Laura became a parent and any chance of returning to education moved drastically down her list of priorities.

One of the barriers Laura has faced was initially incorporating the study time into her daily routine around, work commitments, her daughter's school work, clubs and general day to day life. However, the major issue Laura had was lack of self-confidence or belief that she would still be capable of studying at an older age, never mind doing it successfully. Without the offer of the Access course from the Union Laura would have never taken the leap of faith to get back into education and be spurred on to continue studying at a higher level by her good results and feedback from the course.

The Open University Access Course was an ideal stepping stone for Laura to get her back into education and into her academic development. Her experiences on the course were so positive, that she was encouraged to progress to the next level of learning. In her own words: "The course was great. It was a brilliant introduction to get back into studying for me as the course material was very easy to follow and I had regular tutorials via the phone with my tutor and received lots of constructive feedback from my assignments."

Laura finds the distance learning method, which the Open University provides, works well around her work and home life with her daughter, as she is not tied to attending classes at specific times. In fact, her young daughter, age 7, does her homework at the desk with Laura and they share some special moments studying together and discussing the tasks and assignments they both have.

Laura's experience has inspired her partner who is currently looking into starting a course in September also. "He has seen me working hard and achieving good marks in my assignments and I believe he is motivated by me having my end goal in sight when I pass." She also believes her studying is a good role model for her daughter. In work she has encouraged her colleagues not to be afraid to go back to learning.

Laura studied an Open University Access module 'People, Work and Society', 2016 – 2017 under the FSU Union Learn Project. She successfully passed the course in 2017. This gave her a good insight into the social sciences and psychology.

As a result of gaining the Open University Access Certificate, Laura decided to take the recent step of undertaking a BSc Honours Degree in Psychology with the Open University. She commenced this course in September/October 2017 and is currently in her 1st year which is based around Social Sciences and the Psychology material starts next year. All going well, she will complete the course in 2023.

Learner Testimonials

Steve (Ulster Bank)

"Thank you to the union learn project for investing in staff when the companies we work for don't"

Robert (First Trust Bank)

"Our tutor was great, a really good group and a very practical course. Enjoyed all of it"

Catherine (Danske Bank)

"I was very grateful to have the opportunity to study whilst working full-time. I decided to study with the Open University to improve my knowledge and skills. I did struggle to find the time to study, therefore I believe if anyone is thinking of studying they need to be 100% committed and be prepared to spend a few hours a week studying. Overall I was very pleased with the knowledge and skills I gained throughout the module I studied and I am now aware that I am capable of studying more in the future."

Andrew (Ulster Bank)

"Just a note of thanks for giving me the opportunity to do this course, it's a brilliant piece of practical support, particularly to 3 or 4 others on the course who are 'at risk'." (Note from FSU: 'at risk' means they have been given notice that their job is at risk of redundancy.)

Seainin (Danske Bank)

"I began studying an OU Access Module through ULF in 2015 not having studied for a few years. It was very beneficial and the support provided was exceptional. It gave me confidence to get back into the way of studying and since completing and passing this course I continued my studies. I completed various qualifications through the Institute of Bankers and completed Professional Certificate in People Management and I am currently studying Professional Certificate in Retail Banking. Since embarking on my studies in 2015 I have since gained two promotions. The support and qualifications provided by the ULF are invaluable and I actively encourage all members to avail of programmes on offer."

During 2017/18 the Learn with Unite project continued to focus all efforts in assisting members who were facing redundancy. Through years of reaction to the economic downturn and the still ever-present threat of closure and redundancies, the Unite project has grown to be a key source of help and guidance. Following the closure of JTI Gallaghers the project continued to support 25 people with job searching, interview skills and upskilling courses.

In Michelin the project manager and ULRs working tirelessly to complete Personal Development Plans for the remaining workers facing redundancy. Offering assistance with CV writing, interview skills and job searching is an essential component of the projects operation. To date 116 Essential Skills qualifications in numeracy, literacy or ICT and a further 42 upskilling courses have been completed by employees in Michelin. Further classes have been structured and will continue up to September 2018.

The Learn with Unite project is also involved in the closures of Kilroot, Schlumberger and the redundancies within Wrightbus. This project work will continue during 2018/19.

The Project Manager was invited to speak at the ULR Stage 1 class to share her experiences of working with members facing redundancy and how the Learn with Unite project evolved to address the learning needs of these members.



Clare Caulfield, Learn with Unite Project Manager with the ULR Stage 1 class.

Throughout the history of Learn with Unite the project has helped many community groups direct the unemployed into work through placements. During 2017-2018 the project assisted three community groups place NEETS into work placements. To date six have gained full time employment (hospitality, food manufacturing and distribution) and two have started apprenticeships. The project plans to continue this work in 2018/19 with a particular emphasis on apprenticeships.

Following a comprehensive recruitment campaign, the project identified and recruited 17 new ULRs. This successful campaign has also seen 11 new companies joining the project. Due to restraints on Rep release, formal training has been staggered. The project ran three development workshops for ULRs on mental health support in the workplace, researching skills and e-learning support.

TARGET - 250	LEARNER OUTCOMES – 279 Total
220 Essential Skills	136 Enrolled & 136 Completed
Recruit & Train 5 ULR'S	17 Recruited & 7 Trained Stage 1
5 ULR Stage 2	2 Enrolled & Completed – further class structured for 2018/19
10 ULR Development	78 Enrolled & Completed
10 Progression Learners	32 Enrolled & 27 Completed Other Accredited Courses; 5 learners due to complete in 2018/19 24 Enrolled & Completed Non-Accredited Courses

UNITE Case Study

Michelin

With the closure looming and the in-house training/outplacement team winding up/leaving, Learn with Unite stepped into help the workers still there, to help plan their futures.

Historically the workers still left to the very end are usually those who have no idea where or what they will be doing, want to be doing, or can do. They are grasping to what they know as long and as hard as they can. This group in Michelin are now left with timelines looming to choose what courses they want to do and no one to take the time or interest to help them figure that out.

Unite have a long-term investment in our members and therefore it was a natural fit for Learn with Unite to bridge this huge gap. Over the course of 3 weeks, The Project Manager met with over 100 workers (not all Unite members) and provided Personal Development Plans for re-employability training courses / retirement activities & advice for over 80 of them. This was highly intensive. The personal development plans have now set in motion over with over 400 training outcomes most of which are accredited. These will commence between Jan- Sept 2018.

Without Learn with Unite having this direct contact with these workers they would have not had any re-employability help to the level and standard they did. Many of these individuals are returning to us for job searching skills and CV & interview help.



THE BEST **START** ON THE JOBS TRAIL

Hundreds of Unite members found the support they needed from the union when one of the fixtures of the Northern Ireland industrial scene announced it was going out of business.

When Japanese multinational JTI announced that it would be closing the Gallaher's tobacco plant in Ballymena, politicians and civil servants were quick to promise the 900 staff on the payroll (and dozens more contract workers) that they would do everything they could to help them find new jobs.

Although Unite urged management to treat these pledges with a degree of caution, the company brushed aside the union's concerns, just as it had rejected Unite's original counter-proposal to maintain the plant as a Centre of Excellence, albeit with a reduced workforce.

"JTI were relaxed in the belief that the Department for Employment & Learning (DEL), Invest NI (the regional business development agency) and the various governmental bodies were ready to supply all help whatever that maybe as soon as it was required," recalls Regional Learning Organiser Clare Caulfield (herself originally from the County Antrim town).

"I warned against relying on these promises as I had seen the same process many times with these bodies: as soon the dust settles after the initial shock of the

closure announcement, the promises never come to fruition – and unfortunately I was proved right."

With an unusually long closure period from the official announcement in October 2014 to complete shutdown in early 2017, Unite recognised it had a unique opportunity to develop a comprehensive retraining programme for its members.

However, management decided to pay for the very expensive services of a people management business that promised a two-stage support programme: phase one would concentrate on internal courses and external training assistance and phase two would provide careers advice, job search skills and financial planning.

While the initial meetings between JTI and the union about the transition process were positive, as soon as the company signed the training and development contract with the people management company, it shut Unite out of the process, despite the union's years of experience in local Essential Skills planning and delivery.

For the workforce, many of them feared re-entry into the jobs market, since Gallaher's was the

Northern Ireland

UNITE HAS HELPED HUNDREDS OF GALLAGHER'S WORKERS SECURE NEW JOBS THROUGH LEARNING, AS WELL AS DEMANDING ACTION FOR JOBS FROM POLITICAL LEADERS

only job they had ever known. They had no idea of what it would take to successfully find decent work in middle age with none of the qualifications their younger counterparts had secured.

"Within Northern Ireland, JTI Gallagher's was known as 'a job for life,' which is evident from the length of service most employees have," Clare explains. "A vast number started in the factory as apprentices at 14 or 16, and with few or no qualifications, the core of the workforce were catapulted into a state of despair."

The company reassured staff that the career transition company would see them right, but a large percentage of the workers who managed to obtain a 15-minute slot with the advisers left their one-to-ones without having their fears allayed. "The majority left those meetings feeling they were right to be worried about their future," Clare says.

Knowing the workforce would stand a much better chance with Unite, Clare circulated a simple learning needs analysis to union members. Of the 200 responses she received in very short order, many were from people who needed support looking for a new job while others were from people who needed help coming to terms with their imminent retirement.

"A large cohort of retirees were sinking into depression due to the fear of having no worth outside of the only job they ever had," Clare recalls. "It became very evident very quickly that we would have to take a holistic view of each member separately, as they all had very individual needs."

The next step was to organise a change-management course called 'It's your job that's redundant, not you!' The two-hour interactive session was delivered to 140-plus members by local union training provider New Dawn Training & Development, experts in health and well-being.

"Those who attended came in blaming the world, and left with their eyes open in readiness to prepare for the change ahead, whether it be another job or retirement – we had something for everyone," Clare says.

Immediately after the course, Clare settled down to the business of one-to-one interviews with the workforce, speaking to 400 members about the specifics of what they needed.



It became very evident very quickly that we would have to take a holistic view of each member separately, as they all had very individual needs"

REGIONAL LEARNING ORGANISER CLARE CAULFIELD

After the one-to-ones, Clare set up Essential Skills classes for everyone who wanted them, designing a timetable that accommodated the factory's complex shift patterns.

"Along with the Northern Regional College (NRC), we juggled over 200 members into at least one maths or English class, where all of them gained at least one qualification, and 90 of them also attended ICT classes," Clare says.

With Unite members gaining more than 400 qualifications since starting classes in autumn 2015, the company has finally accepted that union learning has proved itself vastly superior to the external provider offer. "JTI realised that we were moving faster for the employees and started directing anyone looking for help to us," Clare says.

In addition to English, maths and ICT courses, Unite is now offering CV writing and interviewing skills courses, which are giving members the chance to update their skills in line with the current expectations of employers.

The first wave of redundancies occurred in May 2016, with the remaining staff working on until the factory gates close for the last time in early 2017.

"We are in it to offer a tangible service to the individual: it is in our interest to ensure our members gain the kind of high quality re-employability skills to stand against everyone else in a job interview," says Clare.

"We want our members to remain in work and Learn with Unite are best placed to help achieve that." ■



During their second year with the ULF, the RCM project continued to work with Midwives and Maternity Support Workers (MSWs), based in the Belfast, Western, Northern, South Eastern and Southern Health and Social Care Trusts. Several information and awareness sessions on lifelong learning, health and wellbeing and older worker issues were held throughout the year within the various health trusts. These sessions gave the project manager and ULRs the opportunity to promote the benefits of union learning, Essential Skills and CPD.

This year the project aimed to address the educational disadvantage in access to learning, faced by Maternity Support Workers (MSWs). MSWs assist midwives in caring for women and their babies through the vital stages of pregnancy, childbirth and the first few days following birth. Due to this they are often disadvantaged in access to learning and skills specific to their role. A Learning Needs Analysis (LNA) completed by the ULRs, identified an interest amongst MSWs in developing their IT skills. ULRs commenced sign-posting these workers to Essential Skills ICT classes in FE colleges and classes organised in the various health trusts in conjunction with Unison and NIPSA. Five CPD classes for MSWs were organised and delivered, four sessions on 'Breastfeeding Support' in October and November 2017 and one on 'Bereavement Support' in January 2018.

The findings of the LNA carried out in October 2017 by the ULR in the Northern Trust highlighted that the workforce needed specialist training in the use of Aromatherapy for Childbirth. Two experts in this field were invited from England to provide a full day's session and practical hands on training to staff. This was an excellent event and furthermore the ULR was able to secure funding from the Northern Branch of the RCM to cover the experts' fees.

TARGET - 175	LEARNER OUTCOMES – 339 Total
Recruit & Train 10 ULR's	3 Recruited & 3 Trained to Stage 2
80 Lifelong learning info sessions	80 Completed
30 Essential Skills workshops	Promoted at all workshops/CPD events- Target Achieved
30 Health & Wellbeing workshops	45 Completed
CPD MIDWIFES	92 Enrolled & Completed
CPD MSWs	104 Enrolled & completed

RCM Case Studies

One of our trainee ULRs in the Western Trust completed stages one and two of the ULR Training. She carried out an LNA in 2016/17. The ULR has sign-posted staff to learning resources and opportunities and she has developed an Action Plan following on from the LNA. The Action Plan highlighted one of the main learning needs identified from the LNA. This need is helping employers and the workforce to deal with work-related stress. The ULR researched the causes and the signs and symptoms of stress and has come up with suggestions for dealing with it. The ULR engaged the services of an expert in that field and as a result four CPD sessions were delivered in the Western Trust. There were two sessions given in November 2017 in Altnagelvin Hospital and one in Enniskillen and one in Omagh in March 2018.

"I have a passion for learning and development and was keen to get more involved in the RCM so becoming a LR was perfect for me.

I find the LR role exciting as it gives me the ability to promote learning opportunities in the hospital and stimulate interest in lifelong learning among staff. I'm currently using the role to work closely with the Trust's training department to introduce apprenticeships for MSWs. The Trust's learning and development manager was impressed with the learning survey I circulated to members, as it gave an independent view of the kind of work-related and other learning staff would benefit from.

I plan to collate and build information and knowledge about learning opportunities in the Trust and with local colleges so that I can have a library of information on hand for members."

RCM Learning Representative



Pippa Warwick
Royal College of Midwives

I became a ULR after listening to a recruitment talk from the RCM Project Manager. I feel that this is a great opportunity to promote the value of learning within midwifery and I look forward to fulfilling the role within my workplace.



This year INTO recruited and trained their first ULRs. It is intended that the introduction of ULRs in teaching will help to create access to learning and open up opportunities for teachers facing an uncertain future. While teachers do their best to create and foster a learning society for their pupils, they don't often consider the need to develop the same for themselves, until they are faced with redundancy or ill health. A review of their first term as ULRs will take place in June 2018, which will include the drafting of a learning agreement to discuss with the employing authority. A successful meeting with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), was held in Autumn 2017 at which several officers had expressed an interest in attending the training as ULRs. Unfortunately, the training clashed with other appointments so this did not happen. It is hoped that CCMS officers will be trained as ULRs next year which will assist with implementing a Learning Agreement.

Following on from the success of last years' iPad course the project arranged a further course with SERC on advanced use of computer tablets, which 15 teachers completed. Working in partnership with ICTU and SERC the project successfully delivered an OCN Level 2 Managing Stress at Work course to 10 School Principals. In June 2018 a further course is set to be delivered in partnership with the ICTU and SERC, it is expected that 20 teachers will successfully complete the OCN NI Level 2 in Safe use of Social Media.

The project successfully achieved targets set for learning and organising courses. 29 teachers completed a range of courses including School Rep Induction and training and Aspiring School Leaders.

After investigation it became clear that schools were unable to fund the necessary release for teachers and INTO began to look at ways in which to support members to avail of courses. INTO has now set up a fund to assist members in getting release for 2 or 3 days training courses.

TARGET - 90	LEARNER OUTCOMES - 81 Total
15 Advanced iPad Training	19 Enrolled & 15 Completed
10 ULRs Recruit & Train	10 Recruited & 11 Trained to Stage 1
30 Health & Wellbeing Course	10 Enrolled & Completed
15 Learning & Organising Courses	41 Enrolled & 29 Completed
20 Social Media Course	Course Scheduled for June 2018

INTO Case Studies

Why I became a ULR

Orla – INTO ULR

Teachers need a voice in determining their own lifelong learning journey. We are dedicated to improving the lives and educational opportunities of all who come under our care – but who is the mentor for working teachers, who can signpost our next steps in personal development, who will guide the advancement of our professional career? I believe the ULR can and that is why I volunteered for this role.

I became a ULR to help pioneer a new era for working teachers, to continue their own education because learning has no ceiling and teachers should not be parked in a cul-de-sac by their job. Teachers should be continually developing their own limitless talents and abilities.

Schools need pupils, pupils need teachers and teachers need ULRs.

Lisa – INTO ULR

I became a ULR because I feel at the minute there is little or no CPD opportunities in teaching /education. Any training or learning currently is dependant on the priorities set by others (SLT, SDP, Principle, EA) and not the individuals. As a teacher, I appreciate the value of learning and would relish the opportunity to promote it further within my union membership.



Project Manager Nuala O'Donnell with the INTO ULRs



SOCIAL MEDIA TRAINING

Tues 5, Wed 6 & Thurs 14 June 2018 - INTO Northern Office, Belfast
OCN accredited training led by an ICTU tutor

- > Raise your awareness of the difficulties schools, members and reps encounter
 - > Information available on relevant legislation
- > Consider ways to defend against disciplinary action for alleged misuse of social media
 - > Implications of social media being used against members and schools

Available to all INTO reps and members, including Principals and Vice-principals
Assistance with substitute cover is available through INTO if required

Places on the course are limited and will be allocated on a first come first served basis.
To apply please complete and return registration form to INTO Northern Office or infoni@into.ie by 14 May 2018.



“Demolishing Barriers & Building Learning”

In January 2017, UCATT merged with Unite the Union. The merger with UNITE seen the formation of the Construction RISC (Regional Industrial Sector Committee). The Committee is responsible for UNITE Construction strategy in Northern Ireland and its membership includes all of the project ULRs. Education is a standing item on the agenda.

Against an overall target of 143 Construction qualifications, the UNITE Construction project achieved an outcome of 167 i.e. 15% above the target set. An achievement and completion rate of 100% was also achieved. The role of our ULRs in supporting learners has been central to this success.

During 2017/18 the Project Manager has worked closely with ULRs to create robust relationships with employers and education providers. The Project concentrates on those who are hard to reach e.g. small sub-contractors and the self-employed. New employers who engaged with the project this year included; AMC Developments, CM Structural, Cummings Bros, DMC Steel Erectors, EHA Group, Fabricat, JP O’Hare Construction, KJR Construction, Milehill Logistics, MJM Design, Modernspec, Pro Crane Services and Ward Contracts.

The project was unable to recruit any essential skills learners in the 2017/18. This was disappointing but not surprising given sector activity and employer attitudes to the acquisition of essential skills. The barriers to the acquisition of essential skills in construction continue to be:

- Time
- Working Patterns including evening working
- Transient nature of construction work
- Lack of confidence in the sector and amongst construction employees
- Employer attitudes to essential skills and a lack of support to workers
- Stigma associated with poor memories of formal education

Reflecting on 2017/18 the Project Manager said, ‘Whether working independently or in partnership with a range of organisations, including other unions, employers and colleges; UNITE construction has made, and will continue to make, a dynamic and positive contribution to learning. Through this ULF Project we will continue to:

- ✓ Engage with “disadvantaged” learners;
- ✓ Network and partner with employers to develop and engage in skilling and upskilling activities;
- ✓ Tackle skills and gaps and shortages;
- ✓ Develop “high performance” workplaces through partnership working;
- ✓ Reach out to non-unionised workplaces and employees;
- ✓ Improve equality and diversity and reach out to those who feel alienated from education and training.’

TARGET - 143	LEARNER OUTCOMES – 167 Total
100 Construction NVQ Level 2	130 Enrolled & Completed
14 Construction NVQ Level 3	9 Enrolled & Completed
18 Other Construction Accredited Qualifications	28 Enrolled & Completed
10 Essential Skills	Project will carry target over to 2018/19
1 ULR	Project will carry target over to 2018/19

Unite Construction Case Study

Name: Liam Cooke

Company: McKinney Plant

Qualification: ICQ L3 in Assessing Vocational Achievement

Completed 28/03/18

Registration No: 307136



During 2017/18 the Unite Construction project identified employees in danger of redundancy and offered them routes into the construction industry.

Liam Cooke was a driving instructor for 25 years but found himself facing the prospect of unemployment. He sought information and advice from the project manager and progressed to undertake a Level 3 qualification in vocational assessment. He is now employed by McKinney plant as an assessor.



The USDAW project has continued to build on its previous years of success to meet and exceed the majority of targets set. Essential Skills targets have been exceeded by the project during 2017/18. Using non-accredited learning as an assessment and engagement tool, the project utilised The National Numeracy Challenge. 35 learners completed this assessment course which encouraged enrolments onto Essential Skills Numeracy. 'Get Online with USDAW' and 'Intro to Digital Skills' courses were completed by 54 learners and encouraged enrolments onto Essential Skills ICT.



USDAW ULRs with Project Manager, Lorna Morton

At Karro Cookstown, meetings were held with the Personnel Manager to re-establish the Learning Committee on-site. The new Learning Committee members include the Usdaw Project Worker, Usdaw Area Organiser, ULR Learning Coordinator, Personnel Manager, and learning provider's; NRC and Craft Training. It was also agreed to update both the Learning Policy and the Site Learning Fund. Usdaw negotiations included paid time off for employees to do NVQs and ESOL assessments. The new Learning Agreement was signed off on the 23rd November 2017. Several courses have commenced during 2017/18 which include; ILM Level 5 Certificate Award in Leadership and Management, NVQ Level 2 and 3 in Meat & Poultry and Essential Skills in Numeracy and Literacy.

The project has continued its engagement with new stores expanding its network to Tesco Antrim Rd, Tesco Castlereagh, Tesco Newtownabbey and Tesco Northcott. During the year the 50 'Check Out Learning' days were held within various stores throughout Northern Ireland. 536 Learning Needs Analysis (LNA) were completed by ULRs at these events. These surveys identified the learning needs within the stores and enabled ULRs to structure classes or to sign post learning opportunities to their colleagues.

Working with the Community Champion in Tesco Limavady store the project has assisted Ballykelly Men's Shed. The group needed assistance with financial bookkeeping and wanted help sourcing courses. The NWRC was contacted by the project and assessments arranged for ICT. Two members went on to complete Essential Skills ICT Level 2 with the view of progressing to a SAGE course in 2018/19. Community work by the project this year included various awareness sessions on BSL, mental health and autism. The project is currently working in partnership with SERC and various other community groups to plan a Community Open Day which will take place in 2018/19.



Autism Awareness event held during Mental Health Awareness Week

TARGET - 156	LEARNER OUTCOMES – 534 Total
8 ULR Recruit & Train	8 Recruited & 10 Trained to Stage 1
10 Development Training	3 Completed development training
50 Essential Skills	137 Enrolled & 117 Completed
3 Six Book Challenge	9 Completed
85 Other Courses/online courses	161 Enrolled & 129 Completed – 30 learners due to complete in 2018/19 214 Enrolled & 204 Non-Accredited

USDAW Case Studies

Angela, Tesco

My name is Angela and I am 44 years old, my first ever work experience was a paper round about the age of 12 and at 14 my mother would have brought home boxes of hangers from the factory where she worked. She would get me to stick on labels on the hangers and I would then get paid by the box. I suppose I regarded this as proper paid work and all I wanted to do was leave school and get a job.

Although I tried at school qualifications didn't mean that much and even if I had tried harder University wasn't a choice. My parents were working class and this meant you left school and got a job and paid your keep. So, at 15 when I received my National Insurance number I left school with two GCSE's to my name and I started work at Stewarts supermarket doing part time weekend work. I didn't like it much and with little qualifications I found myself over the next 5 or 6 years having several jobs ranging from factory to shop work with finally settling with Tesco at their Lisnagelvin store for nearly 20 years.

It wasn't until Usdaw held a stall in the canteen on learning that it sparked something in me to try again. The ULR at that time organised an ICT class to be held in the store training room. I thought this would be good as going back into a classroom didn't appeal to me and I would be amongst colleagues and in a place, I was familiar with. I completed and gained my ES Level 2 a couple of years ago and decided after that I wanted to learn more and when Usdaw's Check out Learning came back the following year I enrolled for ES Maths.

I would like to further my career but I had been ungraded for Maths at school and these days I know even before you sit down to complete a job application that every employer firstly looks for Maths and English before you get an interview. I can work out percentages in my job but I just wanted to have a Maths qualification on paper to prove I could do it.

My next step was going back into a classroom and it was daunting but few of my colleagues had enrolled with me. It became a talking point at work with my colleagues as we often talked about homework's! It felt like it was more of a hobby, getting me out of the house for an evening, doing something productive, getting to know and meet new people and socialise.

It was not only the tutor that was supportive, patient and understanding and took the time to guide you through if you got stuck; the union's Project Worker kept in touch throughout the course as the store had no Union Learning Rep.

I'm delighted to have achieved my ES Maths Level 2 qualification this year and my hopes are to enrol again to do my ES English through Usdaw's Check out Learning when it next has its event at the store. I would encourage anyone to take advantage of the Free Essential Skills courses if you haven't got that GCSE. Stepping back into a classroom, I found that I had nothing to be afraid of, I was there with others young and adult with the same goal of getting a qualification.

I want to keep learning and progress and further my career prospects. My goal and dream job, is to do something that is much more rewarding and beneficial to helping the community around me. My mind is set around working with mental health or drugs and alcohol awareness as an area I am most interested in. I hope after achieving these Essential Skills that I will be able to apply for jobs in this field of work.

The Union Learning Experience, KARRO Cookstown

KARRO Cookstown is part of the KARRO Food Group, which is one of UK's largest food companies. The Company provides a complete range of pork products to the retail, food service, wholesale and manufacturing markets. Operating at the highest levels of hygiene and quality, the site holds accreditations from the British Retail Consortium, Board Bia and United States Department of Agriculture and the People's Republic of China. The customer base includes Marks & Spencer, Tesco, Asda, Dunnes etc.

The Cookstown site employs 950 people is a complete pork processing facility that encompasses slaughter, butchery and added value departments. As with other companies in the food processing industry, the site employs a large number of people from other EU countries – Slovakia, Czech Republic, Portugal, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, Bulgaria. Within these groups there was initially very limited English speaking skills

Among the UK national employee base, there are a large number of people who joined the business at an early age and would not have gained any qualifications.

The company signed a Learning Agreement with USDAW 10 years ago and the aim of the learning was to provide opportunities for employees to:

1. Gain or improve their English-speaking skills by providing English For Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses. This would benefit both the employees and the company.
2. Gain or increase new technology skills by providing ICT courses
3. Gain or improve foundation skills by providing basic mathematics and English classes

The training has been very successful and has benefitted both the employees and the company. The ESOL and ICT classes have allowed a number of EU employees to progress in the company into roles that require a high level of English skills including supervisory, technical and administration roles.

The provision of learning and personal development opportunities has also assisted the company to recruit and retain employees in the current very competitive labour market, with turnover rates among employees pursuing learning opportunities being typically less than half the turnover rate of those not engaged in learning programmes.

The company have seconded an employee, Lorna Morton, to USDAW as a Project Worker to coordinate Life Long Learning. Lorna has provided invaluable assistance to the business and employees in coordinating learning opportunities, in the identification and engagement of training providers and the management and administration of courses.

Currently the company is running ILM courses levels 3-5 for Team Leaders, Supervisory and Department Managers and have almost 200 employees engaged on NVQ level 2-3 training.

Due to the success of the Learning programme over the last 10 years, we have signed a new learning agreement with USDAW in 2017.

The Union Learning Experience, Tesco Limavady

The Tesco Limavady store engaged in the USDAW Learning Programmes a few years ago following information provided by Lorna Young. Prior to that, we had not been aware of the possibilities that were available for further learning.

The first courses we embarked on were Maths and Spanish. These received a tremendous response, particularly for the Spanish sessions, with so many colleagues wanting to brush up on either their “chat up lines” or the ability to be able to have a few sentences they could use on holiday. I have to say as the course progressed it became obvious that there were benefits above and beyond simply learning some Spanish. As our team gained confidence to try a few words, it was a delight to listen to the craic and the banter in “Spanish” between. This was the most natural team-building exercise we had experienced, and we saw how learning was an effective way of not only coming together, but also a great way of boosting morale.

In terms of our feelings when facing redundancy, when we heard the initial announcement about our futures in January, myself and my compliance colleagues realised that our qualifications were somewhat outdated, particularly in ICT sector. We contacted Lorna at that time to see if she could provide us with a “quick fix” solution. We were delighted when she sourced an ICT course for us, which would take us to an accredited Level 2 certificate in 18 weeks. We are now into week 5 and are thoroughly enjoying the experience. More importantly, we are gaining essential skills for the modern world. On the back of this, and with this new qualification pending, we have been able to apply for a wider spectrum of jobs than before.

Lorna has been a tremendous support in providing the information and following through on courses available to us, and another colleague is currently on the advanced Word Processing course. This has generated great interest from other members of the wider team, who are now looking forward to further courses as they become available.



During 2017/18, Unison continued to engage learners across a range of programmes, Continuing Professional Development (CPD), Essential Skills and Open University modules. All targets set for 2017/18 were met and exceeded. The project set up a dedicated Education page and calendar on their Northern Ireland website with online course booking facilities as well as an Education Facebook page to promote their education programme. Essential Skills Courses are included in the education programme and promotion of local provision via the Facebook page.

During 2017/18 the project ran 98 short workshops and Continued Professional/Personal Development (CPD) courses with 1237 learners attending. These half day to two-day workshops for personal and career development, cover topics such as dementia, autism, palliative care, mindfulness, suicide awareness, interview skills, wound care or resilience. Unison targets learners who wouldn't get access to these workshops through their employer because they are not in specialised roles and many attend, primarily in their own time. The project delivered a number of bespoke interview skills sessions for agency workers intending to apply for full time Trust positions in domestic services and portering in Craigavon Hospital, Daisy Hill Hospital and the Ulster Hospital. 40 learners attended English language and IELTS preparation classes during the year. Unison NI has registered as an Occupational English Test (OET) Preparation Centre and have an IELTS tutor who is currently going through their induction with the intention of delivering a 10-week OET course in September 2018.



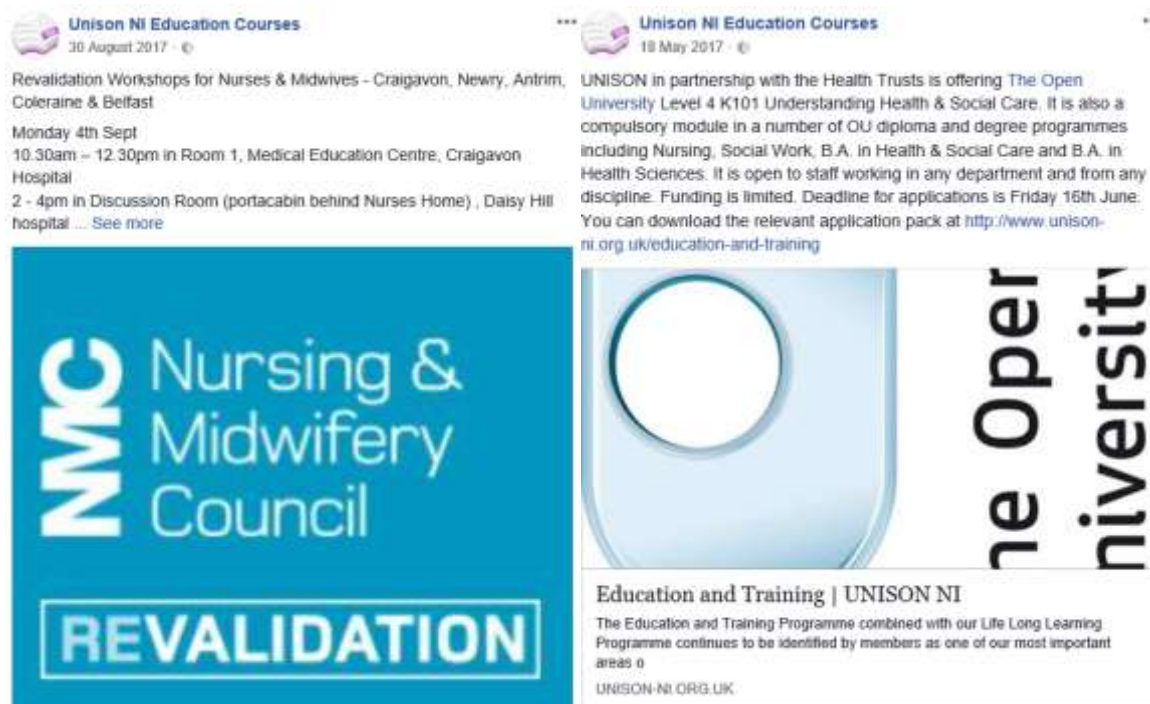
'Caring for Older People' workshop learners, receiving their certificates.

Open University modules offered in partnership with the HSC Trusts continued to be popular. 137 Unison members from various Health Care Trusts enrolled and completed, The Open University K101 Introduction to Health & Social Care. 33 Essential Skills learners progressed onto Open University modules with a view to getting a place on the Open Uni Nursing degree. 44 OU learners have applied to do a module K117 to lead to a Certificate of Higher Education in Health Care Practice. Key support in 2017/18 was the provision of dedicated interview skills sessions in every Trust for staff who had secured an interview for the Nursing Degree. The application process is very competitive as there is as many as four applications for every place available. Feedback received from the attendees was very positive and a number of people said that the session helped them to secure a place. 62 OU learners succeeded in getting a place on the Open University Nursing Degree starting in Oct 2018.

Unison has been a catalyst for developing a programme for medically qualified refugees and asylum seekers to gain accreditation and get onto the GMC register. In partnership with the Belfast Trust the project held an open day to help identify those currently in Northern Ireland. A seminar was organised with NIMDTA to showcase best practice models in Scotland and Wales alongside ongoing engagement with the Department of Health and other stakeholders. At this point, a working group is being established to develop a business case for a programme.

In May 2017, 10 Unison ULRs completed Stage 1 training. They have worked with the Branch Education Officers to promote the Unison Education Programme in workplaces right across Northern Ireland. Some of them sit on the Health Trust Learning & Development working groups to develop progression routes for lower grade staff. Learning stalls were set up throughout the year at Belfast City Hospital, Royal Hospital Belfast, Antrim Area Hospital, Daisy Hill and Craigavon Hospital.

TARGET - 710	LEARNER OUTCOMES – 1493 Total
100 Essential Skills	109 Enrolled & 100 Completed
100 OU K101	137 Enrolled & Completed
500 CPD /workshops	1237 Enrolled & Completed
10 ULRs Recruit & Train	10 Recruited and trained to Stage 1



Unison Case Study

Cathy McMullan

Classroom Assistant – St Anne’s Primary School, Dunmurry

Cathy left school at 17. She was half way through her A Levels when she decided – I can’t be bothered with all this, I want to get a job and some money. So, she dropped out of school and took an admin job where she stayed for 16 years. In the meantime, she got married and had a family and when the kids were school going age, she decided she needed a term time job she could fit around the children and not pay out all her wages on childcare. So, she trained to be a classroom assistant which she absolutely loved.

As part of her role she liaised with the multi-disciplinary teams of social workers, psychologists, speech and language therapists and really saw the impact they had on children and their families. She thought she would like to do this kind of work and had considered teaching when doing her A Levels but that had long since been set aside.

She decided to look into it again but she couldn’t afford to leave her job to study full time. She did some online research and found out about the Open University and saw they had a degree in Psychology which she could do part time. She had enjoyed psychology when she did it for GCSE and decided to undertake a module which she funded herself.

Over the Summer UNISON organised a meeting in the school and she discovered that there were learning grants available for UNISON members for Open University study. She wasn’t sure she would be eligible but with some encouragement she applied and was successful in getting a £300 award. This allowed her to start her second psychology module and she is determined more than ever to work hard over the next 4-5 years and get the degree.



During 2017/18 the project continued to work with Moy Park Ballymena. Following on from its previous years success, a number of ESOL classes were arranged over various shift patterns within the factory. 38 migrant workers commenced both the speaking and listening module and reading module in March 2018. The students will be accessed again in May 2018 to ascertain their progress of learning and levels, in preparation for commencement of the writing module.

In WD Irwins the project organised a number of difference courses for employees which included HABC Level 2 Food Safety, Dynamics Nav IT Training and Forklift refresher courses.

This year seen the project extend its reach beyond the workplace and into the community. The project engaged with five community groups, based within Portadown, Banbridge and West Belfast. A number of open days were held within the community groups which proved successful in gaining learners interest and enabled the project manager to set a number of classes up in partnership with Southern Regional College (SRC). Four Essential Skills classes in ICT Level 1 and 2 were organised and ran in Regenerate in Portadown with 47 learners enrolling and 44 successfully completing and achieving their qualification at either level 1 or 2. Various other courses were organised within the community which included Beginners IT, Fire Marshall Training, Recreational Sage Accounts, Level 2 First Aid, OCN NI Level 2 Vocation Health & Safety, OCN NI Level 2 Diversity Course and HABC Level 2 First Aid. The Project Manager intends to build on and develop this work further, with the various community groups, in 2018/19.



Essential Skills ICT Class in Regenerate, Portadown

TARGET - 176	LEARNER OUTCOMES - 337 Total
Recruit / Train 1 ULRs	1 Recruited and trained to Stage 1
30 Essential Skills	47 Enrolled & 41 Completed
40 IT non-accredited	59 Enrolled & Completed
105 ESOL	76 Enrolled, due to complete in 2018/19 Further classes due to commence in 2018/19
Additional Learners reported	101 Enrolled & 100 Completed Other Accredited Courses 53 Enrolled & 47 Completed Non- Accredited Courses

BFAWU Case Study

Samuel Russel, returned to learning because he was out of work on long term sick. He was attending BFAWU Community Open Day and signed up to take the first ICT level 1 course. Upon completion of the level 1 he went on to complete level 2. Samuel is currently completing OCN NI Level 2 Diversity Course.

Samuel believes that returning to learning has improved his life. He is able to use the computer to communicate with friends and family, pay bills and shop on-line. Samuel has become more involved in his community group. He often helps with activities held by the group because his experience whilst studying has given him the new-found confidence to engage with people.

Samuel has encouraged other members of the community group he attends to sign up for the courses. He also wishes to become a Union Learning Rep so he can have the training to assist more members of the community with their learning needs and encourage them to get involved with the courses available to them.



Project Manager, Noel Mullan at the launch of Essential Skills courses in Regenerate.



The Fire Brigades Union (FBU), represents 98% of all uniformed employees of the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS). The FBU joined the Union Learning Fund in April 2017. The aim of the Project is to identify, source and provide Lifelong Learning opportunities, learning and accredited qualifications to FBU members, Fire and Rescue Service employees and, where eligible, family and friends. Working within the Fire sector and in particular within 24/7 emergency provision has a number of disadvantages, these include:

- Shift workers: lack of flexibility of colleges, availability / time to study, night shifts
- Mental Health issues within emergency service personnel
- Identifying and supporting F&RS staff with disabilities and learning difficulties
- Minority sections: Retained, LGBT, Women, Black & Ethnic Minority Members
- Ageing Workforce
- Employees living in rural areas

To address these disadvantages the FBU Learning Centre designed a range of distance learning courses to meet the needs of its membership. During 2017/18 the FBU project in Northern Ireland worked with FBU National Learning Centre to provide these level 2 accredited, distance learning courses to NIFRS employees, family and friends. The courses are overseen and marked by Northern College of Further Education (NCFE).

The main challenge faced by the project in this first year was bringing union learning in this format to NIFRS for the first time. However, the NIFRS has fully embraced the project, allowing ULRs full access to Fire Station employees service wide. To promote the project and courses on offer, the FBU Project Manager and ULRs, designed and delivered a presentation to over 250 employees at various locations around Northern Ireland. Of particular note was the uptake from NIFRS part time employees and their families who were able to use the qualifications gained to enhance their main employment prospects.

This long and protracted service wide promotion process has been a challenge; however, through this engagement a number of learners have enrolled and completed in 2017/18. A large number of enrolments will commence in 2018/19 which should see the project reach its full potential in year two.

TARGET - 230	LEARNER OUTCOMES - Total 59
25 NCFE Level 2 Autism Awareness	6 Enrolled & Completed
30 NCFE Level 2 Mental Health Awareness	19 Enrolled & Completed
100 NCFE Level 2 Nutrition and Health	10 Enrolled & Completed
20 NCFE Level 2 Team Leading Knowledge	15 Enrolled & Completed
5 NCFE Level 2 Principles of Dementia Care	1 Enrolled & Completed
10 NCFE Level 2 Equality and Diversity	5 Enrolled & Completed
10 NCFE Level 2 Working with Learning Disabilities	3 Enrolled & Completed
30 Essential Skills	Project will carry target over to 2018/19

FBU Case Study

Deanne O'Connor is a member of support staff working at NIFRS Headquarters and was the first learner to complete an FBU distance learning course in Northern Ireland.

Course: NCFE CACHE LEVEL 2 CERTIFICATE IN UNDERSTANDING AUTISM

How did you find out about the course?

A colleague, who is a member of the FBU made me aware that the course was available. He knew my little boy Nathaniel, was being assessed for ASD and thought it would be a great help to me to develop a better understanding of Autism.

How did you find the course?

I was apprehensive at the beginning that maybe I had taken on too much. I was concerned I wouldn't have the time juggling work, family life and Nathaniel's demands & appointments.

However, once I started and managed my time effectively, I couldn't believe the buzz I got from learning again and the sense of satisfaction of completing each module.

On reflection I can see that it was the perfect time for me to do the course. The content of the course helped me to get to grips with Autism in a way I never would have.

It helped me to develop a real understanding of the difficulties my son was facing at only 3 years old and would continue to face.

For the first time I understood *the reasons* behind his behaviors and his need for routine and behavior management techniques to implement at home.

I really loved the course! And in particular the final module, which was "Supporting individuals with Autism to live healthy & fulfilled lives"

This crucially for me at this stage of the process was the first time I was able to feel positive about the future. I can't thank the FBU enough for the opportunity to do this course and the difference it has made to our lives. I look forward to doing another one soon 😊



Fire Brigades Union National Learning Centre



NCFE Level 2 Certificate in Autism Awareness

Course Content

This qualification is designed for a wide range of learners who wish to develop their understanding of autism and the principles of supporting individuals with autism.

It covers the person-centred approach and influence of positive communication methods, how to support positive behaviour and how individuals with autism can be supported to live healthy and fulfilled lives.

Course Information

- Simple enrolment and induction procedure
- Fully supported by The Fire Brigades Union Learning Centre in partnership with our Further Education Partners
- Receive a recognised Level 2 qualification upon completion
- NO course fees – fully funded by The Skills Funding Agency and our learning partners
 - * Subject to Terms and Conditions
- Consists of 3 assessments and no exams!



Course Completion

Each candidate will receive their own learning pack which includes; learning resources, online account material and course information booklets.

Candidates will be supported by our team of fully qualified tutors to ensure that you can complete the course successfully, in the agreed timescales, and achieve your qualification.

Apply Now

To register your interest, please visit the FBU Education and Lifelong Learning website

<http://www.fbueducation.org>



I am Phil Millar and I have recently taken up the role of Project Manager for the Region 2 Union Learning Fund (ULF) Project. Your officials in Region 2 have recently secured local funding which now allows FBU members in Northern Ireland the opportunity to participate in the distance learning courses available from our National Learning Centre.

This is a fantastic opportunity for Region 2 and I would like to see Life Long Learning for FBU members expand and flourish over the coming years.

I am very pleased to be able to report that for the remainder of the financial year ending 31st March 2018 we will be delivering the following courses at Level 2 (equivalent to a pass at GCSE)

Team Leading Knowledge

Understanding Nutrition and Health

Awareness of Mental Health Problems

Equality and Diversity

The Principles of Dementia Care

Understanding Autism

Principles of Working with Individuals with Learning Difficulties

In addition to the above we can also facilitate a number of Essential Skills Courses in Maths, English & Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

If you wish to know more or you want to register your interest in any of the above courses you can do so by clicking on the link on the homepage.

In addition if you would like more information on the FBU Lifelong Learning Programme please contact myself by phone or email as listed below.

NCFE Level 2 Certificate in Mental Health Awareness

Course Content

The NCFE Level 2 Certificate in Mental Health Awareness is designed to help you raise your understanding and awareness of mental health and the problems that can cause mental illness. This course gives you knowledge of a range of different mental health issues, covering causes of the issues as well as how mental health problems can be managed and treated.

Course Information

- Simple enrolment and induction procedure
- A flexible distance learning programme, comprising of ten units
- Fully supported by The Fire Brigades Union Learning Centre in partnership with our Further Education Partners
- Receive a nationally recognised Level 2 qualification upon completion
- NO course fees – fully funded by your Learning Partners
- * Subject to Terms and Conditions



Course Completion

Each candidate will receive their own learning pack which includes: learning resources, course information booklets and paper-based assessments.

Candidates will be supported by our team of fully qualified tutors to ensure that you can complete the course successfully, in the agreed timescales, and achieve your qualification.

Apply Now

To register your interest, please visit the FBU education and lifelong learning website

<http://www.fbueducation.org>

NCFE Level 2 Certificate Understanding Nutrition and Health

Course Content

This course provides an opportunity to improve your knowledge and understanding of nutrition and healthy eating, offering practical advice alongside tips on how to live healthier, develop eating plans and recognising the inclusion of additives in processed food. Throughout the course, you will increase your understanding of the principles of healthy eating and the role of food in maintaining health. This qualification is an insight into food labelling, eating disorders and the role of a healthy diet for weight management.

Course Information

- Simple enrolment and induction procedure
- Fully supported by The Fire Brigades Union Learning Centre in partnership with our Further Education Partners
- Receive a recognised Level 2 qualification upon completion
- NO course fees – fully funded by the Skills Funding Agency and our learning partners
- * Subject to Terms and Conditions
- Consists of three assessments and no exams!



Course Completion

Each candidate will receive their own learning pack which includes: learning resources, online account material and course information booklets.

Candidates will be supported by our team of fully qualified tutors to ensure that you can complete the course successfully, in the agreed timescales, and achieve your qualification.

Apply Now

To register your interest, please visit the FBU Education and Lifelong Learning website

<http://www.fbueducation.org>

NCFE Level 2 Certificate Team Leading Knowledge

Course Content

This level 2 course will provide you an insight into the roles and functions of a team leader. By developing the skills you need to deal with key areas revolving around team leading such as: challenges within a team, maintaining a harmonious working environment, supporting effective teamwork and develop your understanding of how to be an effective team leader.

Course Information

- Simple enrolment and induction procedure
- Fully supported by The Fire Brigades Union Learning Centre in partnership with our Further Education Partners
- Receive a recognised Level 2 qualification upon completion
- NO course fees – fully funded by the Skills Funding Agency and our learning partners
- * Subject to Terms and Conditions
- Consists of 3 assessments and no exams!



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<http://www.fbueducation.org>

NCFE Level 2 Certificate Working with People with Learning Disabilities

Course content

This level 2 course will provide learners with a comprehensive understanding of issues surrounding different types of learning disabilities and how these affect individuals in their daily lives, including safeguarding, positive risk taking and an awareness of the autistic spectrum.

Course Information

- Simple enrolment and induction procedure
- Fully supported by The Fire Brigades Union Learning Centre in partnership with our Further Education Partners
- Receive a recognised Level 2 qualification upon completion
- NO course fees – fully funded by the Skills Funding Agency and our learning partners
- * Subject to Terms and Conditions
- Consists of 3 assessments and no exams!



Course Completion

Each candidate will receive their own learning pack which includes: learning resources, online account material and course information booklets.

Candidates will be supported by our team of fully qualified tutors to ensure that you can complete the course successfully, in the agreed timescales and achieve your qualification.

Apply now

To register your interest, please visit the FBU Education and Lifelong Learning website

<http://www.fbueducation.org>



During 2017/18 the project supported workers facing redundancy in AES site at Kilroot Power Station. The extent of the support ranged from one to one information and guidance sessions, Employability courses, CV workshops, Welfare Rights advice and referrals to other organisations for upskilling opportunities. With guidance from the project, one AES employee enrolled and completed BTEC Level 3 in Electrical Engineering and two completed a Foundation degree in Electrical Engineering.

IT accredited and non-accredited learning continues to be a strong area of project performance. During 2017/18 the project continued to demonstrate significant strength in engaging those with no ICT or internet skills with a 100% over performance in the area of non-accredited IT skills. 20 learners have went on to complete a Level 2 City & Guilds ITQ in IT which was developed by the project. 14 learners completed IT L2 Elements Certificates.

The project continued to work with members is the Red Cross during 2017/18. Seven learners completed the NVQ Level 2 in Health & Social Care and a further Nine completed NCFE Level 2 in Counselling Skills.

The enrolment of Essential Skills learners was disappointing for the project during 2017/18. The project aims to address this in year 2 by gaining accreditation for Essential Skills through City and guilds through the ST. Antonys Centre. This will enable the project to offer the courses in a more flexible manner than is currently available and better suited to the GMB membership i.e. remote, field-based workers, carers on unsociable hours and those working for smaller employers unable to grant release to attend during a working day.

During the year significant progress has been made on developing the National Life Long Learning agenda within the GMB across the country. Development work on increasing access to learning on-line by GMB Members will be launched in June 2018 and will benefit members with a range of courses and opportunities on offer. The GMB learning Forum will be integrated with the GMB NW & Irish Region Life Long Learning Committee with opportunity for Northern Ireland members to participate and influence the work taking place to develop a comprehensive learning offer with partners colleges and learning providers. This should increase the overall learning offer in 2018/19.

TARGET - 114	LEARNER OUTCOMES – 193 Total
Recruit & Train 4 ULR's	4 Recruited & 3 Trained to Stage 1
30 Essential Skills	11 Enrolled Completed
25 IT Accredited learners	34 Enrolled & Completed
10 Level 3 / 4	3 Enrolled & Completed
25 Non-Accredited IT	51 Enrolled & Completed
25 Other Level 2 Courses	25 Enrolled & Completed
Additional Learner Outcomes	66 Non- Accredited Enrolled & Completed



GMB Reachout @GMBReachout · Mar 22

@GMBReachoutNI great attendance at [#NorthernIreland](#) [#UnionLearning](#) Conference. Valuable & much needed support available across NI for union members and communities. [#BetterSkillsBetterWorkBetterLives](#) [#ULR18](#) @NIC_JCTU – At Newtownabbey Borough Council



GMB ULRs with GMB Reachout Project Worker, Dave Flanagan

GMB Case Studies

Kieran McParland – GMB ULR

My name is Kieran McParland and I am a GMB Union representative for the North West and Irish Region within Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council. I have recently been elected to serve as my colleagues Union Learning Representative.

In my own personal life, my ethos has always been designed to help others reach their full potential and to give everyone the chance to develop their own attributes. As a father to a severely disabled child, my family and I were told at the beginning that it would be impossible for my child to achieve certain milestones but through persistent learning and development, my child has overcome a lot of those supposed impossible hurdles on a continuous basis.

When offered the chance to become ULR within my Branch, I could not turn it down because the role resonates with my view in life.

I firmly believe every employee should be given the opportunity to develop their skills within the workplace. This is also the shared belief with all Unions and Management within Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council. By having a common goal in mind, it makes every employee in the workplace have a more positive outlook for the future.

This positive outlook will have a ripple effect throughout the organisation on a potentially exponential level as it would largely boost morale for employees as they would feel their worth in the organisation as they are continually developing and learning new skills and approaches. Also, from management's perspective, development in their role is also key as time never stands still, working practices evolve every day in every aspects of life. Learning and development as a whole brings a more efficient service for the public and every employee in an organisation.

I couldn't ask for a better platform to develop others around me, this role as ULR also gives me the chance to develop as a Union Representative, I feel that my aim can be achieved by working together with employees, management, unions and other organisations. This is made easier as I have the support of my Branch Secretary, members and Union as a whole.

Hazel McKay, HR Advisor, Kilroot Power Station

As the HR Advisor for Kilroot we have been riding the emotional rollercoaster since the first news emerged late December 2017 about a potential closure of K1 and K2 Kilroot Units. As that news unfolded there was total disbelief that Kilroot would close as we all felt secure and needed as we had been providing an essential service for the island of Ireland.

As time passed the disbelief became a reality and we all struggled to come to terms with the changes that this would bring. We have had the comfort of job security and this has resulted in employees working together for a long time. Some have over 30 years' service. This has created strong relationships in the workplace and a deep understanding of our colleagues. Our workforce is highly skilled, competent and truly amongst the best in their professions.

As time progressed and the shock of Kilroot redundancies became a reality the feelings moved from denial to despair. From conversations we were having with the workforce it was clear that they felt that they couldn't compete in the labour market to get alternative work. They felt that there were higher qualified applicants with lots of interview experience in the external labour market. I provided encouragement and reminded them of the invaluable skills and experience that they have but I could see their doubts and insecurities. Our employees enjoy working and the thought of unemployment fills them with dread. I know that this is having an impact on not just the employees but on their families as the job security has gone and the pressures and stresses of change are growing.

I was so relieved when GMB offered the support of the Reachout project to provide support through Maths, English, IT, C.V, and Interview Skills Training to the employees of Kilroot and Ballylumford. This will give them the means to showcase their employability to new employers. This is an invaluable service that GMB through the Union Learning Fund are providing and on behalf for the AES Kilroot employees we are most thankful.



The Learn with Aegis Project based in Computershare Loan Services (CLS), concentrated all efforts during 2017/18 to support employees in a Level 2 and 3 apprenticeship programmes. 26 employees joined the Level 2 Apprenticeship in Providing Financial Advice and completed a BTEC Level 2 in the Principles of customer service and Edexcel Level 2 in Providing Financial Services, Administration for Financial Planning and Mortgage Intermediaries. 19 employees went on to complete the level 3 apprenticeship and achieved the Edexcel Level 3 Certificate in Providing financial advice.

Union Learn – New Apprenticeship Success

14 Sep 2017



Union Learn wins for Aegis learners! During the last number of months Aegis Union Learn in Derry have been running a level 2 apprenticeship in customer service and financial advice . The Union Learn project team identified and supported 26 Computershare (CLS) employees who have all achieved the following qualifications: BTEC Level 2 in the Principles of customer service, Edexcel Level 2 in Providing Financial Services, Administration for Financial Planning and Mortgage Intermediaries.

The Aegis Union Learn Project Manager, Adrian McMenamin said, "The course has been supported by Computershare and Aegis Union Learn and has been successfully delivered via the training provider, Global Horizon skills. CLS, Aegis and Global would like to say a big congratulations to all involved and best of luck as they now move forward on the level 3 qualification.

The 26 successful employees are due to commence a Level 3 apprenticeship, with 10 employees specialising in Customer Service and the remaining 16 focusing on Mortgage Advice. Well done all!"

16 employees enrolled onto CeMAP with seven completing and the remainder due to complete in 2018/19. A further seven employee also enrolled for Level 3 Certificate in Equity release. When employees obtain these specialist financial qualifications it not only increases the individuals' skills it allows the employer to advertise these skills to potential clients. The successful completion of seven CeMap students has led to the creation of mortgage underwriting jobs within CLS.

The project was successful in achieving target set for Essential Skills and Advanced Excel in 2017/18. During 2017/18 the project had intended to run courses on Social Media, Project Management and Coaching and Management, due to a number of issues these courses were unable to proceed. However, the qualifications delivered on the financial apprenticeships, tripled the number of accredited outcomes than these three course targets combined. The project intends to review these targets in 2018/19.

TARGETS - 78	LEARNER OUTCOMES – 120 Total
15 Essential Skills	16 Enrolled & 8 Completed – 8 to complete in 2018/19
10 Advanced Excel	14 Enrolled & due to complete in 2018/19
20 Apprenticeship 2/3	67 qualifications achieved
3 CeMAP & Equity Release	16 CeMap Enrolled & 7 complete – 9 to complete in 2018/19 7 Equity Enrolled and will complete in 2018/19
10 Social Media	Project will review target in 2018/19
10 Coaching & Management	Project will review target in 2018/19
10 Project Management	Project will review target in 2018/19

AEGIS Case Study

We had a learner contact one of the ULR's with a view to completing a level 2 in Essential skills in numeracy. This learner had been out of education for over 20 years and he left school without any maths qualifications. Not only did this learner complete a level 2 in numeracy he also completed a level 2 & 3 the providing financial services alongside a level 2 & 3 in providing customer services.

The learner told the ULR, that these qualifications have now opened opportunities up for him to be able to apply for new roles externally or look for a promotion internally in CLS. This learner has now been shortlisted for interview in CLS for a promotion to management level; he couldn't have applied for this last year without his numeracy qualification. This learner is now looking at doing further qualifications to further enhance his CV and has thanked the ULR for supporting his return into education.

Did you know:

Learn with Aegis can offer courses and mentoring for career development.

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LEARN with Aegis



Learn With Aegis - N.Ireland
22 March · 🌐

Powerful speech from Aegis union learn rep Ryan Elliott on the value of life long learning.