

Wales
TUC
Cymru

Union learning representative

A toolkit for Union Learning Reps
Wales TUC Cymru

Foreward

Welcome to the new edition of the Union Learning Reps Toolkit!

Wales TUC recognises the sterling work that ULRs carry out in their workplaces and are committed to providing advice and information as well as practical support to make your job just that little bit easier. In the context of an economic downturn and against the backdrop of a public health pandemic, your role as ULRs has never been so crucial and important. The contents of this toolkit have been tried and tested as practical aids and tools for you to use as you go about the business of bringing learning and reskilling to your members.

I am delighted to report that in Wales we have many diverse and active ULRs from a wide range of trade unions who have supported many thousands of members in accessing union learning in their workplaces. Many of these learners would not have even thought about engaging in learning and training if it wasn't for the personal confidence inspired by their ULR and the practical and emotional support that they have been given when they take the plunge.

I hope that this toolkit will provide the right information needed by both new and long-standing ULRs to continue with the terrific job that you do on behalf of your colleagues, your unions and your communities.



Shavanah Taj
General Secretary
Wales TUC

Ministers forward

We're extremely fortunate in Wales in that we work in social partnership with trade unions. These last few months dealing with Coronavirus has shown the value of that approach. Skills development is a key part of our partnership with trade unions and Union Learning Representatives are the foundation of much of this work. Good quality employment provides the most sustainable route out of poverty and I am proud of the progress we have made here in Wales, but we need to continue to improve and develop our approach to respond to the challenges of the future. I see union-led learning and the role of the ULR as key to this. As ULRs, you are key partners, not just in terms of providing working people with access to skills and employment opportunities, but also with the important impact you have on workplace health, wellbeing and equalities. This is why I announced an increase to WULF funding in my recent COVID commitment statement.

Recent global developments have brought employment and skills even more into focus. Covid-19 has impacted the economy and labour market hugely, and threatens to reverse the progress we've made to lower unemployment in Wales over the last decade. So I am extremely pleased to be contributing to this toolkit, which will give existing and new ULRs the information and resources that they need to help us address some of the challenges we face now and in the future. As a Welsh Government, we will continue to strive to ensure that skills and employability solutions promote equality of opportunity and fairer work, and support improved growth and inclusiveness throughout Wales.

I recognise that ULRs are volunteers and would like to thank you for your tireless efforts to support people into learning and ultimately help us in Welsh Government work towards our shared goal of supporting people in to high quality, sustainable employment.



Ken Skates MS
Minister for Economy,
Transport and North
Wales





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Why learning is a trade union issue

Unions have long been at the forefront of the fight for equality and the opportunity to learn and progress in the workplace. Learning is empowering and allows workers to access opportunities they may not have had access to before, as well as improving confidence, wellbeing and career progression.

Learning is important for everyone, but not everyone can access it in the same way. Union reps have a key role in supporting members and challenging workplaces to end discrimination, invest in their workforce and ensure that workers are treated fairly and with respect.

A key role for ULRs is to ensure equality of opportunity in the workplace. It is important to consider who typically has access to training in any workplace. Often it is those employees who have more confidence, qualifications, experience or those who the employer chooses to undertake training. This can sometimes lead to opportunities to train being unequal. The ULR role is to consider how to ensure opportunities to learn and train are provided to all groups of workers, particularly those harder to reach groups, by making any workplace learning programme accessible and inclusive. This may involve providing additional support such as: targeting particular job types, grades or offering one to one support where needed.

Learning is lifechanging

Learning can have a positive impact, improving our lives and the lives of those around us. It can change attitudes, provide better job prospects, transform personal situations, and breathes a new confidence into learners. Fundamental skills such as English, maths and digital skills help people to do their jobs, manage their homes, and enjoy their lives. Our learners have benefitted not only in the workplace but in other parts of their lives too.

Example: When a Local Authority decided to move Human Resources (HR) functions online, they worked with the Wales TUC to develop digital skills courses to help train all those affected by the change. One grandmother thanked us following the course as not only could she now access her pay slip online she has been able to help her grandson with his homework more. In another workplace, a literacy course led to the learner believing in themselves and their abilities for the first time and gaining confidence to achieve other learning goals.

Learning has no age limit and can inspire others around you to achieve goals way beyond the classroom.

Case study - Gunwant 'Gunny' Rathour

Gunwant Rathour, known as Gunny, has been employed by Cardiff Council as a Recycling Development Officer for 5 years. He is also a member of GMB.

Gunny works with contractors to recycle public waste, helping to meet Welsh Governments recycling targets. He also supervises the Council Waste Management Depots, ensuring that Cardiff Council becomes more eco-friendly, including working towards a Green Dragon Target, having already achieved a Level 3 grade. Staff turnover and increased recycling targets have, however, led to more work being done by less staff.

Outside of work Gunny practices Taekwondo and is an active member of Cardiff's Sikh community. He attends temple frequently and is proud to be a member of such a close-knit group.

Starting the learning journey

Gunny wanted to apply for an apprenticeship but lacked the qualifications he needed. He sought assistance from his Union Learning Rep (ULR), Anne Newbury.

"Our rep was fantastic; it was all down to her that I began this learning journey. I spoke with Anne about my options and she put me in touch with Sue Da'Casto, the Unite WULF (Wales Union Learning Fund) Project Manager, (see page 32 for more information about WULF) and Michael Wilson from GMB."

He is currently working towards a Gas Safe qualification, supported by the Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF) and multi-union assistance.

Gunny had considered taking the course several times before. This time with WULF funding helping towards the cost of the course and saving £1000, he decided to finally enrol.

"Enrolling on the course has been fantastic, it has really helped me mentally. I have always been quite fidgety during my free time, evenings and weekends, but this has given me something to do and focus on. I get restless when the children have gone to bed so learning a skill has kept me occupied."

"Thanks to WULF and the guidance of my ULR I can help not just myself but the wider community. I am an active member in the Sikh community, and our morals state that if someone is in need, we should help them."

Sharing WULF in the workplace

Gunny is keen to spread the word about WULF and get his colleagues involved.

"The WULF project is massively important as there are many people out there who will benefit from this. Front line staff can have a high turnover for many reasons and WULF gives people additional skills and qualifications which they can fall back on or use to progress in the future."

“I think it should be advertised more. I have spoken to other people in the workplace and they were amazed at the funding that’s available.”

“I hope in the future to further my career and use the Gas Safe accreditation. I am a people person and look forward to being able to work more directly with the public.”

Changing perceptions of union membership

Like many workers, Gunny didn’t realise the full value that trade unions bring to the workplace.

“I always thought that unions were there to help you with disciplinaries or trouble in the workplace, even health and safety issues. It’s more than just that though, there are so many more benefits available to you if you are in a union than just support for a grievance or disciplinary.”

“GMB have helped me obtain funding for my course and given me guidance on furthering my career. My union learning rep has the knowledge and contacts to set me on the correct path.”



Gunwant Rathour
Recycling Development Officer,
Cardiff Council





Barriers to learning

For many people, the joy and benefit of learning has been denied or missed because of barriers. Barriers to learning may be societal or based on background, personal circumstances, or learning disabilities such as dyslexia.

Unlocking talent and skills benefits the individual, the workplace, the economy, and all society. It also makes for a fairer and more equal society because education empowers us, and learning endures. People gain the confidence to challenge what they think is wrong and this can change society, attitudes, and prejudices. It is in all our interests for education, learning and up-skilling opportunities to be accessed by everyone, helping to widen equality, access and participation.

As a ULR, it may be possible to work with a union appointed equality rep to help learners' access more tailored support and overcome the barriers to learning that may be preventing someone from reaching their goals.

Employers have a legal duty not to discriminate, victimise, or harass under the Equality Act 2010. This law protects workers from discrimination because of their identity or protected characteristic and they include age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, race, religion/belief and pregnancy/maternity.

Additionally, in Wales the Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) was created following the Equality Act. This Duty places an extra legal obligation on public bodies and those carrying out a public function to consider how they can positively contribute to a

fairer society through paying due regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who don't.

This includes

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.



Common barriers to learning

Some individuals identify barriers blocking their ability to access learning, many of them are strongly linked to equality issues and may include:

| Barrier to learning | Description | How it may be overcome |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Social and cultural barriers | Peer pressure and family background | Be open with learners and help them understand that the benefits of learning can go beyond workplace benefits and can be genuinely life changing in some circumstances. Provide a clear outline of what will take place during the course and what is expected of learners to allow people to prepare. |
| Practical and personal barriers | Transport, time, shift patterns, travel, finances and cost, lack of access to information | Seek to understand the barriers so that they can be overcome. With practical barriers you may be able to offer a different perspective and you may be able to work with your trade union or WULF project to offer funding to overcome financial issues. |
| Emotional barriers | Lack of self-esteem or confidence due to low skills levels, negative personal experience of learning, previously undetected or unaddressed learning disabilities, social problems such as unemployment, abuse, or bullying. Not wanting to fail, or fear of others finding out that they have poor skills, especially their manager. | Invite potential learners to meet with role model learners. Encourage workers to engage in learning in a new style that is different to a school or classroom environment. Be a genuine part of the workplace community and encourage and offer genuine support for learners. Explain that bullying and abuse is not tolerated in the workplace learning environment and encourage members to set goals and targets to achieve. |

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Workplace barriers</p> | <p>Time off, access, discrimination, unsupportive managers, shift work, isolation, apprenticeship stereotypes</p> | <p>Work with managers to explain the business benefits of having an engaged and upskilled workforce. Your union may be able to help you finance courses and access to courses may be a reasonable adjustment for those with a learning or equality barrier.</p> |
| <p>Learning and equality barriers</p> | <p>Dyslexia, disabilities, an ageing workforce, language, childcare or caring responsibilities, migrant and vulnerable workers</p> | <p>Find other ways of offering learning opportunities, such as e-learning courses. Work with learners to find times that are suitable and which don't clash with other commitments. Some workers who are not comfortable online working may be reluctant to engage this way so ensure that you have conversations about the delivery of courses and how to overcome barriers. For those whose primary language isn't English, it may be useful to help them access courses in their own language, or with the help of a translator. Similarly, English language courses may help with confidence to learn further skills.</p> |

Remember, you can ensure that many of these barriers are removed by using the unique role of the trade union to negotiate changes with your employer. Using collective bargaining to address barriers to learning in the workplace is the unique ability of a ULR. If you would like more advice about how to go about raising this with your employer and developing collectively bargained agreements on learning you can raise it through the branch, talk to your full time official, or contact the Wales TUC for advice.



Learning at Work – Your Rights

Union representatives have a legal right to reasonable paid time off for trade union duties and to undertake training. These rights were introduced by the Employment Protections Act 1975. A specific right giving ULRs the right to paid time off for union duties and training was introduced in 2002.

This section gives an overview of the key legal rights for ULRs. Full details on your learning rights at work can be found at www.acas.org.uk

ULR training

When a member becomes a ULR they are entitled to paid time off in order to get the training needed to carry out the role properly. They must complete that training within six months from when the trade union notifies the employer, in writing that the member worker is a union learning representative of the recognised trade union.

Once the training is completed, the union should confirm in a letter to the employer that the training is sufficient for the ULR to carry out their role. The six-month qualifying period can be extended if there are unforeseen circumstances.

The employee needs to demonstrate to the union that they have received the training that they need to operate effectively as a ULR. They can do this by:

- Completing a training course that has been approved by the Wales TUC or by the union of which they are a member.
- Showing that they have the relevant professional expertise or experience.

Reasonable time off should also be considered by employers for ULRs to do further training to develop their skills and competencies.

Time off for trade union duties

ULRs are entitled to paid time off to undertake their duties. Time off is allowed for the following tasks:

- Analysing learning or training needs.
- Providing information and advice about learning or training matters.
- Arranging learning or training.
- Promoting the value of learning or training.
- Consulting the employer about carrying out or conducting any such activities.
- Preparation to carry out any of the above activities.
- Undergoing relevant training.

The responsibilities of a ULR will vary considerably but time off must cover at least one of the listed areas.

Payment for time off for trade union duties

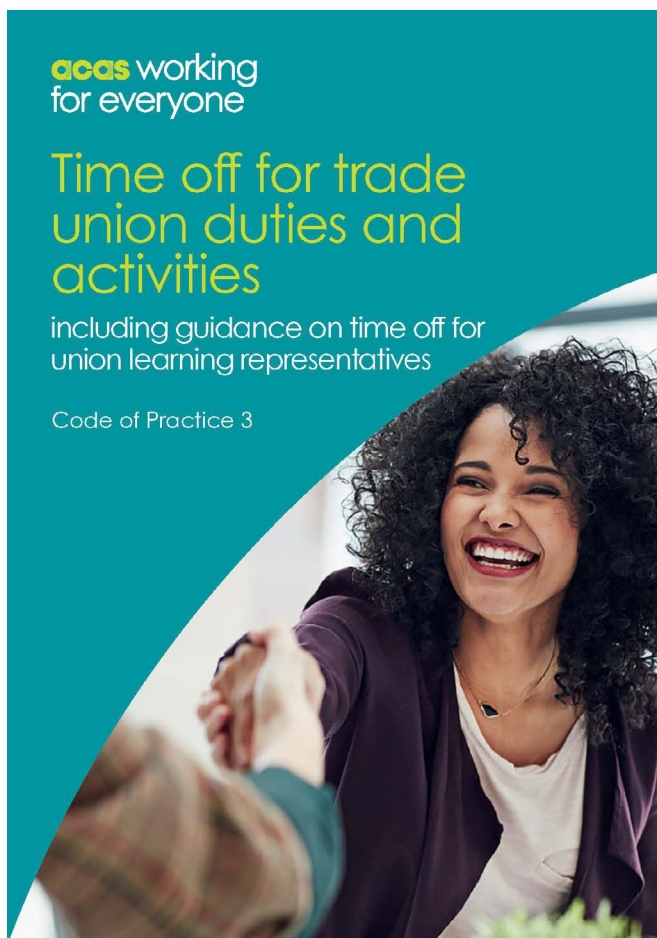
Payment for time take for trade union duties must either be:

→ The amount that the employee would have otherwise earned

Or, where earnings vary with the work done:

→ An amount based on the average hourly earnings for the work they are employed to do.

Employers are not required to pay for time off if the employee would not otherwise have been at work, but part time staff are entitled to be paid if full time staff would be entitled to be paid.



Time off for trade union duties

Union representatives undertake a variety of roles in collective bargaining and in working with management, communicating with union members, liaising with their trade union and in handling individual disciplinary and grievance matters on behalf of employees.

There are positive benefits for employers, employees and for union members in encouraging the efficient performance of union representatives' work, for example in aiding the resolution of problems and conflicts at work. The role can be both demanding and complex. In order to perform effectively union representatives need to have reasonable paid time off from their normal job in appropriate circumstances.

Training Rights

Under the Employment Rights Act 1996 employees have the legal right to request time off for study or training.

Who can request study or training?

- You must be classed as an employee
- You must have worked for your employer for at least 26 weeks
- The training must be aimed at helping you to do your job better

Time off is usually unpaid unless the employer agrees to it.

Restrictions

You can't ask for time off for training or study if you are:

- An agency worker
- In the armed forces
- A young person who has already got the right to take time off for study or training
- 16-18 and already expected to take part in education or training

You only have the right to request time for certain types of training:

- Training leading to a qualification
- Training to develop skills relevant to your job or workplace

How to ask for time off

You should follow your organisation's rules to request time off.

If your organisation doesn't have any clear rules, then you can write to them saying that you are requesting time off 'under Section 36D of the Employment Rights Act 1996' with the following details:

- The date
- What you will be studying or the training you will be doing
- Where and when it will take place
- The name of the training provider
- If relevant, what qualification you will get
- An explanation of why the training will help you in your job
- Details of any previous requests that you have made

If you do not include all this information, then the employer does not have to consider your request.

Your employer must respond by either agreeing to your request or setting up a meeting. You can take your union rep or any other companion to the meeting. If your request is turned down, you have the right to appeal.



Progression for ULRs

There is no time limit on the length of time that the study or training may take. The ULR role focuses on helping other people upskill, but it's important to consider your own CPD (continuous professional development) too. Your training and development shouldn't end when you finish the initial ULR training course. ULRs are entitled to paid time off for training, not only for the initial course but also for additional training to develop and keep your skills up to date.

Wales TUC routinely co-ordinate briefings for reps across Wales, including ULRs which include updates on funding, qualifications, frameworks, apprenticeships and key areas of work they are undertaking. It is useful for ULRs to attend these when possible.

Wales TUC courses

Have a look at our [course directory](#) to decide what you want to learn next. Courses include:

- Mental health awareness
- Equalities: the impact of Covid19 on protected characteristics
- Menopause awareness
- Tackling the far right
- Redundancy – Covid19 and the law
- Discrimination and the law
- Bullying and Harassment - the law

All Wales TUC courses are free for reps. Delivery is currently online, but you will still benefit from the full support of our experienced trade union tutors, just as you would in the classroom.

Train the Trainer

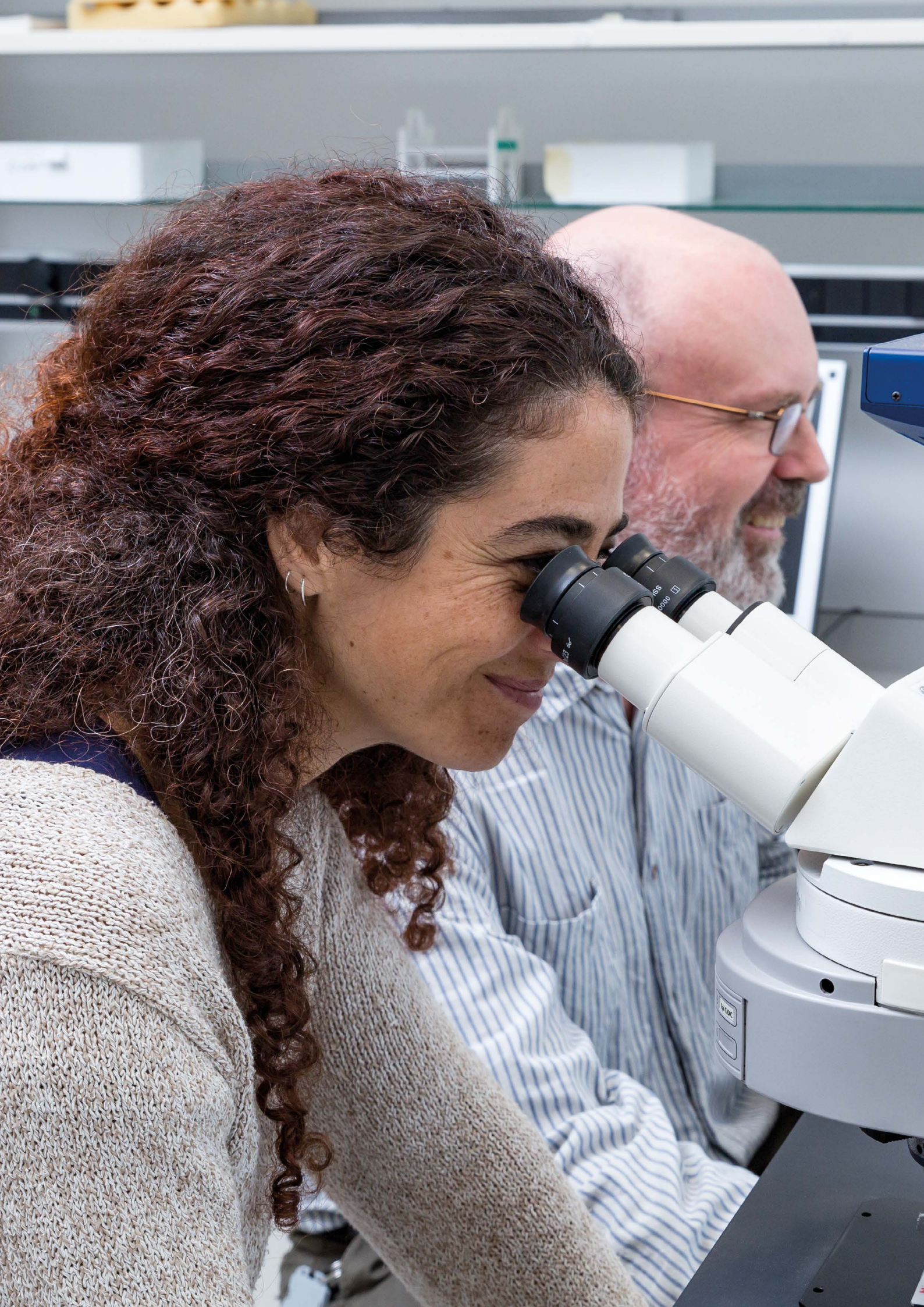
You may also want to consider a 'Train the Trainer' course. This would give you the skills you need to run training sessions of your own in the workplace or online. Such skills are highly marketable and can be hugely rewarding, but costs vary so do your research.

ILM

Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) courses help you develop yourself as a leader and gain the skills you need to progress in your career. You don't need to manage people to benefit from ILM courses and they are available from Level 2-7, so you're likely to find one that suits your needs.

Coaching and Mentoring

Learning how to be a good coach and mentor are ideal skills for a ULR and will help you better understand the needs of your learner colleagues, develop their ideas and help them stay on track throughout their learning journey.



Communicating with your colleagues

It is very important for ULRs to understand the workforce development plans of their employer or within their industry, so they can advise members on how to access employer or industry led training and upskilling opportunities. One of the first tasks should be to research existing workforce development or career pathways within their sector and try, where appropriate, to develop a union learning offer that supports people to progress.

Often the best way of getting your message across to colleagues is word of mouth. Mention the union and learning opportunities when chatting with your colleagues during your breaks and encourage anyone who's already learning to tell their colleagues, friends and families about their experience too.

Where to put your message

There are lots of other ways to spread the message more widely. Start by thinking about how you hear about news and useful information at your workplace. This might include:

- Staffroom notice boards
- Internal magazines
- The training, union or news sections of your Intranet
- Staff meetings or department meetings
- Information given (online or on induction) to new starters
- Announcements at your union meetings

- Social media sites for your workplace like Yammer, Workplace or Slack
- External social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter or Instagram – but remember that people who aren't at your workplace will see this too if you post publicly

Use as many of these communication techniques as possible so that your colleagues and potential learners hear your message far and wide.

What to say

Once you've decided where to advertise you need to think about what to say. When making a poster or writing an article, try and keep it simple. Often, less is more! You don't need to list every single learning opportunity available – think about what's most likely to interest your colleagues and talk about those things.

Always remember to include information about how people can contact you for more information. Where possible share positive quotes or stories from people who are learning now.

What next?

When you've tried all the different ways you can communicate with your colleagues, start again!

We easily get used to a poster on a notice board and, after a few weeks, we stop seeing it. Make a few different posters using different colours and pictures. Try rotating

and updating information frequently so your colleagues notice what you're saying.

Post online regularly and ask for a recurring slot to talk about learning at union or workplace meetings.

Interacting with other reps and your branch

Each union has their own internal structure and these can vary. In general terms a ULR should, where possible, attend: an induction, branch meetings and engage with other reps within their branch to work together for the benefit of all members, and their own role development.





Climbing Frame

What is the Climbing Frame?

The Climbing Frame is an online resource created exclusively for ULRs. It has been developed by our colleagues in Unionlearn to help support learners and promote learning in the workplace.

The Climbing Frame includes a variety of 'Learning Themes' which are topics of interest to ULRs. Within the Learning Themes useful onscreen text information can be found along with hyperlinks to external websites and documents which can be downloaded and printed.

The 'Learner Management' area of the website is where ULRs can store information about their sessions with learners. Working with the learner, the ULR can create a 'Climbing Frame' of actions for them which can help them achieve learning goals. A variety of reports can be produced for the learners themselves to show their progression, and for the ULR to show the overall profile of their learners.

ULRs can also access case studies, news and a wide range of useful links. ULRs can make use of the Climbing Frame discussion forum, store their own notes and links and record their own learning and progress.



Climbing Frame

Hide Add Row Remove Top Row Add Action Add Goal Print Plan

Work Goals 0 Career Goals 0 Personal Goals 2

ECDL Course

IT refresher

Learn to knit

Learn to drive

french 101

Pass Spanish GCSE

Spanish Level 2

Spanish for beginners

Una Union

Action Plan

Add Action Add Goal

Actions (8) Goals (0)

Use the Learning Themes area to:

- Browse learning topics on all aspects of ULR work including equality, supporting learning at 50+, apprenticeships and much, much more.
- Search for specific terms, documents and providers.
- Link to quality resources including downloadable leaflets, posters and a variety of useful websites.

Use the Learner Management area to:

- Safely and securely store contact information for learners – no more lost paperwork!
- Create pathways for learning by developing a Climbing Frame and an action plan for learners.
- Produce a variety of customised and exportable reports.

Use the My Notes area to:

- Free-type and securely save any information you choose.
- Create and save to do lists and contact lists.
- Keep all your information in one place, safe and password protected.

The site is also available as an app – search “unionlearn climbing frame” from your IOS or Android device.

Lots more information and full, free training is available to all ULRs in Wales – contact the Wales TUC for more information at wtuc@tuc.org.uk

To register and see for yourself go to www.climbingframe.unionlearn.org.uk



Developing a Learning Agreement – Guidance Notes

What is a Learning Agreement?

Collective bargaining is how unions can ensure equality of opportunity and improve access to learning and skills. Using the unique role of a trade union in the workplace to negotiate with employers on matters of learning will help a ULR secure a longer-term more inclusive workplace learning programme. One of the ways you can do this is by working with your union to develop a learning agreement.

A Learning Agreement is a written agreement between ULRs, the union and the employer in a workplace (whether at local or national level) to decide how workplace learning is carried out.

Before you start

Is there already a National Learning Agreement within your workplace/union? If so, you may be able to adapt this to suit your site's needs.

Talk to your union's full-time officer – they may know of other Learning Agreements specific to your union or any wider union implications.

Set out the aims of the Learning Agreement (specific to your workplace).

Keep it clear and simple so that all parties are aware of their roles and responsibilities (and their limitations).

Who needs to be involved?

You will need to decide this both from the point of view of who needs to sign up to it (management, union etc) and also who the agreement covers (full time, part time staff, contractors etc). The standard approach is to agree to cover everyone in the workplace as a matter of equality.

Time off to develop learning

Time off for ULR activity should be agreed, i.e. what is reasonable time off? Also, it is often a good idea to agree what types of learning will attract any time off for employees. For example, essential skills have a business benefit and therefore you could negotiate some time off for learners as it will directly benefit the business.

Facilities

It may be useful to agree that management will provide some facilities for any learning development to meet the aims of the agreement. For example, a room could be provided at certain times, computers or other equipment could also be made available. You will also need to arrange use of a room to meet regularly to ensure the aims and objectives of the Learning Agreement are being met.

Communications and Information

It should be made clear in the agreement what information can be provided to management from any union involvement in workplace learning development. Confidentiality is important, especially as you may be dealing with some sensitive issues that some employees may not want divulged to management. Training and learning needs can be identified to the management and any skills gaps can be highlighted without naming individuals.

Information sharing protocol – you should have a clear understanding of how union activity will feed into existing management training procedures. For example, the setting up of a joint committee, how often they meet etc.

Essential Skills

This should underpin all training and should be made clear in the agreement. Any training that takes place should be available to all. Therefore, if people do not initially possess the basic reading, writing, number or communication

skills they should be provided with the opportunity, confidentially, to improve in those areas in order to access further workplace training.

Monitoring

The agreement should be reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains relevant and that anything not covered can be written in. Similarly, employee opinions and evaluations should inform the development of your activity. All activity covered by the agreement should be needs-driven and therefore it is important to regularly ask the workforce for their opinions.



Example Learning Agreement

Every workplace is different, so there is no 'one size fits all' Learning Agreement. Using the guide on p.26-27 should help you consider the right questions to put together the best Learning Agreement for your workplace, but feel free to use the example below as a guide to adapt and add to.

Partners

- Union Learning Representatives at Workplace A
- Employer

Aims

- To build a learning and skills partnership in Workplace A
- To encourage the staff within Workplace A to participate in lifelong learning
- To provide access to skills development, career transition and lifelong learning
- To establish a learning culture within the workplace
- To build upon the Government's current learning initiatives
- To work with organisations such as local providers and the Wales TUC to support ULR development, identify funding and ensure the partnership is a success

Who the agreement covers

This agreement covers all full and part time employees of Workplace A.

The employer will ensure that this agreement will not be used as an alternative to collective bargaining with the Unions and agrees to maintain and use existing negotiating procedures and arrangements other than those specified in this agreement.

The partners agree that all individual grievances arising from any educational or learning initiative shall be subject to the existing grievance procedures.

The partners agree to establish realistic guidelines for the paid release of Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) to attend relevant training and be given appropriate time off to carry out their duties in the workplace.

ULRs will be released with full pay for 1 day per week to carry out their duties in line with agreement from the Learning Partnership Committee (LPC). Partners agree to review these guidelines as an on-going process through the activity of the LPC.

A Joint Union/Employer Learning Partnership Committee (LPC)

The Partners agree to establish a joint Union/ Employer Learning Partnership Committee (LPC), which will be responsible for introducing, implementing and monitoring learning initiatives.

The main responsibilities of the LPC will include:

- Identifying the learning needs of all staff and sharing intelligence on workforce learning and skills needs to underpin workforce planning and enhance potential for career development

- Producing a realistic Learning Plan, setting goals and targets for the learning provision within the workplace, which will include establishing a learning centre where possible
- To collaborate with external partners to increase access to best practice and other sources of funding
- Ensuring that the Learning Plan is effectively implemented so that the LPC meets their goals and targets for learning provisions

The partners agree that any learning needs analysis is undertaken with the full co-operation of all partners, and that any such analysis will be solely for learning and educational purposes. The analysis will not be used in relation to other issues such as pay, performance appraisal, redundancy, disciplinary, procedures etc.

The partners commit to regularly updating the learning needs analysis of participants in any learning programme.

The partners agree to ensure that all sectors of the workplace are represented equally on the joint LPC, and that members of the LPC are provided with all relevant information concerning the learning provision and their duties/responsibilities as members of the committee.

The partners will have the responsibility of disseminating all information on matters relating to learning in the workplace and will ensure that all employees and managers are made aware of the learning opportunities available and the work of the LPC.

The LPC will meet once a month (or as agreed by a meeting) to carry out the tasks as identified by this partnership agreement.

A Chairperson and Secretary will be appointed at the first meeting of the joint LPC, and once a year thereafter, to facilitate the future meetings of the committee.

Equal opportunities, equal access

The partners recognise the importance of equal opportunities and equal access to enhance skill levels in order to meet both the business objectives of the employer as well as the individual learning and development needs of the employees.

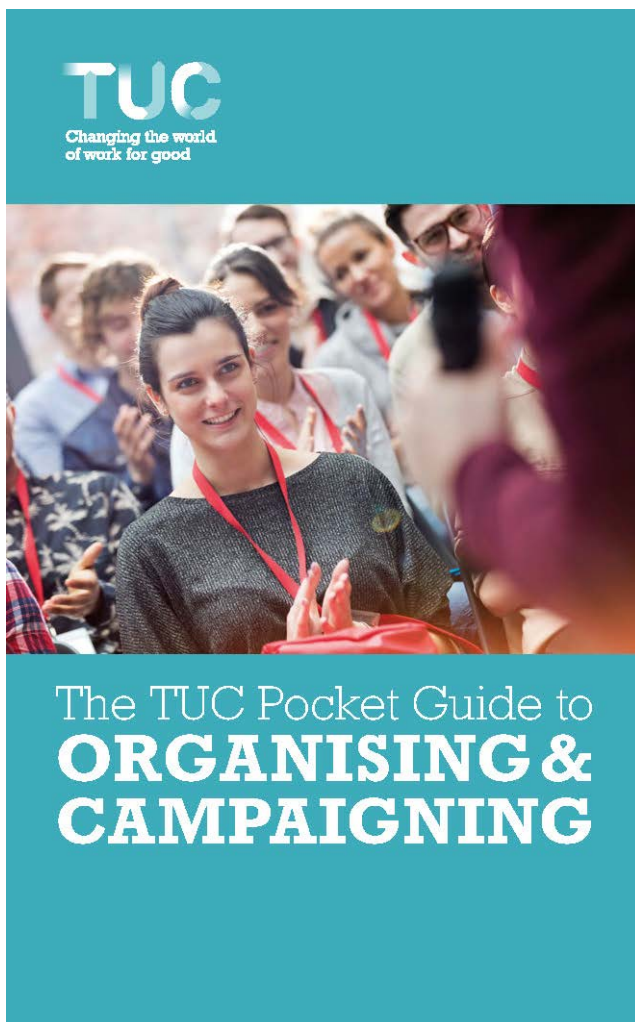
The partners will ensure that training and development will be provided to all employees.

Although participation by employees will be on a voluntary basis, the partners agree to actively encourage their members to fully participate in all learning initiatives and opportunities.



Working with members

An online and downloadable pocket guide has been created for use by members, reps and all activists who want to be involved with building stronger unions in the workplace and the wider community.



This handy guide features useful tips and essential skills for organisers. It aims to assist you with creating your own campaigns both in union recognised areas and new places of work.

The guide can be [downloaded here](#).

The Union Learning Support Officers (ULSO's) within the Wales TUC are available to assist or support you in this and many other things.

If you need a ULSO to visit your workplace, ask either a Union Officer or WULF project manager to contact the ULSO for your region:

Gareth Hathway – North Wales
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Wales Union Learning Fund WULF

The Wales Union Learning Fund has been achieving success, implementing positive change and helping people learn for over 20 years.

Since 1999, WULF has used Welsh Government investment to support hundreds of successful, innovative projects helping thousands of workers across every industry in Wales. WULF currently has Welsh Government commitment and funding to March 2022.

WULF works by targeting and accessing unionised, organised workplaces and workers. Union reps and officials work in partnership with managers, providers, learners and partners to meet targets and provide life changing assistance and support packages.

WULF is delivered by unions to provide learning opportunities to all workers in Wales. WULF aims to up-skill, build confidence, and provide individualised support to progress.

Many union-led WULF projects recruit, train and support ULRs. ULRs can play a key role to help achieve WULF successes. Together WULF and ULRs can develop and establish long lasting, sustainable workplace learning initiatives.

- WULF promotes the value of lifelong learning
- WULF is inclusive
- WULF is flexible
- WULF is needs-driven
- WULF reduces barriers to learning
- WULF builds confidence and increases motivation
- WULF improves equality, health and wellbeing
- WULF helps learners to help themselves and to progress on their learning journey
- WULF provides advice and guidance
- WULF is open to all workers, both union members and non-members
- WULF can help your union to organise and recruit
- WULF can support learning for every type of worker: agency, zero hours, part time, under threat of redundancy, freelancers, migrant workers, front line, managers, vulnerable, and those with protected characteristics
- WULF works in partnership
- WULF can support a huge range of learning opportunities e.g. essential skills, digital skills, confidence-building or languages
- WULF targets hard to reach and non-traditional learners
- WULF aims to improve core skills for the modern worker in changing workplaces
- WULF provides an individualised approach to employability support
- WULF responds to current and projected skills gaps
- WULF promotes fair work
- WULF provides support for a radical shift in the world of work



Read a success story here:

20 years of WULF - Jan discovers she's dyslexic through helping others with their learning

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/news/20-year-wulf-jan-discovers-shes-dyslexic-through-helping-others-their-learning>



If you'd like to find out more about WULF, our website has an article that will help explain it all a little better:

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/learn-your-union>

2019- 2022 WULF Project List

There are currently 18 WULF projects being delivered by unions across most industry sectors and Wales-wide.

An easy to use list of WULF projects and their contact details can be viewed on our website

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/wulf>

Who funds WULF?

Welsh Government directly funds WULF. WULF also generates co-investment and often receives in kind support from the union and partners.

WULF works in partnership, it is delivered by a lead union and supported by key stakeholders and partners such as learning organisations, providers and workplaces.

Example of co-investment: A project is usually based and managed at a union office. The office spaces, equipment, overheads and staff time may be provided as an in-kind investment and at no charge to Welsh Government or the fund.

Who delivers WULF?

A lead union has responsibility for delivering outcomes and achieving success. The lead union will work with a variety of partners to

ensure high quality and needs driven delivery.

- Union Head Office
- Union Wales Office
- Union branches
- Union Officers – Project Manager, Full Time Officers, Organisers, Reps, Branch Secs
- Workplaces and employers
- Partners / stakeholders E.g. Working Wales, Digital Communities Wales, and Chwarae Teg
- Further Education and Work Based Learning Providers (FE and WBL) tutors
- Welsh Government

What can WULF fund?

WULF can fund a variety of learning and upskilling options. If in doubt, check with your WULF Project Manager.

- Employability Skills
- Essential Skills
- Digital and ICT Skills
- Vocational training/qualifications
- Job search support
- Personal development
- Health and wellbeing courses
- Progression and professional development

How do unions access WULF?

WULF operates a bidding round system. Welsh Government opens bidding rounds by publishing a prospectus and inviting unions to complete an application. Applications are assessed by a panel, successful projects start in April and run on a financial year basis.

Here is the link to the most recent Welsh Government 19-22 prospectus

<https://gov.wales/wales-union-learning-fund-working-unions>

There are currently 18 projects running that were granted approval to deliver from April 2019 to March 2022.

WULF aims to achieve success against the four main themes set out in the Welsh Government Employability Plan.

Aims and targets get set during the application process and are agreed by the panel. These aims, targets and outcomes are regularly reviewed.

WULF successfully achieves against and promotes many Welsh Government policies and strategies, from health and wellbeing, the economy to equality.

Funding

There are a variety of funding options for workplace learning available in Wales. Many of these funds vary in terms of who is eligible and what sort of learning you can use the funding for. Some are employer-led, some are targeted at individuals and other funds are only available depending on which part of Wales you work or live in.

As a ULR it is worth taking the time to get an understanding of what funding is available to you, your industry and the workforce. You can do this by talking to your local Further Education (FE) colleges, adult community learning providers, or you can contact the Wales TUC ULSOs (details on page 31) who will be able to help. It is also worth doing some research.

Working Wales #changeyourstory

Website <https://workingwales.gov.wales/>
E mail workingwales@careerswales.gov.wales
Phone 0800 028 4844
Support Finder <https://careerswales.gov.wales/support-finder>

What is Working Wales?

Working Wales is a free employment, learning, skills and funding advice service, set up to support individuals through changing times. Advisors provide guidance and access to training to help you get into work or further your career.

Working Wales is delivered by Careers Wales and funded by the Welsh Government and the European Social Fund

At the time of publication these programmes were available. This is not an exhaustive list and many programmes/funds will vary in terms of region and availability. It is important to do

your own research using the links on this page to establish the appropriate funds in your area/sector.

Examples of funding options in Wales:

- Wales Union Learning Fund
- Nurture Equip and Thrive – NET Progress for Success (North)
- Working Skills for Adults (South East)
- Personal Learning Accounts
- Employment/job creation programmes (e.g. Jobs Growth Wales, Bridges into Work)
- ReAct
- FE employer/employee skills programmes (Upskilling@Work project (South East), Skills for Industry project (South West), SEE (North))
- Innovation Grant

Personal Learning Accounts (PLAs)

Personal Learning Accounts offer individuals access to free part-time, online courses to upskill, gain a qualification and rewrite their career. PLAs are delivered by Further Education colleges across Wales.

Applicants must be over 19, living in Wales, in employment earning under £26,000 a year or affected at work due to coronavirus, by being furloughed or at risk of redundancy or accessing the Job Support Scheme (regardless of salary). A Personal Learning Account is a great way to access part-time study on specific technical courses. Working Wales can help offer expert PLA advice and guide you onto the next step of your success story.

What is a Personal Learning Account?

A Personal Learning Account helps to fill skills gaps and increases career progression. Accessing a PLA will allow you to study for free, on a part-time basis, online and around your existing commitment and responsibilities.

You will obtain the skills and qualifications you need to switch careers and embark on a new pathway in engineering, construction, Information Communication Technology (ICT), health and care, hospitality, retail and tourism, the creative industry or financial services.

The new skills and qualifications gained can be matched with those that local employers need, either to help you progress your current career or change it altogether.

The large range of courses on offer through a Personal Learning Account are funded by the Welsh Government. Read more here <https://workingwales.gov.wales/personal-learning-account>

Example courses on offer:

- Diploma in Team Leading
- HNC in Electrical Engineering
- Diploma in Plumbing Level 2
- Music Production Techniques
- C++ Programming
- AAT Foundation Certificate in Accounting
- City & Guilds Level 2 - Health and Social Care
- Level 4 Hospitality Management
- E-learning - Health & Safety in the Workplace



Case study - Rhiannon Jones

Rhiannon Jones is a teaching assistant in a special needs school in Newport, South Wales. Here she tells us about how taking a WULF-funded PECS course has given her new professional skills and inspired her to continue learning.

I've been a UNISON member since 2017, and luckily, have never needed their support in a work place capacity.

In July 2020 following the advice and support of our local UNISON schools rep I undertook a Picture Exchange Communications (PECS) course. She told me that our local UNISON WULF Project were funding places to do the Level 1 online workshops – I jumped at the chance!

I wanted to do the course due to working in Maes Ebbw, a special needs school - to help the children I work with.

I probably wouldn't have done it if it wasn't for UNISON and their support. I am already saving to continue with my part time Open University degree, and my school is unable to fund this type of training.

Unison provided me with all the details I needed and were able to help me apply for the course... and they funded my place!

I completed this course during the summer holidays and was thrilled to pass and receive my certificate allowing me to put this to use upon our return in September.

I would fully recommend the PECS course to others - I have told other colleagues about it and some are looking into the course themselves.

Since finishing the PECS course I have begun the Higher Level Teaching Assistant course which WULF were able to partially fund again helping me achieve my goals and improve my future prospects.

I had a bad experience of learning in the past, which had turned me off pursuing my teaching dreams, but this experience has inspired me to continue my studies and broaden my horizons.

Opportunities to learn with WULF

Whether you're interested in photography or computer skills, Welsh or electronics, WULF funding can support you in your learning journey. Take a look at our website to see how you can get access to WULF funding or talk to the Union Learning Rep where you work for more information.



Rhiannon Jones
Teaching Assistant



10 tips to help employers make the workplace more equal for learners

1. Ensure that recruitment practices are inclusive and state clearly that they will support employees to learn and develop within the workplace
2. Ensure that all communication both inside and outside the organisation is diverse and uses clear and appropriate language, images or social media content.
3. Ensure interview and promotion panels are diverse and that all who sit on them have been given equality and diversity training.
4. Allocate a budget to workplace learning and inform the union team and members of staff of its existence and remit.
5. Ask people what their access needs are. Everyone may have different access needs that need to be considered. For disabled workers their access requirements vary widely and may include, but are not limited to; accessible buildings and toilets, adjustments for equipment or learning tools, dietary requirements, ensuring opportunities to rest are built into the course, finance and ability to travel to courses. Most people are happy to be asked their access requirements if you can be trusted to act on them in an appropriate and timely manner.
6. Carry out an audit of workplace policies on a regular basis, checking for any disproportionate negative impact or potential impact on groups and amending them if a policy or practice cannot be objectively justified.
7. Share training opportunities within the workplace for workers and managers, they may help to address biases in access, recruitment or learning and they will help learning and the workplace fairer.
8. Work with trade union reps to put in place adjustments for workers based on their needs or protected characteristic, this doesn't just meet legal obligations, but it creates a workplace culture where diversity is respected and valued and workers can be open about their needs. This in turn leads to healthier, happier, and more productive workers who are engaged and able to take up opportunities to learn and develop.
9. Ensure effective monitoring of learning opportunities takes place and that the monitoring forms are accessible in style, font size, print/paper contrast and language.
10. Engage with workers over the results of monitoring and staff surveys and ensure that information is acted upon and not gathered without a proper reason. Work with trade unions and workers to help understand what has been said and what is not being said. Question if your workplace culture is a contributing factor to any of the results.

10 actions union reps can take to make the workplace more equal for learners

1. Engage with workers and get their views, allow them a safe and confidential space to disclose information to you on equality practices within the workplace and work with them and the employer to overcome barriers.
2. Press the employer to carry out pay audits on a regular basis to check for any unjustified gender, disability and race pay gaps. Ensure the results are shared with you and action is taken to address any unjustified gaps.
3. Ensure that Learning Agreements refer to equality of access. They should also state that learning opportunities learning opportunities are available to both union and non-union members.
4. Work with employers to ensure that their policies on family-friendly leave are inclusive and reflect the diverse range of families that exist. Such policies and benefits should make clear that they apply to same-sex couples and parents.
5. Flexible working opportunities should be made available to all workers. Flexible working is not just for women with young children: it can be important in advancing equality of opportunity for disabled workers, carers and older workers as well. Plus, if it is available to everyone it is more likely that the culture of the workplace and the design of jobs will change to meet demand for flexible working, so those who really need it will be more likely to get it.
6. With the removal of the default retirement age, talk to members about their concerns around retirement, and consider negotiating flexible retirement options for older workers.
7. Look into the types of contracts that workers are on. Black women have been particularly affected by a rise in zero-hour contracts and the gig economy makes it extremely difficult to find stability in the workplace. Employers should review not only the pay that workers are on, but the types of contract and if there are any gender, race or disability gaps in accessing decent terms and conditions.
8. Ask yourself if you are challenging gender, race, disability, LGBT+, religious and age barriers or if you are promoting opportunities that meet stereotypes. For example, are you offering traditionally more 'feminine' courses to women and more physical courses to men? Overcoming equality learning barriers means breaking stereotypes and encouraging people to learn in areas which society has traditionally alienated them from.
9. Work with the employer to ensure that they carry out effective monitoring and that the monitoring forms are accessible in style, font size, print/paper contrast and language.
10. Ensure that information from monitoring and staff surveys is acted upon and not gathered without a proper reason. Ask to see the data and feedback and ask how the employer plans to act on the results. For example, if it is evident that a group of workers, such as disabled workers are not progressing, then the training, development and promotion structures should be checked for discrimination and positive action measures may be considered to address the problem.

Workplace activity

Equality at work is vital, and as trade unionists it is important that we ensure everyone is being treated fairly and equally, without prejudice. This important piece of our continuing work has been one of the founding principles of the trade union movement and many workplace practices have been challenged and changed by the effective work of trade union reps and officers.

You may have an Equality Rep in your workplace or branch. If not, you could see if you have any appropriate and willing volunteers, training is available through the Wales TUC or your trade union. You may want to consider thinking through the following questions:

- Have I mapped the workplace?
- What are the potential barriers/equality issues for different groups within the workplace?
- How do I let people know that I am a ULR to potential learners?
- How do others perceive me as a ULR?
- Is our ULR team representative of the workforce?
- Do I have enough awareness around equality issues?
- Do I have enough awareness around learning issues such as dyslexia, visual or hearing impairment, and learning disabilities?
- Is the information we produce accessible for all?
- Have I promoted the information in an accessible way?
- Is the learning environment suitable for all? Have I properly considered access, religious needs, caring responsibilities, school term times?
- Is timing, cost, levels, range or style of provision an issue for anyone?
- Will learners feel safe in the learning environment?
- Do all learners share values of respect and tolerance of diversity?
- Am I recording information so I can monitor take-up in the workplace?
- Do I need further training?



Other Wales TUC publications

Learning and awareness is key when it comes to equalities and health and wellbeing in the workplace. ULRs play a key role in raising awareness amongst their own branch and with their colleagues. You can do this through learning. Detailed below are all the various toolkits and resources you can use as a ULR to help raise awareness of important issues within your workplace.

If you would like more information on our campaigns visit www.tuc.org.uk/wales



Autism and the workplace



Autism is a term describing a wide range of conditions that reflect neurological differences among people. These are known as autism spectrum conditions (ASCs).

Autism, along with other neurological conditions such as dyslexia, dyspraxia and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), are all examples of 'neurodiversity'. Neurodiversity is a relatively new term that refers to the diversity of the human brain. This means there is a wide range of difference in how people's brains work. Neurodiversity recognises that some people's brains are wired differently.

1 in 100 people have autism spectrum conditions. There are an estimated 31,000 people with autism spectrum conditions (ASCs) in Wales and an increasing number of people in work have a formal diagnosis.

There are also many people with the condition who, for a variety of reasons, may not have a formal diagnosis.

Many workers are the parent or carer of someone with autism.

Barriers that are placed in the way of workers who have autism spectrum conditions can negatively affect their lives at work. And some are excluded from work simply because of their condition.

Trade unions have a vital role to play in increasing awareness and understanding of autism in the workplace and enforcing the rights that protect people.

Wales TUC has created a toolkit called Autism Awareness in the Workplace. The aim of this toolkit is to provide information to help union officers and reps in Wales to represent autistic members or those who have autistic family members.

The toolkit will help reps to recognise the workplace issues that can impact on autistic people and will give them the information and guidance they need to help tackle those issues.

The autism and the workplace toolkit is [available here](#).

Invisible Disabilities and the workplace



Disability and 'hidden' impairments in the workplace

A toolkit for trade unionists
Wales TUC Cymru

Of the hundreds of thousands of disabled people living in Wales today, only a relatively small number are people with 'visible' impairments (such as wheelchair users and people with guide dogs). Many disabled people have 'hidden' impairments that are not immediately obvious to someone who doesn't know their circumstances.

Around 1 in 4 people in Wales report having a disability or 'limiting' long-term health condition, yet according to research by Scope, nearly half of the British public say that they do not know anyone who is disabled. This shows that there is a big gap between people's perceptions and reality – it is highly unlikely

that nearly half the population do not know any disabled people. It reflects the fact that many people do not recognise that more people are disabled than those who can be identified by sight alone. Unfortunately, the belief that 'real' disability can be seen often leads to the assumption that anyone who is not visibly impaired is "not really disabled".

Everywhere from car parks to public transport to the workplace, disabled people whose impairments are not apparent to others report being challenged with the words "you don't look disabled" (for example, for using a disabled parking space or toilet). In the workplace, people with 'hidden' impairments report that such comments are often used to show disbelief or challenge their right to reasonable adjustments.

Sometimes managers may use such comments as an excuse for refusing to offer support, or colleagues may imply that the disabled person is somehow seeking to gain unfair advantage. It can be an extremely stressful experience for workers with hidden impairments to have to manage their condition without adjustments or support and carry out their job in the face of hostility from managers and colleagues.

After hearing these and other accounts of the barriers that continue to be faced by many disabled workers with hidden impairments, the Wales TUC carried out a major survey to investigate the experiences of disabled workers in Wales.

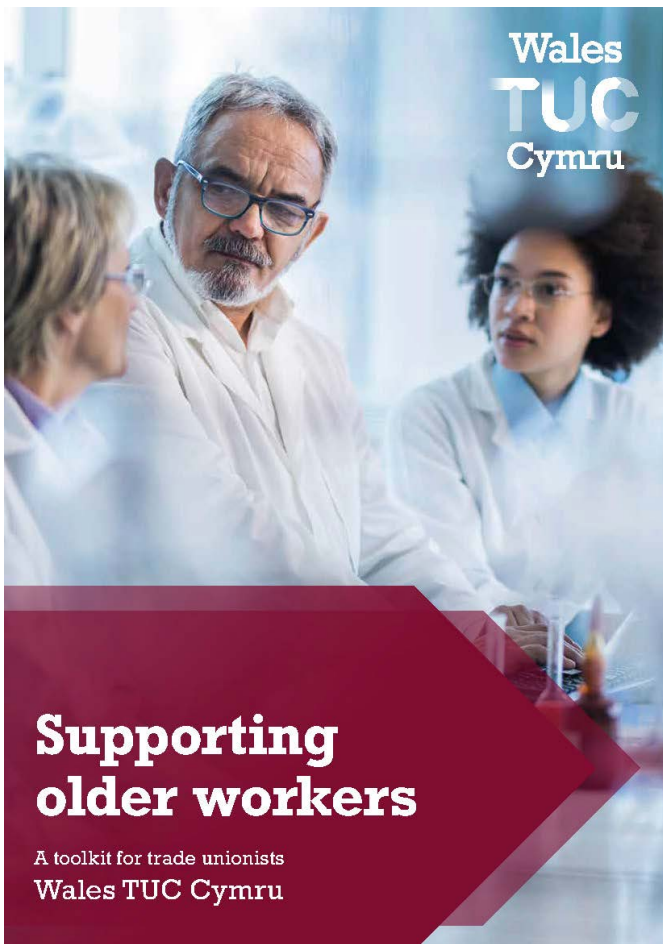
More than 1000 people responded to the survey and shared their own personal experiences. The research uncovered some concerning findings and showed that many disabled workers want to see a change in the way that disability is treated at work. Unions have a key role in raising awareness

of 'hidden' disabilities in the workplace and tackling the stigma, prejudice, and barriers that many disabled workers continue to face. Union reps can use this toolkit as a resource to help support disabled members and press employers to take action to improve disability equality in the workplace.

The invisible disabilities toolkit is [available here](#)



Older Workers



Wales has a rapidly ageing population. There are 265,000 more people over the age of 50 than there were 20 years ago.

By 2029 the country's over-50 population will have risen to 1.4 million – a remarkable 33% increase since the turn of the century.

The reasons for this are straightforward: people are having fewer children and are living longer.

As Wales gets older so does its workforce. There are more older workers – and for this

toolkit we use that term to refer to anyone over 50 – in the workforce than ever before. Within the next five years, one in three people of working age will be over 50.

People are also working for longer. For 40 years after the second world war the average retirement age fell. That trend stalled in the 1980s and has been reversing ever since.

All workers deserve dignity, safety and security at work. But for far too many older people that is not currently the reality.

Instead they are having to work under outdated employment practices that fail to take account of the fact that the Welsh workforce has changed. We need new approaches that prioritise worker health and wellbeing, flexibility, lifelong learning, inclusivity, and support to ensure that everyone can plan properly for their future.

An ageing workforce also represents a challenge to trade unions. As the workforce ages, it is essential that trade unions set out a clear vision for how workplaces should adapt. It is equally important that trade unions lead the efforts to secure change. This toolkit provides the information and guidance trade union reps need to help meet those challenges.

The older workers toolkit is [available here](#)

Menopause



Around one in every three women has either experienced or is currently going through the menopause.

Women make up nearly half of the Welsh workforce and with increasing numbers of older workers, many more women are now working through and well beyond the menopause.

Although some women do not experience difficulties as a result of the menopause, around eight in every ten women will experience noticeable symptoms and of these 45 per cent will find their symptoms hard to

deal with. Many women report that workplace environments and practices can make symptoms worse.

The menopause has traditionally been viewed as a private matter or 'a women's issue' and is often not a topic which is discussed openly or considered when designing workplaces and working practices.

Employers, even in workplaces dominated by women workers, have been slow to recognise the menopause as an issue, and that those going through the menopause might need additional consideration or adjustments. In many cases the menopause is still not recognised as a workplace issue by managers. Consequently, many women feel they have to hide their symptoms or only talk about them in a humorous way. This means many are unable to access the adjustments they need. In some cases, women report feeling forced to leave the workforce altogether due to a lack of support.

In 2016, the Wales TUC carried out a major survey of almost 4000 workers on this issue. The survey clearly touched a nerve – in fact, we have never received such an overwhelming response to a survey. It found that almost nine out of ten of those with direct experience of the menopause felt that it affects working life. Significant numbers of those responding to the survey also reported witnessing the menopause being treated negatively or as a joke within their workplaces. The survey showed that only a very small number of workplaces have policies in place to support women who experience difficulties during the menopause. This needs to change.

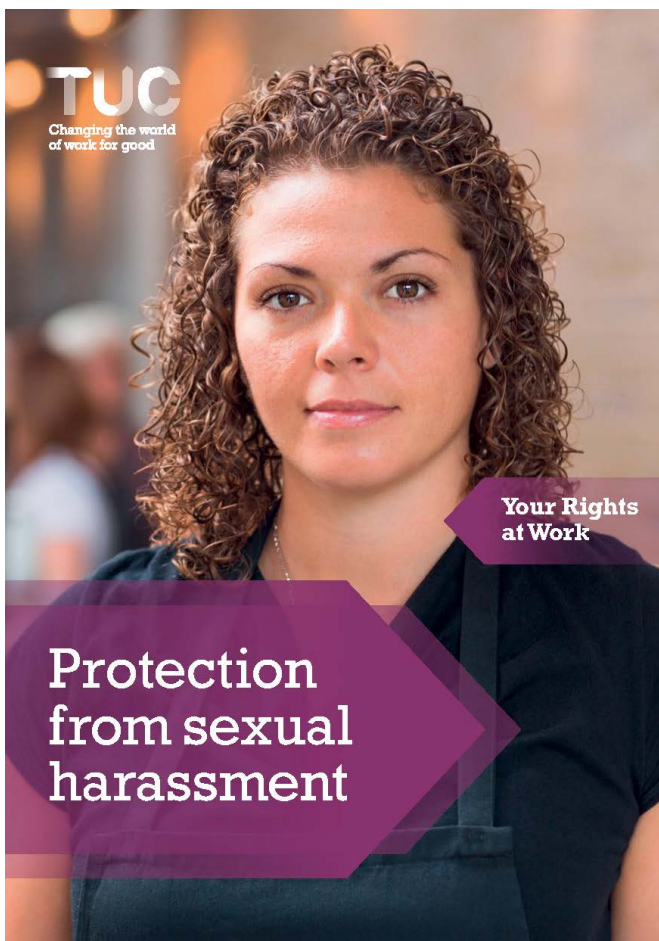
Unions have a key role to play in raising awareness of the menopause as a workplace occupational health issue. Union reps can

use the menopause toolkit as a resource to help support members working through the menopause and press employers to take action to address the health and safety and equality issues linked to the menopause.

[The menopause toolkit.](#)

[The menopause enote.](#)

Sexual Harassment



The Equality Act 2010 defines sexual harassment as unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

As unions we have listened to your stories of sexual harassment in the workplace. We've conducted surveys and you've responded by telling us your experiences.

Our findings are shocking and it's clear that workplace culture needs to change, but this won't happen without changes to legislation, employment practices and workplace culture. Trade Unions are key to those changes being made and this work marks the beginning of our reinvigorated campaign to change workplaces for the better when dealing with sexual harassment.

Your employer will be liable for sexual harassment that occurred in the workplace unless they can show that they took all reasonable steps to prevent it. This would mean they had done things like adopted a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment, set up good procedures for monitoring and dealing with complaints and trained staff on what kind of behaviour is unacceptable.

A union in your workplace can help you to enforce your rights, providing support for you to handle the issue informally or to bring a formal complaint which might eventually lead to an employment tribunal claim.

Wales TUC is currently creating a resource to allow unions and workers to learn more about this topic and tackle it within their workplace.

Mental health

We all have mental health. One in four of us will experience mental health problems in any given year. One in six workers are affected by conditions such as anxiety, depression, and stress. Although we talk more about mental health many workplaces aren't doing enough. Work is one of the important domains of human life and more than a source of income: it offers a way for people to contribute, reach their full potential and develop and maintain valuable social networks. For people with mental health problems work can provide crucial links to a wider community, as well as being an important part of maintaining mental health wellbeing or as part of recovery.

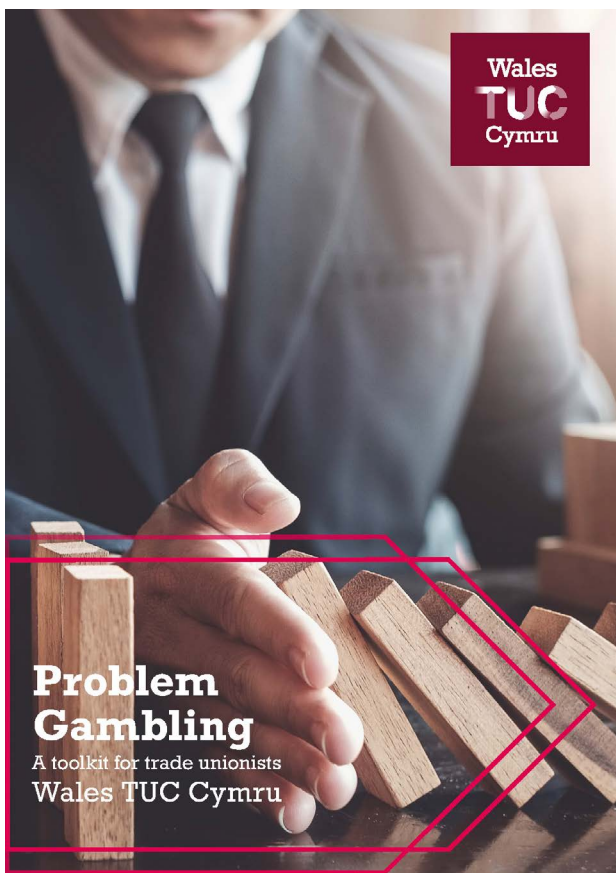
The workplace can be one of the most important settings for mental health, and positive promotion of mental health can help to increase workplace satisfaction, efficiency and productivity at work as well as contributing to personal and professional development.

Conversely, work related stress and mental health issues negatively impact the entire workforce through major socio-economic consequences, such as absenteeism, turnover, presenteeism and loss of productivity.

Mental health is an important part of our work as trade unionists, it is crucial to how we understand and interpret health and safety: conduct at work; performance and development; workplace relationships; equality issues; ill health; learning and training; union workplace democracy; and many others.

A union in your workplace can help ensure that your employer values and protects your mental health and puts in place measure for when your mental health isn't so good. Wales TUC are working towards a new mental health toolkit where we will outline actions that workplaces can take.

Problem Gambling- a community issue, a workplace issue, a trade union issue



Access to gambling has never been easier, due to the expansion of betting shops and improvements in technology. Your mobile phone is now a bookmaker, a bingo hall and casino in your pocket. Now you can bet on literally anything, at any time of the day and at any place your device can access the internet. You cannot watch any television or other forms of media without being bombarded by advertising from gambling operators. Alongside the apparent success of the industry has been the worrying and often devastating impact of problem gambling.

The consequential harm from these activities can affect anyone. It can happen at any age, to any gender and to people from any ethnic background. The way this gambling impacts different groups and the way the gambling manifests itself does however differ through different demographics.

Problem gambling can have a profound impact on family break-ups, mental health problems, criminal activity to finance excessive gambling and the cost to employers. Tragically, the link between harmful gambling and suicide is clear. We hear heart-breaking stories in the media and solid evidence proving that nearly 1 in 5 problem gamblers had considered suicide in the past year.

Learning is key to success. The Wales TUC has a toolkit for reps to help them support members faced with the impacts of harmful gambling. It aims to help reps recognise who is at risk and the impact of problem gambling and offers practical advice and support about signposting to help.

The National Gambling Helpline provides confidential information, advice and support for anyone affected by gambling problems in England, Scotland and Wales.

0808 8020 133

The climate emergency- what does it mean for workers, trade unions and skills?



A green recovery and a just transition

A Wales TUC report

Climate change is a trade union issue. Now more than ever, workers, just like employers, want a sense of security. But the climate crisis means a more uncertain future for us all.

Trade unions have called for urgent action to build a greener and fairer economy that protects jobs, our health and the planet.

Working people are on the front lines of climate change. In Wales, as elsewhere, we've already started to see the impact of extreme weather on our communities and workplaces.

Climate and nature breakdown will increase threats such as extreme weather and new viruses. And harmful air pollution from emissions is already a public and occupational health emergency.

Climate change exposes the existing inequalities in society, both at home and abroad. There are important social justice reasons why trade unions are campaigning and bargaining on this agenda.

A 'just transition'

We must secure the future and livelihoods of workers and their communities in the transition to a low-carbon Wales.

A 'just transition' to a greener economy is one where workers have a central voice in planning the transition, so it is done 'with' them not 'to' them. It's one where no workers or communities are left behind. And where new jobs that are created are just as good any that are lost in terms of pay, skills, pensions and trade union recognition.

Green skills

Workers need to be equipped with the 'green skills' needed for the transition and have clear pathways to the new jobs that will be created. With proper planning and funding, tackling climate change will not mean fewer jobs but could increase the number of jobs. There is an enormous amount of work to be done in building renewable energy, low carbon homes and transport.

It is estimated that around one in ten workers in Wales are in roles that are likely to need significant re-skilling or upskilling as we

transition to a net-zero economy. But workers across all sectors will be affected by changes and will be part of the efforts to decarbonise and move Wales to a more sustainable, zero-waste, circular economy. And trade union members have the knowledge and ideas to help deliver the changes needed.

We must also ensure that new jobs are good quality jobs offering 'fair work'. And we need urgent support for our energy intensive industries to move to lower carbon models. For example, the steel industry will play a vital role in building a greener future (e.g. wind turbines) and it must be supported in the transition to greener steel.

Climate-proof our work

Employers, small businesses, and local and national government all need to have a plan for the low carbon future. And workers and their unions can help to develop and support those plans. Acting together can only be good for business, good for employment and good for the climate.

Many organisations are already considering 'climate risk', adapting their corporate plans to reduce emissions and to mitigate and adapt to risks. It is important that employers work with trade unions to develop these plans. They should work with unions to ensure that workers are involved in decision making and that changes are fair and fit for purpose.

Unions can start a conversation with employers about how, together, we can plan to climate-proof our work in a way that protects jobs, livelihoods and communities.

The role of trade union environmental or green reps

Union environmental (or 'green') representatives can be elected to champion environmental issues in the workplace and can help to develop successful joint approaches. They can raise awareness of sustainability issues and ensure that they are included in the negotiating or bargaining agenda at work.

The main concern of a union environment or green representative is to agree a joint approach to decarbonisation and sustainability. Ideally this joint approach will be formalised in a collective agreement and overseen by an employer or union committee that addresses environmental issues.

Some unions elect or appoint dedicated environmental or 'green' reps. Others incorporate the functions of the green rep as additional responsibilities into existing roles, for example, into the role of the health and safety rep. Speak to your union to find out more.

ULRs and 'green skills'

On the issue of 'green skills', union learning reps have a key role. Early identification and planning for the skills that will be needed as workplaces adapt to new ways of working will be vital. A whole branch approach is needed and ULRs should work closely with other reps in the branch to ensure a joined-up approach.

There are also opportunities to combine education and skills development with action on the environment. Consideration could be given to running events on 'high profile'

dates, like Earth Day in April or Clean Air Day in October. Where there are continuous professional development programmes, environmental and climate modules could be introduced.

To support awareness raising, the Wales TUC is developing environmental and climate awareness training for all reps, alongside specialist training for green reps.

Find out more about our green recovery and just transition campaign and details of resources and training at www.tuc.org.uk/green

Tackling the far right

Far-right extremism is on the rise in our workplaces and communities. Since the Brexit referendum we've seen increased far-right activity across Wales.

Far-right activists have been mobilising in our streets and online, often seeking recruits in communities suffering years of neglect, underfunding and unemployment. These include many of our own communities here in Wales.

Trade unions have always been at the forefront of the fight against fascism and racism, opposing them wherever we find them. This legacy has left us experienced anti-fascist campaigners.

Wales TUC has created a new eNote to help trade union members (and others) tackle the far right in their workplace and community.

Our eNote:

- explains who the far right is and why we oppose them
- provides practical tips on how to campaign against the far right
- lets learners practice answering difficult questions in a role-playing scenario

The Tackling the far right eNote is [available here](#).

Fair Work

Equality runs through the heart of Fair Work. Please see the section on Fair Work to familiarise how we envisage achieving a Fair Work Nation.



Skills and Fair Work

The Wales TUC are campaigning to make [Wales a Fair Work Nation](#) – where workers get a better deal. Low pay, zero-hour contracts and inequality are a blight on our economy.

Creating a Fair Work Nation will:

- Tackle low pay in Wales' labour market
- Stamp out illegal and unsafe employment practices and labour exploitation
- Establish a union-led approach to lifelong learning
- Address restrictions on the activities of trade unions by employers receiving public money

Learning and skills are at the heart of the Fair Work Nation idea.

In 2018 the Welsh Government established the [Fair Work Commission](#) to make recommendations to promote and encourage fair work in Wales. The Commission produced a wide-ranging set of recommendations and established a working definition of what 'fair work' is:

"Fair work is where workers are fairly rewarded, heard and represented, secure and able to progress in a healthy, inclusive environment where rights are respected."

Further to this, it established the vital characteristics within that definition:

"Fair reward; employee voice and collective representation; security and flexibility; opportunity for access, growth and progression; safe, healthy and inclusive working environment, legal rights respected and given substantive effect."

The Commission explored ideas around how skills and progression should be approached in the workplace. They were clear that progression opportunities should not be traded off if someone is accessing flexible work opportunities. This is particularly important for those who must access flexible work so that they can remain in a job – like those with caring responsibilities.

The Commission acknowledged that opportunities to acquire and access skills should be open to everyone, and the development opportunities are inclusive and recognise people have different needs.

They were also clear that opportunities for progressions should be open to all – so regardless of your employment type or your personal characteristics, you should not be discriminated against. For example, agency workers often won't be given the same opportunities as contracted staff because an employer doesn't want to extend their investment in them. The Commission called this out as unfair.

And critical to the future of work, the Commission recognised that people need access to training for their current and future careers, including re-skilling for workers who need it. They also called for the offer of high-quality apprenticeships.

All the Commission's recommendations were accepted by Welsh Government. The Wales TUC are now working with Welsh Government, and other social partners, to turn the recommendations into reality.

Useful links & bibliography

ACAS

www.acas.org.uk

Course directory

https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-09/Wales%20TUC%20online%20courses_0.pdf

Climbing Frame

www.climbingframe.unionlearn.org.uk

Organising and campaigning

https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-10/Pocket_Guide_To_Organising%26Campaigning_2019.pdf

Learn with your union

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/learn-your-union>

WULF projects

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/wulf>

Welsh Government WULF prospectus

<https://gov.wales/wales-union-learning-fund-working-unions>

Personal Learning Accounts

<https://workingwales.gov.wales/personal-learning-account>

Working Wales Support Finder

<https://careerswales.gov.wales/support-finder>

Jan James WULF story

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/news/20-year-wulf-jan-discovers-shes-dyslexic-through-helping-others-their-learning>

Autism awareness in the workplace

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Autism%20Awareness%20in%20the%20Workplace%20FINAL.pdf>

Disability and 'hidden' impairments in the workplace

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/DHIWtoolkitEng.pdf>

Supporting older workers

https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-08/olderworkers11_3.pdf

Tackling the far right eNote

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/farright>

The menopause in the workplace toolkit

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Menopause%20toolkit%20Eng%20FINAL.pdf>

The menopause - a workplace issue eNote

<https://learning.elucidat.com/course/5c9cab29351b8-5cc6f8cc92df1>

Wales a Fair Work Nation

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/making-wales-fair-work-nation>

Fair Work Commission

<https://gov.wales/fair-work-commission>

Problem gambling toolkit

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/problem-gambling>

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This publication is also available in the Welsh language.

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This toolkit will be regularly updated, so we would welcome any comments or suggestions on how it could be improved. Please let us know if you notice anything that is out of date, unclear, or that you think may need correcting or updating.

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