



## ALW & Learning at Work Day

From scuba-diving to smoothie bikes the region was learning at work

## Quality and Quantity for PCS

Eleven PCS learning projects receive the Quality Award

## Mental Health First Aid

Three steps to improving your workplace First Aid Kit

## Usdaw and POA

Joining forces to deliver courses for learners in the North East



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## Carrying the Torch for Health, Wellbeing and Learning

**Learning Styles Project ULR Coordinator at Sunderland Council, Howard Fawcett, invited Olympic torch bearer, Larry Smith, to return to his birthplace to help promote the Learning Styles project and Diabetes awareness.**

Larry, who now lives in High Pitington in Durham, but was born and raised in Hendon in Sunderland, ran the Blackhall leg of the Olympic torch relay on Sunday 17th June. He is also one of the oldest torch bearers at 85 years old and a worthy recipient of his torch, having been nominated by his granddaughter for his life's achievements and charity work.

The Learning Styles Project not only supports and encourages self-development in relation to learning



opportunities but also advocates individual and collective health and wellbeing at work and at home. As a diabetic himself, Larry is also a keen advocate of this topic and raising awareness and money for associated causes/charities.

Larry was with Howard from 8.30 am till 6.00 pm on the 20th June between the Unison Branch office, Jack Crawford House, South Hylton House, Sunderland Civic Centre and Moorside ICT. He wanted to stay right to the end of the day to ensure that as many people as possible could have the fantastic opportunity to hold an Olympic torch and to highlight the importance of health and wellbeing.

The project provided the opportunity for individuals to meet Larry, have their photographs taken with him and the Torch and promote the project's work, including the very appropriate health and wellbeing agenda. More than 125 people came along and Larry was a real star.

Howard said, "It was one of the most enjoyable days I have had whilst working for the Council, the whole day was a success from start to finish.

"I'd really like to offer my sincere appreciation and that of Unison City of Sunderland Branch to Larry Smith. Thank you Larry, you are a true gentleman."

**For further information please contact Howard Fawcett ULR Coordinator, The Learning Styles Project by telephone on 0191 5532730 or email him at [howard.fawcett@sunderland.gov.uk](mailto:howard.fawcett@sunderland.gov.uk)**

# From pedal power smoothies to laughter yoga... ...the Northern Region is Learning at Work

## National Learning at Work Day and Adult Learners Week fever once again gripped workplaces all over the land.

During the event in May, the Northern Region embraced the concept with union-employer partnership events happening all over the North East and Cumbria.

The variety of employers taking part was extremely diverse, ranging from manufacturing and Local Authorities to Housing Associations, Government departments and food and drink and Utilities suppliers! Some of the employers/workplaces taking part via their union-led/partnership learning projects were: Caterpillar in Peterlee, South Tyneside Council, Nestle, EDF Energy, Sunderland City Council, East

Coast trains, Vela Group, Sunderland City Council, Cavaghan and Gray and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, to name but a few.

The activities taking place were as varied as the workplaces and reflect the creativity and dedication of the many Union Learning Reps and learning partners involved – as well as the breadth of learning opportunities available. Some of the most notable were car park scuba diving, Laughter Yoga, Zumba, Boxercise, hand and arm massage and the 'Smoothie bike' – where participants make their own healthy smoothie using pedal power on a specially adapted exercise bike, as part of health and wellbeing sessions.

Naturally, there were the more 'traditional' learning subjects on offer

as well, with literacy, numeracy and IT being perennial favourites everywhere, and supported brilliantly by local skills for life tutors and many of the region's HE institutions who also work in partnership with the workplace learning projects on delivering for learners.

Many of the workplaces brought their learning at work right up to date this Adult Learners Week/Learning at Work Day with the use of the latest technology MOBAT tablets (mobile assessment tools) supplied by unionlearn, which allow learners to test their skills at a time and place to suit them and they proved extremely popular.

Beth Farhat, unionlearn Union Development Coordinator said:

“ Last year we engaged nearly a quarter of a million adults into learning – many of whom will have been bitten by the learning bug during workplace learning activities like the ones going on this year. Between the unions, employers, providers and ourselves, there is a fantastic support network for events to suit any workplace and workforce and the level of dedication and enthusiasm that is put into their organisation is often awe-inspiring – especially as many ULRs, reps and tutors give up their own time for the benefit of their colleagues, families, friends and communities. ”





## Constructing an amazing Learning at Work Day

**Thursday 17th May saw Caterpillar Peterlee hold their first ever Learning at Work Day event for the hundreds of staff on site, and they also extended the invitation to other local businesses.**

In partnership with Unite the union and unionlearn in the region they really did it in style with more than 30 different activities available for people to take part in from 8.00am to 6.00pm.

As well as traditional learning with subjects like Maths, English and Information Technology on offer there were more vocational activities like Guitar lessons, holiday Spanish, Digital Photography, Making a video and the ultimately practical 'How to build a brick BBQ' and Scooter Maintenance sessions

- along with many more. There was also a raft of health and wellbeing pursuits on offer to work body and mind, including; Zumba, Boxercise, Circuit Training, and the Science of happiness.

One of the most intriguing and creative tasters on offer was an 'Outline of a Scuba Dive', which was held in the car park of Caterpillar's Learning Centre of Light by The Diving Centre Limited!

Thursday's bumper event was organised by Carl Robb, Caterpillar's North East Learning Manager, supported by Rennie Simpson and Steve Morrison, both Unite the Union Shop Stewards.

Carl oversaw proceedings on the day and Rennie and Steve helped to run numeracy and literacy assessments utilising the user-friendly and portable MOBATs supplied by unionlearn.

Carl Robb, Caterpillar North East Learning Manager and event organiser said:

“ This is a fantastic opportunity for Caterpillar colleagues and the wider community to discover a gateway to learning and perhaps start a new learning journey of their own with one of the fantastic providers we have at the Learning Centre of Light. ”

Rennie Simpson, Unite Shop Steward said:

“ It is a pleasure to help organise and take part in the Caterpillar/union joint venture. We hope the taster sessions and the information provided on the day will help to promote and increase awareness of the importance of learning a new skill - whether for career or recreational purposes. ”

Kevin Rowan, Northern TUC Regional Secretary said:

“ Caterpillar have really embraced the Learning at Work day ethos and made sure that there is something for absolutely everyone, no matter what their interests or motivations. It is always our pleasure and privilege to be able to support such committed projects where unions and employers are working together to provide the best for employees, colleagues and even communities. ”



## Adult Learners Week at Nestle, Dalston, the sweet taste of success!

**The recently trained team of four Unite the Union Learning Reps (ULRs) at the Nestle factory in Dalston were extremely busy this Adult Learners Week, helping the 350+ staff on site to re-engage with learning as part of their new workplace learning project.**

Starting on the 12 May, they held four learning events throughout Adult Learners Week, held at the Dalston site where they make coffee and chocolate drink products. Each event was timed to coincide with a different shift pattern and so ensure that every member of staff had the opportunity to find out more about adult learning, skills for life and digital inclusion. As a show of support and encouragement, the

employer gave everyone time off to go and meet with the ULRs and participate in the sessions.

All of the ULRs were hard at work conducting Learning Surveys and helping to run numeracy and literacy assessments. As well as the ULRs, the sessions were supported by very experienced skills for life tutor, Amy Cosgrove, who has previously done lots of good work in Pirelli's union-led project.

The results of the Learning Surveys will identify the key areas people are interested in and inform the type of activity that is subsequently offered through the project, with IT, literacy and numeracy courses the front-runners so far. They also aim to have a dedicated 'learning room' available by the end of the year, fitted with four PCs and registered as a UK Online centre.

Catherine Graham, Unite ULR and part of the event organising team said: "We are all very excited about our new learning initiative here at Nestle, the ULRs have gained the confidence of the workforce to support them on their learning journey and none of this would have been possible without the support of Unite, unionlearn, providers and the employer in reaching our goal."

Kenny Morton, Training Manager said:

**“ At Nestle Dalston we are committed to developing the skills and knowledge of our employees. We are happy to work with and support the ULRs who are opening up new routes to learning for those at the site and see this partnership bringing benefits to all involved. ”**

# Employers urged to improve mental health... ...equipping your workplace First Aid Kit



**The spotlight was once again thrown on the importance of health and wellbeing at work.**

At the end of July, Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg and Care Services Minister Paul Burstow called upon employers to take three simple steps to improve the mental health of their staff, as well as calling upon everyone in society to play their part in reducing stigma.

Mental ill-health, such as depression and anxiety, costs British businesses over £1000 per employee every year or almost £30 billion across the UK economy. This is mostly in lost production through staff being off work or underperforming at work. The wider economic costs of mental illness in England have been estimated at £105.2 billion each year. This includes direct costs of services, lost productivity at work and reduced quality of life.

Right now, one worker in six has a mental health problem – almost 5 million of Britain's 29 million workers.

**To improve the health of employees and reduce unnecessary costs to businesses in lost productivity, managers and colleagues can all make a difference with these three simple steps:**

## MHFA Step One

Make this year the Time to Change: Sign your company up to the Time to Change campaign to end mental health discrimination.

By signing up, you make a public commitment from the top of the organisation to the bottom, send a strong message to employees, and get expert support from Time to Change in dealing with mental health issues at work.

## MHFA Step Two

Get some 'First Aid' training in mental health: most companies have an employee trained in first aid. But mental ill health is the most prevalent cause of illness among people of working age. Appointing someone as a mental health expert or training a number of people in awareness would make a huge difference. Training is available from a variety of organisations, including unionlearn with the Northern TUC.

As part of our very successful flagship Health and Wellbeing project in the region, we deliver bespoke workplace interventions and have a wealth of

experience around the mental health agenda, offering various support mechanisms and training to both unionised and non-unionised employers, their reps and staff.

In addition to the bitesize stressbuster sessions we can offer, unionlearn with the Northern TUC are also qualified to deliver professional Mental Health First Aid courses to workplaces across the North East and Cumbria.

## MHFA Step Three

**Call for help:** the Health for Work Adviceline in England can be accessed on **0800 0 77 88 44** or by visiting **[www.health4work.nhs.uk](http://www.health4work.nhs.uk)**

It is designed to support employers and employees in small and medium sized businesses, by providing free-to-use early and easy access to professional occupational health and well-being advice to help employees remain in or return to work after a period of ill health.

**For more information:** or to discuss how we can support your organisation and book training please contact Tom Ross via **Email: [tross@tuc.org.uk](mailto:tross@tuc.org.uk)** call him on **M: 07919174202 T: 0191 227 5555**

For the full Department of Health Press Release issued on this topic visit: **<http://mediacentre.dh.gov.uk/2012/07/24/employers-urged-to-take-3-steps-to-improve-mental-health>**

# Digital Champion Case Study...

## ...Mary Titler, Bridges to Learning Project Worker

**Mary Titler has definitely earned her Digital Champion cape thanks to her inspiring work throughout Gateshead in getting hard-to-reach Gateshead Council Domiciliary Care staff across the whole borough to engage with computer-based learning.**

Mary says the drive behind her interest in online learning is simply the need for it. She says, "A lot of the people I work with have been doubly disadvantaged by their age – missing out on a lot of the technological stuff as it wasn't around when they were at school and now have extremely limited access to learning opportunities due to the nature of their job and shift-patterns. Consequently, they are now nervous or frightened of what they see as something for the 'young ones' and feel as though they can't catch up." She feels that it is the role of Digital Champions to not only encourage and promote online learning, but to 'take the Gremlins away'. This is something Mary has become very adept at, and she knows it doesn't just start with them turning the computer on.

As a great believer in informal learning in general, Mary got many of her learners hooked by starting off with team and confidence-building courses in nearby outdoor activity centre Whickham Thorns,



Mary Titler (front - second from right) Kim McBeth (front - third from right) and other learners with their certificates

where they could participate in a range of activities from archery to blindfolded navigation. At the same time, Mary got the chance to talk to people in a relaxed setting and build their confidence further.

This proved an effective method as the first 12 week IT course was run in the summer of 2011 with 18 attendees - the vast majority of whom have gone on to do further courses. One learner, Senior Domiciliary Care Worker, Kim McBeth, has now gone on to complete her ECDL Level 2 - and Mary was invited to her 50th birthday celebrations proving that her learners think she's a champion, too.

Kim said, "The IT training I received though the Bridges to Learning project has supported me in my work role as Senior Care Worker in the Domiciliary Care Service. I feel more confident inputting service users' information and

allocations of staff work rotas via the computer. Getting this training has encouraged me to take up more courses and I am currently enrolled on a distance learning course."

Due to the success of the first course and obvious demand for computer skills, (continually one of the most frequently ticked boxes on the Learner Surveys distributed by the ULRs) Mary has been trying to set up a second. However, this has been difficult due to a lack of funding – until Terry Edwards, Unison Branch Secretary at Gateshead Council, offered the funding to run a Basic IT course for a further 10 staff in September. All those who complete this will receive an Entry Level certificate, with the hope that they progress to the ECDL. Management has also been very supportive in approving time-off to attend where necessary – so it looks like they need a few more capes at Gateshead Council!



## USDAW and POA working together to deliver for learners

**USDAW and the Prison Officers Association (POA) signed a joint Agreement on 16th July at the Holme House Know How Learning Centre, to cement their intention to work in partnership across the North East area of the country, to help members, friends and family from both unions, to access courses in POA Learning Centres.**

Initial discussions have already taken place with the two POA learning centres in Stockton (Holme House) and Durham (Frankland) to bring learners and courses together. Ultimately, the aim is for this partnership to include the other POA regional centres as well. It is hoped that USDAW members will not only take part in existing courses set up by the POA project workers but will also be able to use their facilities to run courses for

USDAW members and to then invite POA members to join in the courses that they are running, so there is a positive reciprocal relationship with more courses available to more learners.

Martyn Warwick, Lifelong Learning Project Worker enthused,

**“This is an exciting opportunity for both unions; by pooling our resources and working together we can increase the number of learners who are able to attend and take up learning opportunities, making the courses more viable and therefore likely to run.”**

Usdaw Mobile ULR Jayne Chapman who covers a multitude of sites, including Tesco stores across the region, said,

**“We want to see if we can encourage our members, their friends and family, to use the excellent existing facilities made available to us by the POA. Digital photography and guitar lessons will be the first courses on offer and we are**

**planning some free ICT courses in the very near future.”**

Alison Manion POA Learning Co-ordinator said:

“ We are already working successfully with USDAW in other regions and hope that our partnership can grow in the North East to enhance the delivery and variety of learning to members of unions, their family and friends. ”

Stewart Herkes, Regional Centre Manager, HMP Frankland said:

“ Opening up the POA Learning Centres to include USDAW members will give us the opportunity to increase and enhance the number and variety of courses delivered. I hope we can look forward to a successful partnership and to include other unions in the future. ”

# BITE SIZE BRIEFINGS

September  
to November  
2012

You can register  
direct via email to  
the designated  
contact or for general  
enquiries/to register  
by telephone please  
call 0191 232 3175

unionlearn  
with the Northern TUC



## Representing Carers at Work

Rather than detracting from a company's organisational focus, research has highlighted that adopting a flexible working approach for working carers can bring a wealth of benefits to your organisation.

Known benefits include: cost savings; staff retention; reduced recruitment & selection costs; increased levels of productivity; improved performance; reduced sickness absence; better customer focus and service.

### The aim is:

- To help employers develop a better understanding about carers in order to adopt innovative and creative ways of attracting, recruiting and retaining them as part of a more flexible and adaptable workforce
- To enable carers in the workforce to grow with "smart" jobs that stimulate learning and growth for both the individual and the organisation.

## Getting the most from your money online

This briefing session combines financial literacy and IT, two topics that play a huge part in most people's lives in the 21st century.

The briefing looks at a "typical" nuclear family and how they could use online tools to help manage their money.

### Topics covered include:

- Online benefit check
- Managing debts online
- Navigation around other useful sites e.g. moneysavingexpert, moneyadvice service, etc
- Switching energy suppliers
- Online budgeting tools

- Avoiding scams e.g phishing and other bogus websites

## Mental Health First Aid

Mental ill health affects one in four people in the UK at any given time. The Bitesize Briefing on Mental Health First Aid will hopefully help combat the stigma associated with mental health problems and encourage people to become Mental Health First Aiders. It will also increase awareness of the major areas of mental health and how they affect individuals in and out of the workplace.

## The Environmental Factor

With 21st century projections from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change stating that global surface temperature is set to rise between 1.5 to 1.9 °C (lowest emissions scenario) and 3.4 to 6.1 °C (highest emissions scenario) there is much work to be done on the issue of the environment.

This briefing aims to increase awareness around how employers and Union Reps can both contribute to mitigating the detrimental changes and adapting so that 'green' is firmly on the workplace agenda.

### Attendees will look at and discuss the following:

- Mitigation: reducing household, industrial and commercial and transport carbon emissions (energy resource management, shift to clean energy)
- Adaptation: tackling rising workplace temperatures, new health and safety challenges, increased flooding and fire risks.

## Mediation Skills and Employment Law

A briefing aimed at those new to mediation. The objectives of the talk are to give participants a broad understanding of mediation with specific focus on mediation in employment tribunals together with some practical examples.

- Introduction: what is mediation and why has it become more important? The different types of mediation and the pros and cons of mediation
- Judicial Mediation in the Employment Tribunal: what is judicial mediation? When is a case eligible? How do you apply for judicial mediation? The likely directions; What does the mediation involve on the day?

- How to get the most out of mediation: how to prepare; the golden rules and matters to consider
- Case studies and practical examples
- Question and Answer Session

## Campaigning for a Living Wage

To coincide with 'Living Wage Week', 4-10 November, this bite-size briefing will outline the background to the living wage campaign; provide some information about how it is calculated; identify where living wages are and are not in place; and discuss some of the arguments for and against. Attendees will have the opportunity to think about how they can support the campaign for a living wage in their area.

## Community Learning Champions

Learning Champions can make a difference - encouraging neighbours, family and friends to take up learning and job opportunities and act as role models, showing how learning new skills and access to career pathways can be made easier.

We can support you to engage in informal adult learning, so that others can learn from you. Signing up as a Learning Champion can prove to be a very effective career development path.

Participants will receive full training from the TUC, one day a week over 5 weeks.



# September - November 2012 Timetable

You can register direct via email to the designated contact or for general enquiries/to register by telephone please call 0191 232 3175



	Date	Venue	Time	Registration Contact
<b>Representing Carers at Work</b>	Thursday 6 September	Northern TUC Newcastle	12.30pm to 4.30pm	<b>Melanie Lowden</b> mlowden@tuc.org.uk
<b>Getting the most from your money online</b>	Wednesday 31 October	Northern TUC Newcastle	1.00pm to 4.00pm	<b>Anne Cairns</b> acairns@tuc.org.uk
<b>Mental Health First Aid</b>	Wednesday 26 September	Northern TUC Newcastle	1.00pm to 4.00pm	<b>Anne Cairns</b> acairns@tuc.org.uk
<b>Mental Health First Aid</b>	Wednesday 10 October	Community Union Offices Ground Floor, Suite 3, Cargo Fleet Offices Middlesbrough TS6 6XH	1.00pm to 4.00pm	<b>Anne Cairns</b> acairns@tuc.org.uk
<b>The Environmental Factor</b> <small>Places limited</small>	Thursday 13 September	HMRC Lillyhall West Cumbria House, Jubilee Rd, Workington, Cumbria CA14 4HB	1.00pm to 3.00pm	<b>Helen Parry</b> hparry@tuc.org.uk
<b>The Environmental Factor</b>	Wednesday 21 November	Northern TUC Newcastle	1.00pm to 3.00pm	<b>Helen Parry</b> hparry@tuc.org.uk
<b>Negotiating a Living Wage</b>	Thursday 8 November	Northern TUC Newcastle	1.00pm to 4.00pm	<b>Melanie Lowden</b> mlowden@tuc.org.uk
<b>Mediation Skills</b>	Thursday 25 October	Northern TUC Newcastle	1.00pm to 3.00pm	<b>Melanie Lowden</b> mlowden@tuc.org.uk
<b>Community Learning Champions</b>	Monday 24 September <small>Then consecutive Mondays; October 1/8/15/22</small>	Northern TUC Newcastle <small>5 day course over 5 weeks</small>	10.00am to 3.30pm	<b>Joe McGuigan</b> jmcguigan@tuc.org.uk



## Regional Apprentices helping to make Apprenticeships fit for the future

### **Unionlearn in the Northern Region hosted and facilitated a discussion group for local Apprentices to give feedback on their own personal experiences.**

The group was part of unionlearn's ongoing commitment to increase capacity, drive up the standard and continually improve the quality of

Apprenticeships. It gave Apprentices the opportunity to share their views directly with the Richard Review team, the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills and Education commissioned review into the future of Apprenticeships.

The group was comprised of more than ten current or past Apprentices, ranging from 17 to 40 years old and covering a diverse range of trades and disciplines in both the public and private sector;

from Mechanical Engineering and Construction to Health & Social Care, IT and Customer Services. Discussion was focussed on exploring the views of the apprentices first-hand and giving them a 'voice'.

All of the participating Apprentices' employers, including Gateshead Council, South Tyneside Homes, Caterpillar and Gentoo are exemplar in their programmes and most hold the

unionlearn Quality Award for their Apprenticeship provision.

**The review aims to:**

- **Take a medium-long term look at the future of apprenticeships in England**
- **Identify best practice and ensure that going forward, apprenticeships meet the needs of the changing economy**
- **Deliver the qualifications and skills which employers need, to world class benchmarks**
- **Ensure that government is maximising the impact of public investment in apprenticeships**

The review will be conducted over the summer and the findings/experiences and suggestions from this discussion

will contribute to the final report.

Doug Richard, leader of the review, is expected to report on his findings and recommendations in the autumn.

Lynne Dickenson, a final year Apprentice Electrician at Gentoo said:

“ I am really fortunate to have had such an amazing opportunity with my Apprenticeship and it has been of the highest standard throughout. Hopefully this review will help to ensure that every Apprentice in the future gets the experience I’ve had. I’m really looking forward to qualifying next year and then working towards fulfilling my long-term ambitions and progressing within my workplace. ”



Tom Wilson, Director of unionlearn commented:

“ The Richard Review is an important chance to reflect on and review the current state of apprenticeships. It is important that apprentices get a chance to contribute directly to the Review, and unionlearn are pleased to be able to help make this happen. They know firsthand what works and what doesn’t, what can be improved and what needs to be challenged. This input is vital to helping to make apprenticeships the gold standard in high quality, career development opportunities that lead to decent work. This input will also be important in helping to challenge bad practice where it exists. ”





**EAST COAST**

## Case Study: East Coast Trains make Newcastle Central the education station

**The Education Station is the joint union-led (Aslef, RMT and TSSA) partnership learning project based at Newcastle's Central Station.**

The union-led project only began less than a year ago but is already creating a huge buzz at East Coast and has snowballed since train driver Tony Paul got on-board as a Union Learning Rep (ULR) last July. With fantastic support from East Coast management, Tony has been responsible for setting up a Collective Learning Fund, sending out over 400 Learning Needs Surveys to staff, asking them what they'd like to learn and organising events, courses and providers to deliver on their requests.

**“ We are still a really young project but I can't believe just how much the learning agenda has taken off and been embraced by absolutely everyone at East Coast. It's been lots of hard work but an amazing success and myself and the other 2 ULRs are 'full of busy!' ”**

**Tony Paul: Lead ULR, Aslef**

The first ever event at the Station was the October Celebration of Learning one, and Tony's first 'gig' and it went off without a hitch, engaging hundreds of staff, friends and family. Having forged a subsequent partnership with local provider Sunderland College, The Education Station now offers literacy and numeracy courses on a rolling basis,

with £50 for every completer going into the Collective Learning Fund pot; they are now up to almost 100 skills for life learners with a 100% pass rate. The income generated is invested straight back into the project and has already paid for a Microsoft Powerpoint, Excel and Word course as well as some of their amazing Learning at Work Day activity.

**“ I have just completed and passed my third course, level 2 Maths. I've also completed and passed Level 2 English and Level 1 Maths. I have thoroughly enjoyed all 3 courses and they have had a massive impact on me especially the maths as it has never been my strong point. Even in my role as a train guard**

**it has made a difference, as working out discounts I can now do alone in my head rather than getting the machine to do all the work. I have already told a lot of colleagues that if the courses were to come back to definitely take part, who'd have thought I'd actually enjoy going back to school!**



**Ruth Herring:**

Train Guard at Newcastle Central Station

This May they ran sessions all day to maximise the opportunity for people to participate. Thanks to the exemplar partnership working and a real sense of 'team spirit' they were able to offer free sessions ranging from holiday Spanish and 'making the most of technology' to guitar lessons and First Aid. Even staff who aren't ULRs were willing to give their own time to ensure the day was a success, including a Station Guard who is also a St. John's Ambulance Instructor and 2 East Coast drivers who came in on their day off to oversee and support the most popular activity, the Driver Simulator.

The Driver Simulator allows budding train drivers to experience exactly what it's like to drive one of the East Coast trains, complete with a full-size control panel and real-time screen showing your location. everyone who has a go will have to see if they can make it from (virtual) King's Cross to Stevenage Station in 20 minutes or under – without over or under-shooting the platform.

All successful 'drivers' were awarded a prize. As well as being open to the 350+ East Coast staff and family members, two ex-Newcastle United players and the Lord Lieutenant Nigel Sherlock Esquire (the Queen's

representative in Tyne and Wear) have all had a go.

In response to the interest in photography and related courses the ULR team also ran an innovative competition where all staff were invited to bring in their best photos and display them in the event room. At the end of the day a selection of 13 pictures were chosen by a panel and have since been made into their first ever East Coast charity calendar which is going to be sold on board the trains, to staff and beyond. Every sale will raise £3.00 for the Railway Children's Charity and they are hoping to sell hundreds.



Tony was also nominated for East Coast Trains' national Employee of the Year 2012, in recognition of both his flawless train driving and his commitment to and success with the learning project. One of the many learning innovations he's been involved with is the introduction of 'Recruitment Days', where the ULRs meet and greet all staff starting/finishing work and ask them what they'd like to learn, etc, which has yielded great results for the project and

learners alike. The next event at the Station is a celebratory one in September where the latest cohort of 40 staff will be presented with their certificates in front of all project partners, including the Managing Director of East Coast Trains, Karen Boswell and ASLEF General Secretary, Mick Whelan.



**In less than a year Newcastle has truly become the "Education Station"! The trade union Learning Reps have been absolutely fantastic in inspiring colleagues (not only from East Coast, but also from other TOCs) to grasp the opportunity of achieving accreditation for Maths and English courses. Foundations for long standing relationships between City of Sunderland College, the Trade Unions and East Coast have been forged. The momentum which this project has created will only gather pace, and I can see the success of Newcastle becoming a beacon for others to follow.**

**For me, two things stand out: firstly, the team that has been established between the Trade Unions and East Coast, with one aim - to provide learning opportunities for colleagues in the workplace.**

**But to me, the most important successes are the learning opportunities which are being grasped by colleagues. They should feel very proud of what they have achieved.**



**Bob Howes:**

Driver Manager at East Coast Trains



## It's a case of 'Quality' and quantity for PCS learning projects!

**The union-led learning projects at 11 PCS union workplaces across the whole of the North East and Cumbria have performed an outstanding feat as they have all earned the prestigious unionlearn Quality Award.**

The awards were given for the quality of their IAG (information, advice and guidance) provision in the workplace. Both Kevin Rowan, Northern TUC Regional Secretary and Beth Farhat, unionlearn Union Development Co-ordinator have had the pleasure of spending the summer joining local MPs at some of the HMRC, DWP, IPS and RPA sites throughout the region to offer congratulations and celebrate their collective achievements.

The unionlearn Quality Award is a

kitemark awarded to organisations that are committed to working with trade unions and can demonstrate that unions and union learners are considered in the design, development and delivery of courses and programmes.

As part of the wider workplace learning project the Union Learning Reps (ULRs) at HMRC Quorum ably demonstrated they are providing expert level IAG to the hundreds of staff on site and committed to partnership working in this area and so passed the stringent assessment process with flying colours.

Information, Advice and Guidance is an umbrella term which covers a range of activities and interventions that help people to become better able to manage their personal and career development, including learning. It can range from helping a learner to find a Holiday Spanish course or guitar lessons to advising on options about how to access a specific career path or job-related

qualifications such as a Business Degree.

Jan Gifford, PCS Learning Organiser for the Northern region who supports all 11 of the awarded workplaces said:

“ This is a fantastic achievement for all the ULRs on site, for the region and PCS in general. This award demonstrates to the learners and management the commitment, enthusiasm and professionalism that their colleagues show in supporting them in accessing learning opportunities. I have no doubt that without this initiative far fewer members of staff would have embarked on their learning journey. This award is a fitting tribute for the ULRs. On behalf of your learners - thank you and congratulations! ”

Beth Farhat, unionlearn Union Development Coordinator said:

“ Good information, advice and guidance is central to the development of workplace learning. It is what ensures learners find the course/route best suited to them; start at the right level; and study at a time and place that's most convenient - getting all of that right leads to learners achieving and having the most positive experience possible. It's fantastic that workplaces like HMRC Quorum can offer this professional - and now kitemarked service free and in-house for the benefit of members and colleagues alike. ”

**Mary Glindon, HMRC Quorum & MP for North Tyneside said:** “As the local MP and as a member of PCS Union, I am really proud that the ULRs, at HMRC Quorum, have achieved the unionlearn Quality Award. It is confirmation that, because of their hard work, staff are getting the right support to help them learn and enhance their personal and career development. Winning this award is both inspiring and good for morale and clearly demonstrates the high level of commitment and professionalism within the Service.”

**Nick Brown, DWP Tyneview Park and HMRC Benton Park View & MP for Newcastle East said:** “Self-reliance, a respect for education and a hunger for learning and knowledge amongst

working people were founding themes of the early trade union movement and the Labour Party. To find this same energy and commitment channelled today through the Unionlearn programmes is really encouraging. These projects are tremendous value for everyone involved and I congratulate the regional TUC and the staff at Benton Park View and Tyneview Park for their latest achievement.”

**Tony Cunningham, HMRC Lillyhall and RPA Workington & MP for Workington said:** “It is always a pleasure to see unions, employers and employees in my constituency working together to help improve themselves and the region. All of the staff at HMRC Lillyhall and RPA Workington are in an enviable position of having experts in learning and careers guidance to hand – and more importantly, the opportunity to access them for ongoing advice and support. These projects are dynamic, productive and progressive ones in every aspect of their work, from learning to health and wellbeing and the environment. I'd like to extend my congratulations to everyone involved and look forward to hearing about more of the pioneering work being done here.”

**Grahame Morris, HMRC Peterlee & MP for Easington said:** “Events like these demonstrate the commitment of trade unions, individuals and employers to working in partnership to continuously drive up the standard of learning and working experiences for people in our region. Tailored advice and guidance,

coupled with the ongoing support offered by Union Learning Reps is clearly a conducive environment for learning at any and every level, evidenced by the achievements of this project and its participants. Helping to celebrate this significant achievement is a pleasure and can only be a positive for Easington as a whole.”

**James Wharton, HMRC Stockton & MP for Stockton South said:** “This award recognises the significant contribution to training and personal development unions can make in the workplace. It is exactly the role our trades unions should undertake, making a lasting and positive contribution to both the organisation and employees and I am delighted HMRC Stockton are leading the way. Union Learning Reps at this office have worked hard to secure this recognition and it is well deserved.”

**Sharon Hodgson, HMRC Waterview Park & MP for Washington and Sunderland West said:** “Learning programmes such as this are a great example of the beneficial impact that trade unions and their representatives have in the workplace – driving up standards and developing the skills and knowledge of the workforce for the benefit of the employer. Gaining the Quality Award for the expert-level service being offered to and taken up by the many staff and learners here at Waterview Park is testament to the hard work and dedication of the Union Learning Reps and wider learning partners to ensuring the project, learners and region can meet their clearly huge potential.”





**fresh\***  
Smoke Free North East

Make a healthy change  
and stub it out in

**Stoptober**

**Smokers in the North East are being urged to join the tens of thousands of people gearing up for the nation's biggest ever stop smoking drive in October.**

'Stoptober' is a new national campaign from the Department of Health and supported by Fresh, encouraging every smoker to make a quit attempt on October 1st.

Workplaces, friends, families and colleagues can make a real difference to support people to stop for the whole of October and beyond. Evidence shows people who manage to quit smoking for four weeks are five times more likely to stay quit.

Smoking costs businesses and organisations over £70 million a year in the North East and over £2bn nationally. But companies can improve their bottom line and have happier, healthier and less stressed workers by supporting quit schemes in the workplace. Having the support of an

employer and work colleagues can often make all the difference.

Ailsa Rutter, Director of Fresh, said: **"Tens of thousands of people in the North East have stopped smoking in the last few years and it shows quitting can be done, even if it takes a few goes."**

**"We are encouraging employers, employees and families across the North East to get behind Stoptober and give every smoker the confidence they need to stop for good."**

**"If you smoke there're countless reasons to stop. You will feel better in yourself, lower your chances of suffering a serious smoking related disease like heart disease or lung cancer, stand a better chance of being around longer for your loved ones and have more money in your pocket to boot."**

The NHS provides a range of free expert advice and support to help you help your staff quit smoking. Whether you're a small company or large organisation there's support available.

You could host a stop smoking session on-site; encourage staff to visit one in the community; or we could train your HR/occupational health team and/or health advocates/ULRs to give stop smoking advice as part of a wider company health initiative. There are also materials and tools for staff.

**The Benefits of quitting:**

- Reduce the risk of a serious smoking related disease from middle age
- You'll improve your general fitness
- You'll save hundreds if not thousands of pounds for nicer things
- Your skin and teeth will improve
- You won't smell of smoke
- If you smoke indoors, you'll protect loved ones from poisonous smoke

**Anyone wanting to quit smoking, or wishing to help their colleagues/staff to quit, can call the Smokefree helpline on 0800 169 0 169 or click on: <http://smokefree.nhs.uk>.**

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Solicitors

**Call 0808 129 3322**

**Kevin Rowan**

Northern TUC Regional Secretary  
krowan@tuc.org.uk

**Beth Farhat** Union Development

Co-ordinator  
bfarhat@tuc.org.uk

**Ian West**

Regional Education Officer  
iwest@tuc.org.uk

**Linda Hughes**

Senior Union Support Officer  
lhughes@tuc.org.uk

**Dave Storrie**

Senior Union Support Officer  
dstorrie@tuc.org.uk

**Ken Gyles**

Union Support Officer  
kgyles@tuc.org.uk

**Joe McGuigan**

Union Support Officer  
jmcguigan@tuc.org.uk

**Graeme Rushton**

Union Support Officer Cumbria  
grushton@tuc.org.uk

**Susanne Nichol**

Marketing and Communications  
snichol@tuc.org.uk

**Tom Ross**

Health and Wellbeing Project Worker  
tross@tuc.org.uk

**Alex Rodgers**

USO non-union workplaces  
arodgers@tuc.org.uk

**Melanie Lowden**

Secretary/Office Manager  
mlowden@tuc.org.uk

**Anne Cairns**

Unionlearn Project Assistant  
acairns@tuc.org.uk

# Celebration of Learning

**It's very nearly that time again, when we encourage trade unions, employers, reps, providers and everyone else, to do something to celebrate learning and the difference it makes.**

This year our month long celebration will be running from 15 October to 16 November.

There are a number of key themes for this year's Celebration of Learning and you should consider how your activities

will fit into some of these themes.

- **Community Learning (Informal Adult Learning)**
- **English and Maths**
- **Digital Inclusion**
- **Workplace and Community Learning**

To help support your celebrations and workplace activities there will be a small allocation of regional funding to bid into. Full details and application forms will be available imminently so check your emails and the website so you don't miss out!

## events For information on events or issues please contact the Northern TUC

### September 2012 Calendar

- 10** **Congress**  
10-12 September
- 18** **Executive**
- 23** **Sunderland Pride**
- 24** **Community Learning Champions Course**  
Continues: 01/8/15/22 October
- 27** **ELSF**  
Hancock Museum, Newcastle
- 28** **Health & Safety Forum on 'Noise'**  
Thistle Hotel, Newcastle

### October 2012 Calendar

- 15** **Go Online Week**  
Begins w/c 15 October
- 13** **Regional Council**  
Centre for Life, Newcastle

### November 2012 Calendar

- 20** **Executive**
- 24** **Reclaim the Night**  
Venue to be confirmed

### December 2012 Calendar

- 24** **Northern TUC Office Closed for Christmas**  
24 December to 2 January 2013

Northern TUC, 5th Floor, Commercial Union House  
39 Pilgrim Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 6QE

Telephone 0191 232 3175  
or email northern@tuc.org.uk



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