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1. Dates for Your Diary

July 2012	August 2012	September 2012	October 2012	November 2012	December 2012
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Coventry union learning representatives

Unionlearn equality & diversity forums

Southern and Eastern region union learning rep meetings

Find out more on these events below:

Event: *Coventry Union Learning Representatives*
Date and time: *Monday 9 July, 10.00am – 1.30pm*
Venue: *Workers' Educational Association, St Paul's Church Rooms, 346
Foleshill Road, Coventry*

Share and broaden your knowledge and skills, raise issues and get more information on a range of learning topics that concern you. With the continuing changing landscape of workplace learning, it is essential for all ULRs to keep themselves updated with the many initiatives and challenges in developing skills. The role of ULR is increasingly being recognised as an important lead to developing skills and supporting businesses to succeed in the global market place, ULRs being best placed to encourage participation and provide the support learners and members need. ULR forums provide an opportunity to build upon your skills and resources, whilst exploring new areas of best working practice.

Discussion topics: Skills for Life, Skills Utilisation, ULR Development, Apprenticeship Charter, Union learning Climbing Frame. Places may be limited and will be offered on a first come, first serve basis, so please complete and return the attendance form as soon as possible. Please share this information with other ULRs at your workplace as we do not have contact details for everyone, but all ULRs are welcome to come along.

Travel: there is no onsite parking, street parking is available on the surrounding streets including Webster Street and Holmsdale Road and charges apply. Use this form http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/events/event_form.cfm?event=3177 to register interest or request more information. Alternatively contact Lisa Stones on 07884 186083 or lstones@tuc.org.uk.

Event: *Stoke Union Learning Representatives Forum*
Date and time: *Friday 20 July, 10.00am – 1.00pm*
Venue: *Stoke –on-Trent College, Cauldron Campus, Stoke Road, Shelton,
Stoke-on-Trent*

Share and broaden your knowledge and skills, raise issues and get more information on a range of learning topics that concern you.

With the continuing changing landscape of workplace learning, it is essential for ALL ULRs to keep themselves updated with the many initiatives and challenges in developing skills.

The role of a ULR is increasingly being recognised as an important lead to developing skills and supporting businesses to succeed in the global market place, ULRs being best placed to encourage participation and provide the support learners and members need.

ULR forums provide an opportunity to build upon your skills and resources, whilst exploring new areas of best working practice. Discussion Topics:

Skills for Life
Skills Utilisation
ULR Development

Apprenticeship Charter
Training Session:
Union learning Climbing Frame

Places maybe limited and will be offered on a first come basis, so please complete and return the attendance form as soon as possible. Please share this invitation with other ULRs at your workplace as we do not have contact details for everyone, but all ULRs are welcome to come along.

Register interest or request more information

Please use this **email form** or contact Paul Humphreys on 07900 910328, or at **phumphreys@tuc.org.uk**.

<http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/events/detail.cfm?event=3175>

Event: *unionlearn 'the Equality and Diversity Forum'*
Date and time: *Tuesday 7 August 2012, 10.30am – 3.30pm*
Venue: *Transport House, Quayside, Merchants Quay, Salford*

Event: *unionlearn 'the Equality and Diversity Forum'*
Date and time: *Tuesday 2 October 2012, 10.30am – 3.30pm*
Venue: *Transport House, Quayside, Merchants Quay, Salford*

Date and time: *Tuesday 4 December 2012, 10.30am – 3.30pm*
Venue: *Transport House, Quayside, Merchants Quay, Salford*

The Equality & Diversity Forum on behalf of North West unionlearn will provide strategic support for Equality Representatives, Union Learning Representatives, any other union representative and their affiliate unions to work in partnership with organisations and other partners/stakeholders to exchange good practice and experience and give advice and support on the Equality & Diversity Agenda.

To register please email **vchander@tuc.org.uk** with the following details:

- Full name
- Union
- Organisation
- Email address
- Special/other dietary requirements

Event: *union learning rep network meetings, Southern and Eastern Region*

Date: *Wednesday 5 September*

Venue: *Congress House, London*

Date: *Tuesday 18 September*

Venue: *Cambridge Central Library, Cambridge*

Date: *Wednesday 19 September*

Venue: **Brighthelm Centre, Brighton**

Network meetings are an opportunity for Union Learning Reps, other trade union reps and trade union officers to meet up, exchange ideas and information, and find out the latest news in workplace learning. There will be the opportunity to network with reps from different unions and speak to members of our team.

To register your interest or for more information please contact Johanna Garcia: email jgarcia@tuc.org.uk or phone us on 0207 467 1251.

<http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/ulr/learn-4589-f0.cfm>

Should you wish to attend any of the above events, please go via your branch for authorisation. You will also need to agree with your branch should you wish to claim any out of pocket expenses for these events as unfortunately expenses cannot be met by UCU nationally.

2. Meet the new Training Officer

I have taken over as UCU training officer while Abbie Jenkinson is on maternity leave and thought I would take this opportunity to introduce myself to all UCU Union Learning Reps.

I joined a trade union two days after starting work back in the early 1980s and very quickly became an active member of what was then COHSE (Confederation of Health Service Employees). I worked in mental health and substance misuses, but also worked as a COHSE Lay Tutor delivering training for Reps in conjunction with TUC tutors.

At various points I undertook almost every post in the branch, which was less about my skill, and more about the lack of people coming forward as reps. It was during this time, while trying to build the branch that I began to understand the true potential of lifelong learning not only for its own sake – but also as a means to empower the membership and as a tool for recruitment.

After my son went off to university, it finally dawned on me that over the years I had gained the skills and knowledge I needed to do what I loved, and go to work full time for a Trade Union. Consequently I left the NHS and got my first trade union position on a 6 month contract working for unionlearn (the learning arm of the TUC) as a project worker.

I also trained as a TUC tutor and worked, for a short time out of a college delivering the TUC's core programme, focusing on the role of the Union Learning Rep.

I was then lucky enough to get a job with RMT's (Rail Maritime and Transport Union) learning project (formerly Rail Union Learn), covering the South of England. I worked with branches to develop learning reps, deliver training and ensuring the role of the ULR was embedded into RMT structures.

Unfortunately that post was on yet another fixed term contract (a problem not specific to just the education sector). I soon realised that I would need a permanent trade union post if I was to develop as a trade union professional.

I eventually plucked up the courage to apply for an organising role with UCU – I say plucked up the courage because I assumed (wrongly as it turned out) that without a degree I would be at a disadvantage working within a well respected education union. I soon discovered that my assumptions were incorrect, as it turned out my years of experience as an activist coupled with my experiences in other trade unions had served me well.

I am finding my current role as UCU Training Officer one of the most rewarding, challenging and exciting roles I have ever undertaken. Every day is different, my colleagues are amazing and I take great pleasure from knowing that the UCU Education programme is helping to build strong, robust branches. I believe strongly in the role of the ULR and would encourage all branches to ensure the ULR role becomes integral to the work of the branch.

Karen Brooks – UCU Training Officer (maternity cover).

3. UCU Women – Moving Further Reaching Higher Project

The *UCU Women – Moving Further Reaching Higher* Project in the North West of England is a two-year project with the aims of supporting and developing the personal and professional development of women in particular; supporting and developing the UCU Learning and Equality Representatives; and engaging with employers and providers on the learning agenda.

The project emerged from the Regional Organising Plan, which prioritises the work in the Region and which identified a concern that there were too few learning reps along with the need to establish a women's network in the region.

Janet Newsham Project Worker for Moving Further Reaching Higher explains 'We are facing many challenges in our branches and the North West is no exception. However, this project will enable us to proactively engage with our members and our employers.

Through the project we will be encouraging branches to elect UCU learning and equality reps, conducting learning needs surveys and where appropriate equality audits, negotiating learning agreements with employers, organising events in the North West including training to support our reps and members sharing best practice, information and ideas. The project will culminate with a number of dissemination events, so we can share our findings around the wider ULR networks in UCU.

We are inviting branches to participate in the project and to use the opportunity to support their members by establishing or improving the personal and professional development opportunities in their institutions/workplaces, including women's development, and to engage in a positive agenda with their employer.

The real measure of the project will be that it changes member's lives! – in that it is based on their concerns and issues, equips them to challenge and change their circumstances and inspires them to direct and own the learning agenda, based on equality and recognising diversity'.

The project is managed by Lynn Collins the FE Regional Official in the North West and Janet Newsham has been appointed as the project worker.

A steering group has been established, which will oversee the project involving the following people:

Helen Carr – UCU Head of Equality

Maire Daley – (Liverpool Community College) National Women’s Committee

Cheryl Felstead – (Manchester College) ULR and FE Organising & Training Officer

Alison Hollinrake – (UCLAN) ULR

Patricia Hornby-Atkinson (Edge Hill University) NW Regional Equality Officer

Dominique Lauterburg – (Manchester Met. Uni) HE Organising & Training Officer

Pauline Murphy – ULF Support Development Worker

Gareth Storey – UCU Head of Finance

Dan Taubman – Senior UCU National Officer

Abbie Jenkinson/Karen Brooks – UCU National Training Officer

It is the intention that after the project finishes in two years’ time its legacy is a vibrant and active learning agenda across our institutions/workplaces.

Janet Newsham –Project Worker, UCU Women – Moving Further Reaching Higher

4. Three union learning reps review their UCU training

I found the 3-day ULR training course in London to be invaluable. After all, if the Higher Education Sector – in my case – is truly going to be full of Universities that can be called “learning organisations” then we need to robustly train our staff as well as our students. By becoming the ULR for the University it gives us the opportunity to put staff learning at the centre of the unions mission to up-skill and train the very people at the heart of the union. Given too that there are so many different staff challenges today, including staff roles changing due to re-structuring, staff being down-graded, dismissed or even feeling so aggrieved that they enter into tribunal cases, it is relatively easy to find learning opportunities for staff that link to these and other challenges. I am very positive about the future learning of staff at the University. One of the key skills I learned on the course was to conduct a survey of staff learning needs. Having got Branch committee approval for this, there is much to be done and much to look forward to. On behalf of the University , I am very satisfied with our direction of travel and I offer a BIG thank you to UCU for putting on such a great course, a course which also allowed me to carry out some very interesting networking with my fellow learning organizations in the FE and prison sectors. I would strongly urge you to get involved with this recognized trade union role of the Learning Representative.

Going on the ULR course gave me knowledge, confidence and strategies to go about gathering and sharing knowledge, not just surrounding learning, to take back to my branch, which will, in turn help us to become stronger and better informed.

Thank you all once again; it was a very well spent 3 days.

I was a participant on the UCU Union Learning Representative course in May/June 2012. One of the things that most impressed me about the course was the sense of solidarity and commonality of purpose among the course members. I had a distinct feeling from attending this course that everything is actually up for change! Like my fellow participants I had a real sense that we had been on a little bit of a pilgrimage and it's a credit to our UCU tutors that we all came out of this course feeling we could do so much good in our respective unis and colleges. Indeed it would not be over-stating the point to say we felt pretty inspired! Based on the knowledge we now have on the role and rights of learning reps we certainly feel much better equipped to support our comrades in their desire to enrich their own educational experience and even up-skill to a tempo or epistemological track which genuinely suits them! We may even feel more confident in challenging the antediluvian attitudes of some managers who have for so long put staff educational needs to the back of the policy queue. It's also likely that we will all make a bit of an impact in helping thrash out decent and equitable learning agreements in our respective places of work. It was a fab experience and I'd encourage any of my colleagues to be a learning rep or at least insist that their branch puts someone forward for this challenging role. After all isn't personal development supposed to be at the heart of what it says on our own educational tin!

5. UCU learning rep training – next dates

The next dates for UCU Learning Rep training are:

- 17–18 October & 7 December 2013
- 13–14 May 2013 & 10 June 2013

For more information including how to register go to:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3212>.

6. The annual unionlearn conference: Skilling a Future that Works, Monday 25 June 2012

The annual unionlearn conference took place at Congress House on the morning of Monday 25 June. In a change of tempo from last year, which was a buoyant celebration of continued union learning funding, this year's conference was a short and sharp delivery of some key messages to support union learning reps.

Union learning reps were thanked for their work by TUC and unionlearn leaders Frances O'Grady, Brendan Barber and Tom Wilson, It was noted that the OECD had praised the

unionlearn model as an example of the promotion of learning to be used across the developed world, an opportunity which will no doubt be facilitated by the launch of a new unionlearn website next month.

Martin Lewis, the broadcaster and financial expert explained how delegates could support part-time students to make FE loans work to their advantage by pointing out that it is what is earned on completion of the course, not the course fees, which is critical to students' financial best interests here.

A range of examples of successful union learning were explored, including apprenticeships, community learning and the work of the Professional Footballers' Association, both a trade union and a professional association.

Learning reps were recognised with a range of Quality Awards before the conference broke up into workshops and a brief but energetic morning drew to a close.

7. TUC Education 'eNotes'

The TUC has recently launched a new initiative to support and complement the work of union learning reps, a new online educational resource called 'eNotes'. The resource provides short interactive modules on a range of subjects. The material is interactive, easily accessible and can be viewed multiple times. Modules on equality law, paternity leave, sick notes and European Works Councils are currently available, with helping vulnerable workers, green workplaces, bargaining for skills, the Climbing Frame, supporting learners, organising and facility time coming up. To log-on and get started go to: www.tuclearning.net.

8. TUC Education Update and Climbing Frame Newsletters

Keep up to date on all the latest from TUC Education here:

<http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/education/index.cfm?mins=88>

Keep up to date on all the latest on the unionlearn Climbing Frame here:

<http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/advice/index.cfm?mins=156&minors=156>

If you have any comments or queries regarding UCU Learning Rep News or would like to contribute material for the next edition, please contact: Diana Hendry, Public Policy Administrator at dhendry@ucu.org.uk. The next newsletter will be issued in September/October.