

IN THIS ISSUE

P3 NEW DEPARTMENT TAKES SHAPE

P6 THE SKILLS NETWORK

P5 SUPPORTING EE REPS

P8 DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY

P10 MENTAL HEALTH

P13 DIVERSITY EVENTS

P14 APPRENTICESHPS

P19 ULF IMPACT STUDY

P20 NORTH EAST LEARNING EVENT

COMMUNIQUE



THE EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE

AUTUMN 2019

Learning For Life

*If you could learn one thing in the world, what would it be?
I know what I'd say if you asked me*

*I'd like to learn... why life is full of problems
We often feel so powerless with no options
We wanna make a difference but not the potential
But if we wanna do it, we need a little bit of potential*

*Knowledge gives you options
A lesson is the first step to solving problems
Knowledge is a powerful tool to overcome oppression
Knowledge is the key to a world that blossoms*

*But of course as soon as you have knowledge
Most of us think about going to school or college
Rules, boredom and pressure
It's because we were never really wanted*

*It's no wonder people don't wanna learn
Plus they've got to work hard to earn
Even if you wanna learn, you can't afford to
And there doesn't seem to be anyone to support you*

CONTACT US

CWU

150 The Broadway
Wimbledon
SW19 1RX
T: 020 8971 7200
E: info@cwu.org
www.cwu.org
@CWUnews

General Secretary

Dave Ward

[f](#) Dave Ward CWU

[t](#) @DaveWardGS

Editor

Paul Dovey
E: pdovey@cwu.org

Contributors

ULRs & LPWs of the CWU

CWU Equality, Education & Development Section

150 The Broadway
Wimbledon
SW19 1RX
T: 020 8971 7340
E: learn@cwu.org
www.cwueducation.org
@cwueducation



The Time Has Come!

The General Election presents us with a clear choice; more of the same under the Tories or a radical change in direction under Labour. For CWU members this is particularly clear when it comes to our industries. Labour is pledging to renationalise Royal Mail, end Post Office closures and set up a new Post Bank and, as members will have seen in the past few days, to nationalise the broadband relevant parts of BT to rollout a full fibre-network and deliver universal free full fibre broadband while safeguarding our members' jobs.

It is also stark when it comes to education. In contrast to Tory tuition fees, the marketisation of education and the privatisation of knowledge, Labour offers us the National Education Service; education

for all, from the cradle to the grave. The CWU have had the privilege to be involved in the consultations on this and, for anyone who understands the transformative power of education, they are truly inspirational.

For too long working class people have been deprived of education. We have almost been encouraged to wear our lost opportunities as a badge of honour and judge those who do manage to get an academic education as somehow getting above themselves, when what we really need to be doing is opening these opportunities up to us all.

The abilities of working class people have always been talked down - mostly by those who benefit from keeping us down. In



fact we have a wealth of skills, honed in the cold hard face of the workplace and communities stripped bare by Tory austerity.

The National Education Service will give us the tools to recognise and develop the skills we have and the chance to gain new ones. It will identify the potential in every member of society and help them to realise it. It is the mark of a society that really wants to move forward in the world. It is an idea whose time has come. Bit it needs Labour to be in power to come to fruition. Every ULR, every rep, every member needs to be fighting for it with every fibre of their being.

Dave Ward

New Challenges, New Opportunities

I am delighted to welcome you to the first issue of *Communique* to be produced since I became Head of Equality, Education & Development.

It is an exciting time with new challenges. My immediate priority has been to fully merge my team at Head Office so we can start to work together and develop the strategies we need to deliver the objectives of redesign.

We are looking at innovative

new ways to work with the Regions and Leads, utilising Residential, Regional and Online learning to their full potential. These ideas will be underpinned by the award winning work of our ULRs.

The CWU ULF projects have been to deliver a 10 to 1 return to the British economy. While these figures help to make the argument to the Exchequer, it is when you see what it means to the people who see their lives transformed that you see



the real power of education!

The Labour Party's proposed National Education Service does just that; building on the successes of the Union Learning Fund. The potential for this to transform the lives of working people is truly inspirational. We all need to get behind this with everything we've got. We need a Labour Government.

Kate Hudson



New Department Takes Shape

The Equality, Education & Training Department are now firmly established in our new joint offices on the third floor of Head Office. This is where the old Equality Department was based - and conveniently next to the U-learn learning centre, making for a much more practical layout.

Now we are all based together it will make it easier to work together, building on the synergies of the two strands. If you are in Head Office, make sure you come to see us. We have got a big agenda to work through and we are keen to get on with it.

Contact Us

Kate Hudson, Head of Equality Education & Development
khudson@cwu.org / 020 8971 7238

Lee Wakeman, Policy Asst
lwakeman@cwu.org / 020 8971 7388

Paul Dovey, ULF Project Mgr
pdovey@cwu.org / 0208 971 7212

Michelle Simpson, Snr Secretary
msimpson@cwu.org / 0208 971 7340

Simon Massen, Project Worker (Left Click)
smassen@cwu.org / 07904 409661

Fevzi Hussein, Policy Asst
fhussein@cwu.org / 020 8971 7388

Dionne Gittens-Noel, Personal Asst
dnoel@cwu.org / 0208 971 7356

Julie Rodrigues, Snr Secretary
jrodrigues@cwu.org / 0208 971 7309

Phil Sutton, Project Worker (ULR Support)
psutton@cwu.org / 07711 368160

CWU Harassment Helpline 0800 090 2303

NEWS IN BRIEF

The National Education Service has been included in The Labour Party manifesto. This will provide cradle-to-grave education for all. Every adult will be entitled to 6 years of free study, including FE and HE courses up to Level 6. They will also scrap tuition fees and reinstate maintenance grants. This is a potential game changer for lifelong learning – but will only happen if we put in the work to ensure a Labour Government.

The Skills Network: Some areas may be having difficulty with course funding through the Skills Network. This is due to the government's devolution of education funding and is affecting all national providers. These problems are being worked through and should now be mostly resolved.

Transgender Day of Remembrance will be observed at our ULR Networking Event on 20th November in memory of those lives lost to anti-transgender violence.

Bread & Roses Song & Spoken Word Award: The deadline for the B&R Song and Spoken Word Award is 14th December. Send your entries to entriesculturematters@gmail.com

Spread The Word

New spoken word video to promote learning OUT NOW!

Some of you will know our friend and comrade Potent Whisper (aka Georgie), who has run a number of spoken word workshops for us. Recently we have been working together on a new project; a specially commissioned spoken word piece to promote learning across the CWU.

Potent Whisper has always blended his art with activism. He was born to a working class family in South London but got the opportunity to study at The BRIT School, where he started rapping. His early releases, **Between The Lines** and **The Boom Bap Bounce** were featured on BBC Introducing. The video for the anti-war single **Just Wondering** starred Joe

***Potent Whisper
has always
blended art
with activism***

Glenton, the first British soldier to refuse to serve in Afghanistan on moral and legal grounds. Tom Robinson played the song on his BBC 6 Music show, calling it "*life affirming*." The video for his single **Now** was filmed at the Occupy the Tory Conference demonstration in Manchester. His EP **New Radical**, featuring MOBO award-winning vocalist Fola, has been described as, "*A masterclass in political Grime.*"

He performed at the Tate Modern's Hyperlink Festival and delivered performances in Senegal, France and Sudan. His first play **Invisible** toured the UK in 2014. His spoken word piece **Trident on Trial** was released in collaboration with CND and his **Rhyming Guide to NHS Privatisation**, was released by Momentum and quickly went viral.

In 2015, he founded the community group Our Brixton which supports local housing campaigns, fusing art with direct action. The video for his single **Brixton First** was filmed at the Reclaim Brixton demonstration and featured on BBC 1's Inside Out programme, quickly becoming an anti-gentrification anthem.

He organised numerous actions in the Save Brixton Arches campaign and co-organised the Youth March for Housing. The march was the product of a series of free arts workshops delivered on Cressingham Gardens Estate. These workshops also resulted in the single **Make A Change**, a song about housing. This led to an interview with Inside Housing magazine, which he later went on to translate into rhyme as **Estate of War**. In response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy, he wrote **The Rhyming Guide To Grenfell Britain**, which was also the name he gave to a collection of his poems, released in 2018.

The CWU have been working with Potent Whisper since 2017, delivering rhyming workshops on workers' rights to young people entering the world of work. Last year he delivered a workshop at our National ULR Networking Event. It was here that we started discussing the possibility of developing a bespoke video to promote union learning. *"It's interesting to see how spoken word engages people,"* said Paul Dovey,

CWU ULF Project Manager, *"You see people open up. You see them become receptive to new ideas and opportunities. Often it encourages people to participate themselves – which of course is what we want for learning."*

"We have lots of posters and flyers to promote learning but we wanted something different. Something not tied to the page but something



Rhyme For Rights Workshop

that jumps out and engages people. Something they can share. This is exactly what Georgie has given us and I encourage everyone to share the hell out of it."

For more about
Potent Whisper visit
www.potentwhisper.com

Watch it now!



Watch on YouTube

<https://youtu.be/u4mh4I5Nv2w>

CWU Partnership With Skills Network

*Emma Garner, CWU Preston Brook,
Bury & Retail Branch, takes not one
but two VQs with The Skills Network*

Assisting members in their learning is a proud trade union tradition and rightly so. Education can give access to transferrable skills, open up opportunities and allow people to pursue an interest that gives them satisfaction and pleasure. Education can help our members to realise their own worth and potential. In fact, learning something new is advocated as one the NHS's five steps to wellbeing.

Since the CWU joined forces with the Skills Network I have completed Level 2 qualifications in both Mental Health Awareness and Counselling Skills. Not only have I enjoyed learning something new, the sense of engagement and achievement has helped with my own depression and anxiety. Receiving learning materials through the post and being able to complete assessments online has meant that I've

been able to gain qualifications that I simply wouldn't have been able to achieve through classroom learning, as I couldn't have managed that around my job and other responsibilities. What I have learned has been invaluable to me in my role as a union rep and a mental health advocate. It has also encouraged me to go on to become a Mental Health First Aider.

I'll tell anybody who will listen to me to take a look at the fully funded courses available to members. I've put together a few laminated handouts to show to people at engagement days and the interest from existing members and potential new recruits has been amazing. In terms of recruitment and retention of members, particularly in none core areas, we have to create value. Most people cannot fail to see the value of education and the opportunities that it can provide. That is why, in my opinion, we need to sing our own praises and make sure that as many of our members and potential members as possible know about the support that we, as a union, can provide.

P.S Did I mention that my course also meant that I was eligible for an NUS student discount card? #justsaying!



BALTUS students celebrate their success

Know Your Rights!

Urgent training for EE Reps helps to support members threatened with redundancy

When EE announced that it was proposing to restructure its operations, leaving North Tyneside and scaling back in Doxford, it put 80 jobs under threat and left loyal employees shocked and disappointed. Tyne & Wear Clerical branch and the CWU nationally took immediate steps to support their comrades but as the CWU had only recently secured bargaining rights with EE, many of the workplace reps found themselves in urgent need of training on handling large-scale redundancies. All employees were entitled to individual consultation meetings with management

– and CWU members were entitled to take a CWU rep in with them. However, requests that EE deferred the individual interviews until the requested explanation of the rationale for job losses were refused, making the need for training all the more urgent.

The Equality, Education & Development Dept were able to develop and deliver the course within the space of a couple of weeks. Due to the pressure of time the course was informal and unaccredited – but it delivered all the content our reps urgently needed and gave them the

opportunity to gain experience and support from senior reps.

The course covered, key documents, such as the EE Redundancy Process and how it related to ACAS Code of Practice on Redundancy and the Equality Act 2010. It also provided problem solving tools, checklists and role plays on the support that reps were going to need to provide members going into their individual consultation meetings with management.

“Many thanks to the Equalities, Education & Development Dept for turning this round so quickly,” said Nigel Cotgrove, CWU National Officer, “It was vital that our EE reps got the training to support our members in this difficult situation. Feedback from the course has been very positive.”



EE North Tyneside

Snapping Success

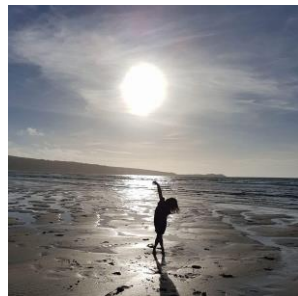
With the rise of smartphones we nearly all now have a camera in our pocket at all times. Little wonder that we are seeing an increase in interest in digital photography, as Gavin Hardy explains.

Photography is becoming more popular as a pastime for many people of any ages! Therefore, in 2018, our Branch, Plymouth and East Cornwall Amal decided to stage a local photography competition. This is on the back of the national photography competition which has been running for five years, which former Plymouth Mail Centre employee Paul Fine won on two separate occasions.

The competition proved to be a massive success with 19 individuals entering with a very high quality. The competition was judged by a local professional photographer who commented on the fantastic standard of entries. He said, *"The standard is absolutely first class. It's been a total joy to judge."*

The title for the competition was Summer Days. The eventual winner was Alec Dybov who works within the Customer Experience team in Plymouth, with his winning photo titled Sparks Flying High. Alec has been inspired by photography for a number of years and told me, *"I dabbled in photography for many years and I'm so pleased with this achievement, It's*

amazing!" Alec went on to say, *"It's really giving the confidence to carry on taking picture of interesting things and perhaps enter more competitions."*



Mel Stewart

The other five top finalist with Alec were; Mel Stewart from Plymouth Mdec, with her photo Dancing in the Twilight. Mel said, *"This was taken after a beautiful sunny day at Hayle and my daughter was dancing ballet as the sun began to set,*



Alec's winning entry Sparks Flying High

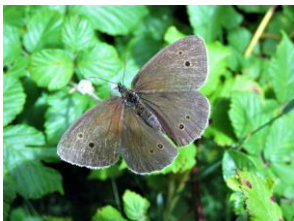
completely unaware that anyone was watching. She's just lost in the moment."

Jeni Mattock from Plymouth Customer Experience described her photo, Lazy Summer Colours, "My photo was taken in July when I was on annual leave we had two very hot weeks and the picture was taken on Porth Minster beach St Ives Cornwall I just liked the multi coloured brightness against the turquoise sea and blue sky."



Jeni Mattock

Mike Woodley from Plymouth Mail Centre Processing, explained his photo, Butterfly. Mike said, "I take many pictures of butterflies, be it the speckled wood or peacock or something else. Stealth is



Mike Woodley

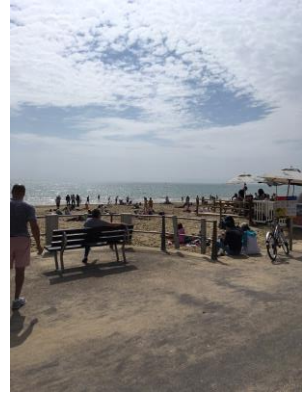
the secret and a micro zoom. Butterflies do not sit still. A cannon power shot was used."

Mike Freshwater, from Plymouth Mail Centre Processing described his photo, Morning Glory Mike said "The camera I used was a Canon Eos 5d, the lens I used was 70-300 mm lens. The photo was taken on the morning of 26th of May 2018 at 8.05am. It was taken from my bedroom window, I woke up saw it and grabbed my camera which is always nearby. If I was to put a name to the photo I would simply call it, Morning Glory."



Mike Freshwater

Mike Lavis from Plymouth Mail Centre Distribution, explained his photo Summer Sun. Mike loved taking photos of his adventures away and said, "I feel so lucky to live in such a great part of the country."



Mike Lavis

This overall experience has fuelled my ambition to promote another photography competition within our Branch next year. Moreover, the amount of entries and the quality has really surpassed all expectations and I hope this will be matched by the same enthusiasm next year.



Winner Alec Dybov with Customer Service Site Manager Lisa Luveniyali

Mental Health

It is now widely agreed that mental health is a key workplace issue. But, as Paul Dovey reports, the debates around mental health are not ideologically neutral.

As a result of Motions 64 and 69, carried at General Conference 2018, the CWU has been in the process of developing a comprehensive Mental Health Strategy, including a joined up training programme. In addition to the Mental Health Awareness course we will now be able to offer Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), as a cohort of 12 CWU MHFA instructors is currently being trained. This is important because the debate around mental health does not develop independently of a political context.

Before going any further, I should disclose that I myself have experienced bouts of poor mental health throughout my life. I consider this to be normal. 'Normal' is not a neutral word. It is a powerful word, which can be used to

stigmatise, exclude, control and coerce – so it is not a word to be treated lightly.

Other terms such as psychiatrist and psychologist are often used interchangeably, when they refer to different disciplines. Psychiatrists are medical doctors who can prescribe courses of medication. Psychologists treat emotional and mental suffering with behavioural interventions. Both professions work together and both require 5-6 years of training before they can practice – but they do not always agree.

For example, the 5th Edition of American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, is considered the key reference book for the profession. In the past 100 years the number of mental

health disorders recognised has increased from 22 to 300. It is argued that more detailed definitions enable more individually tailored treatment. Certainly, outcomes for people with mental health issues have improved over the last century. However, critics argue this has been accompanied by an increasing tendency to medicalise normal patterns of behaviour. For example Homosexuality was listed as a "sociopathic personality disorder" until campaigners managed to get it removed. Elsewhere the cut-off before grief is diagnosed as a depressive disorder has been reduced from two months to two weeks. Dr Allen Frances, who co-wrote the previous edition of the manual, calls this, "The legalised conversion of a sacred ritual, and an inherent part of being a mammal, into a mental disorder."

Mental health professionals argue that where mental illnesses occur across cultures, it suggests that they have a medical basis, rather than being influenced by society. However, an Open Letter to the Global Ministerial Mental Health Summit in 2018 accused Western Countries of exporting failed and ethnocentric definitions and treatments across the world.

None of this diminishes the



CWU Mental Health First Aid Instructors receiving their training

reality of the experience of the 1-in-4 of us who will suffer from mental ill-health throughout our lives; nor should it cause us to waver from our commitment to provide comradely, non-judgmental support to those of us going through such problems, but it might cause us to consider whether we are looking at the problem from the right angle.

Karl Marx used the concept of alienation to explain the economic and social estrangement of workers under capitalism. Alienation sees us disconnected from what we produce, from each other, from our family and society, as capitalism turns us into mere units of production, cogs in the machine. In terms of scientific

method, Marx's theory of alienation was based on his observations that under capitalist production, workers inevitably lose control of their lives and work. To test this hypothesis we would look for evidence of this happening. An otherwise unexplained 'plague of mental illness' could be seen to be just that.

It also worth noting that research continuously shows mental health issues to be disproportionately prevalent alongside other existing areas of disadvantage. This suggests that their mental ill health can be a result of disadvantage rather than a cause of it. Similarly, where changes in brain chemistry do occur, mental health charity MIND acknowledge

that we do not know whether these are the cause or result of the depression.

There is however, a growing body of evidence for a strong socio-economic gradient in mental health; meaning that social inequalities are strongly linked to mental health inequalities. These can be exacerbated by a lack of access to NHS services when mental health problems manifest. As the Mental Health Foundation points out, all of these are socially-produced, systemic differences that are avoidable – and therefore unjust.

Meanwhile employers are now publicly proclaiming their, *"commitment to improving the lives of employees with mental health*

MENTAL HEALTH

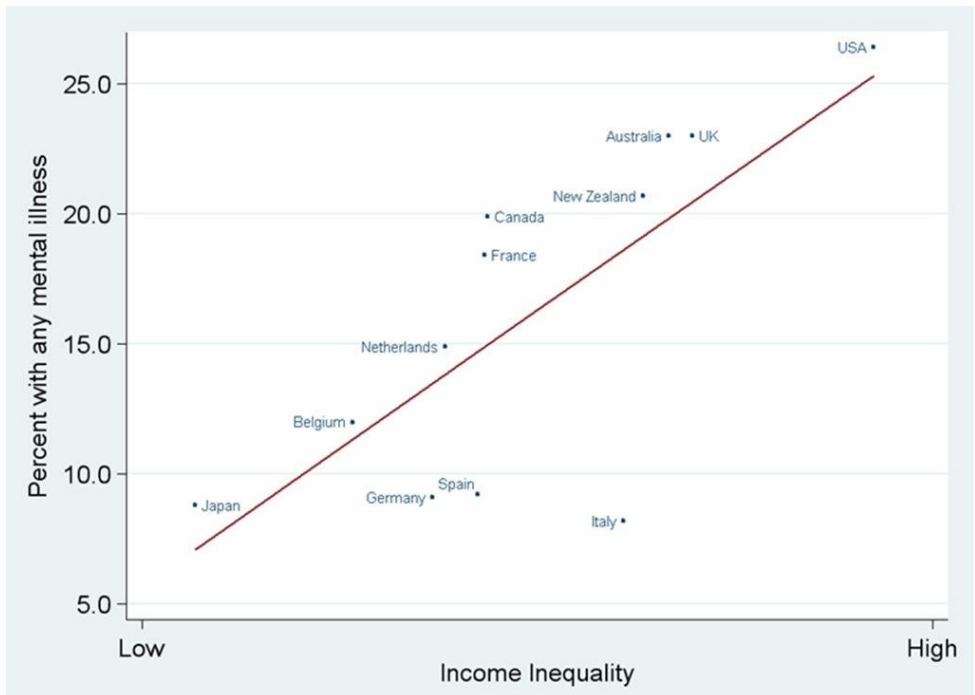
conditions,” but they seem to struggle to recognise their own culpability in the mental health of their staff. Business In The Community’s Mental Health At Work Report, found that 60% of employees reported experiencing mental health issues because of work. 31% have been formally diagnosed with a mental health issue but only 13% felt able to disclose a mental health issue to their line manager – and of these 15% were subject to discipline, demotion or dismissal! So despite 61% of senior managers thinking their organisation supported

employees with mental health problems, there is a clear disconnect with the experiences of the workers.

It is clear that mental health issues are now a recognised feature of the workplace. If we consider identifying the problem as being a step towards solving it then this must be a good thing. But we should also be aware that the field of mental health is rapidly developing and many areas are contested. We should be aware that the diverse range of conditions is, if anything, surpassed by the diverse experiences of

the people coping with them. Many mental health users and survivors groups have taken up the time-honoured battle cry, “*nothing about us without us*” and are calling for their voices to be at the heart of policy making around mental health.

While some of the medical evidence remains contested, there is clear evidence that the work environment and wider social inequality play a significant part in mental ill health. That is something we are well-placed to campaign around.



Learning From Each Other

Sandra Absalom explains how a diversity event at Swindon Mail Centre got everyone talking and sharing – and raised money for a good cause.



Plenty to go round

I am on the diversity committee for Swindon Mail Centre and I was asked to help organise the event by the Mail Centre Manager Dan Williams, Phil Gee and HR Cheryl Shaw.

I thought it would be a good idea to incorporate learning into the week, as I run the Isambard Learning Centre in the Mail Centre. The theme of the week was foods from around the world and any interesting information or pictures that people would like to share regarding their culture.

I spoke to people that worked in the Mail Centre regarding the week; Sue Harkin, Poonam & Bush Sandhi, Evangeline Rodrigues, Mohamed Chaudhry and Steve Pritchard offered to help.

The week was very successful. The main day of the event was Thursday where 34 people brought in food to share. We had a lot of different foods from around the World. We labelled the food to let people know what country it came from and the name of the food. It was a really positive experience with lots of people taking part, this included cleaners, canteen staff, postal workers and office staff. This was really good as everyone mixed.

We had display boards up all week with information regarding different cultures. Some people come into the learning centre to research parts of their own culture and print off information to share during the week.

Throughout the week, Steve Pritchard (CWU Engineering Rep) organised a quiz where people had to identify different types of flags. We had 157 entries with the winner, Kieran King receiving a £50 gift voucher.

We decided that it would be a good idea to raise money for the Rowland Hill Fund, which provides financial help to Royal Mail colleagues facing hardship. The food that people brought in was free for people to share, but we had collection buckets on the table so people could donate if they wanted to. We did well with this and raised £506.93 through the bucket collection and donations from South West No 7 Branch and Royal Mail.

Light Goods Vehicle Apprentices

Ady Prins describes how members in Wales kept their apprenticeship programme running through WULF

Before the Government changed the funding for apprenticeships, diverting all funding through employers, several CWU learning centres had been running an LGV Apprenticeship programme. These have mostly ceased now, although Chester Mail Centre's The Pl@ce Learning Centre has been able to develop a learning collaboration between Grŵp Llandrillo Menai Coleg or Group Llandrillo Menai College for those non-Welsh speakers.

Once the outlined, a further meeting was called for between the college, branch Lead ULR, the secondary provider (Kickstart2 employment) and P & G driver training school in order that everyone's roles and

responsibilities were outlined and accepted.

Whilst talking of Apprenticeships, funding is hard to come by but there is an option open to all employees of Royal Mail. The Apprenticeship Levy is being paid by the business and,

whether you agree with the privatisation of the company or not, as shareholders we have a say in how that levy is implemented. Ask your manager these three questions; how much Royal Mail currently pays per month and how much is being used and how much will HMRC take back at the end of the current financial year?

When setting this trial up as a ULR you seek that the outcome will meet the needs of our members and will also enable them to have transferable skills. You must be sure that you do not breach any National or Local agreements. One such matter was ensuring that those selected for the trial knew that this was a personal development course and not a means to leapfrog seniority into Distribution or Logistics jobs.



Some of the successful candidates. Sean Francis (Wrexham DO), Jamie Foulkes (Mold DO), Matthew Winder (Chester MC), James O'Donnell (Chester MC), Sean Sweetman (Chester MC) with Hayley Hinkinson-Walsh (P & G Driver Training) and Ian Taylor (NEC).



Additionally; all candidates know that the Apprenticeship will have £750 towards their class 2 licence acquisition and that they will pay the difference to the driving school at a time and method of their convenience. I had brokered a deal with Hayley Hinkson-Walsh that a complete total inclusive of the £750 licence acquisition of £1200 enables our members to undertake their Medical, Hazard and Theory training including that test, as well as 20 hours in cab training and final driving test, plus CPC training.

I suggest working closely with your Distribution / Logistics rep to draft an agreement with management for all candidates to sign. To begin with a diagnostic assessment on their English and Maths skills. Essential Skills Wales qualifications are intended to support learners as they seek to improve their numeracy, literacy, digital and employability

skills. This is a mandatory requirement of the course and any support is tailored to the individual, should they need assistance in that area. Once this aspect is verified all candidates are offered a supplementary course in Maths & English should they wish to do so.

Once everyone had completed and passed their diagnostics the Lead ULR arranged for a sign-up session with all students to attend The Pl@ce learning centre to sign the course and college paperwork with all receiving a welcome and a course brief of the course from Chris Franklin, Work Based Learning Manager from the college. Further questions were fielded by Hayley Hinkson-Walsh Managing Director of P and G driver training.

It was imperative to have a trusted driving school with a long history of successful candidates, which this school

does. Wayne Brown Lead IQA has been a massive help in this trial.

The Apprenticeship model works in this way; completion of the nine apprenticeship units, the Employee Rights & Responsibilities (ERR), which empowers candidates to understand wages and employment law. If they have completed the Essential Skills Wales, candidates receive their Maths & English awards.

Once the academic elements have been completed and marked, the provider claims the funding from the college, the college verifies the work and releases the money to the provider, who in turn pays the driving school. The member then books time off to complete their training with the school and then pass their class 2.

This has been a successful and popular course. We hope to do more in the future.

Healthy Lives Need Healthy Workplaces

Geoff Hodge, Lead ULR in the Somerset, Devon & Cornwall branch has been raising awareness on health and wellbeing matters at BT workplaces across Cornwall.

The Somerset, Devon & Cornwall branch has been raising awareness on a range of health and wellbeing matters at BT workplaces in the South West.

We kicked things off at Goonhilly Satellite Earth Station as a pilot project to gauge interest, before launching it more widely. It became evident from the very start that this initiative was going to prove popular.

We started off by delivering Healthy Eating / Healthy Weight sessions in partnership with the Cornwall Health Promotion service. There was a talk given by a subject matter expert on healthy eating where the group were introduced to the 'Eat Well Guide' which shows how

much of what we eat overall should come from each food group to achieve a healthy, balanced diet.

This was followed by a 15-minute session with a set of scales known as a Body Composition Monitor. The scales work by sending a small electrical current through your foot and into your body and then measures the signal as it exits through the other foot. This produces a detailed set of results, covering Body Mass Index (BMI), Fat Mass, Muscle Mass, Bone Mass, Hydration Levels and Metabolic Age. The latter measure always provokes a reaction as the scales collates all the various data about you and then works out what age it thinks you are.



Geoff having his health check

There was also a "Make the most of your lunch break" initiative, where members were encouraged to get away from their desks and do something healthy. A lunch time walking club was established with a 20-minute brisk walk on offer on a Tuesday and Thursday led by a resident pace setter who really got lungs pumping and made people feel like they had a good Cardio workout once they completed the circuit and returned to base.

We organised lunchtime workshops on subjects such healthy eating and mindfulness, and also provided a table tennis table in an under-utilised office space to give people another choice of a healthy and fun lunch time activity.

The next significant development was the introduction of Free NHS Health Checks in the workplace. This was delivered by the 'Healthy Cornwall' organisation, jointly funded by Cornwall Council and the Cornwall & Isles of Scilly health authority. Their remit is to offer encouragement and advice on a wide range of health topics with the goal to raise awareness and to change behaviours to promote a healthier lifestyle and essentially to keep people out of hospital.

The NHS Health Check is a health check-up for adults in England aged 40-74. It is designed to spot early signs of stroke, kidney disease, heart disease, type 2 diabetes and even dementia. As we get older, we have a higher risk of developing one

or more of these conditions. An NHS Health Check helps find ways to lower this risk. These Free NHS Health Checks are available through GP surgeries in England, but typically most people are either not aware of them or put off attending one. However by bringing the opportunity to attend one in the workplace removes these barriers.

As the initiative gathered momentum (and significant interest) we decided to expand the project to other BT sites across Cornwall including the BT TEC in Truro and Bodmin Telephone exchange and the demand has gone off the scale! Over 2 days in February, twenty Openreach Engineers and Managers were checked at Truro TEC and three were urgently referred to their GP's with serious health

concerns which underlines the value of organising this type of activity.

Each time I advertise a health check opportunity for example I am heavily oversubscribed, the last one in Truro by a factor of 100%. To meet this demand I have now booked up sessions well into 2020.

I have had some really good feedback from people buying into the Healthy Workplace project – and I've have seen some really quite incredible results with people heeding advice of the health care professionals and making behavioural changes that are seriously changing their lives for the better. The most important message is that we all need to eat well and move more to give us the best chance of living a long and happy life.



Welcome to

**NHS
HEALTH
CHECK**

Helping you prevent

- diabetes
- heart disease
- kidney disease
- stroke & dementia

More Apprenticeships At HWDC

Apprentices have achieved qualifications in operations and logistics, traffic office, LGV and management, as well as additional merits in Maths, English and ICT.

Thanks to the work of ULR Parminder Kaur, members of South East No 5 branch based at Heathrow Worldwide Distribution Centre (HWDC) and the International Logistics centre (ILC) in Slough have just completed apprenticeships in one of the largest single apprentice groups in Royal Mail. The apprenticeships were delivered between 12-18 months with apprentices having the opportunity to learn on-the-job, in the classroom and remotely from home.

Bob Lawrence, HWDC's International Operations & Communication Manager, said: *"These apprenticeships involved a lot of hard work and study, so well done to all! It takes a lot of commitment and determination to complete these courses*

alongside your usual day job. Congratulations! Thanks also to our lead union learning rep (ULR), Parminder Kaur, who has been facilitating the

"For many of these women, the workplace is the only place where they can access the education they need."

courses throughout."

"The HWDC workforce has a relatively high ethnic minority population, which is reflected in the need for improved English communication skills, particularly among women workers," said Parminder. "This was very apparent to me and one of the main reasons I volunteered for the ULR role. For many of these women, the workplace is the only environment where they can access the education and learning they need."

In the last two years Parminder has trained a total of 52 participants aged between 20-55 across a range of subjects. To complement their existing roles and enhance their career prospects, her apprentices have completed qualifications in operations and logistics, traffic office, LGV and



Parminder Kaur



Members presented with their certificates at HWDC

management. As well as achieving these qualifications, they have gained additional merits in Maths, English and ICT.

"Each of the apprentices worked in the Logistics sector but none of them had any formal qualifications," said Parminder. "They all volunteered themselves to develop their own career paths. The skills and knowledge gained will now support their careers, giving them the confidence to progress through a well-structured pathway with CWU and Royal Mail."

Each of the four LGV apprentices now hold their

In the last two years Parminder has trained a total of 52 apprentices, aged between 20 – 55.

category C licence, having only held their category B (car) licence prior to starting the apprenticeship. Throughout their courses, all the apprentices were supported by System Group qualified skills coaches, Paula Woolmore and Anita Virk, who worked with the

apprentices to ensure they felt fully supported, and that teaching was being delivered to the highest standards.

Cathy Hutton, head of employer engagement at System Group, said: *"The apprenticeships have been very successful and really well received by CWU, Royal Mail and its employees. All our learners have gained an industry recognised qualification and now have the skills and knowledge to help them implement their work more effectively. Along with this, the apprenticeships have given them legitimate qualifications that they can use to progress in their careers."*

Making An Impact

The Marchmont Observatory conducted independent Impact Assessments on five long-standing ULF projects. The CWU was one of them.

This year the CWU's ULF project has been part of an impact study conducted by the Marchmont Observatory at the University Of Exeter. The purpose of the study was to independently assess whether the project was achieving its stated aims, judging it by the same criteria used in the business world.

Ours was one of five Impact Studies conducted, combining qualitative assessment (such as reports and interviews with project staff, ULRs, learners and managers) and quantitative analysis (such as qualifications, skills obtained and their impact).

Many learners said that taking learning out to them really helped them to return to learning, "Outside is hard. I'm a mother and work full-

time. Travelling to college and finding the time and money to do that would be tough – so studying inside the Learning Centre was ideal for me."

"I'm a mother and work full time. The learning centre was ideal for me."

ULRs were able to provide learning opportunities and support to members at all levels, "We had a lad taken on at a weekend shift with learning difficulties. It took him a year and a half to get through the first course – but afterwards he was so happy and so confident. His shift manager was delighted with him. He's now level 1 and 2 in English and Maths and is a different man. He got the education here that he didn't get at school."

Others had taken vocational qualifications, leading to progression at work, "Some have progressed into Deputy Manager jobs, others have moved into other sections such as Resources after IT training and some have gone onto Team Leading and Production – which needs IT."



Sandra Absalom, ULR at South West No 7

This has also improved diversity in the workplace. One ULR reported that, *"Previously not many women had Deputy Manager jobs – but now many ladies have moved to these jobs in the business. We encourage them."*

Their research led the Marchmont Observatory to calculate that every £1 invested in the latest CWU ULF project generated a total economic return of £9.87, of which £6.00 accrues to individuals and £3.87 to employers.

In all the report was very pleasing and a credit to those ULRs and branches who took the time to participate in it. It identified some excellent case studies and showed that our ULF project does indeed produce benefits for individuals, employers and the wider UK economy.

***Every £1 invested
in the CWU ULF
project generated
a total economic
return of £9.87***

While the language such reports use might be a bit alien, they have provided the ammunition to protect the ULF through a decade of Tory austerity. It also shows why the Labour Party are absolutely right to be including a National Education Service in their election manifesto. This would really lift our work to the next level. More importantly it would provide all of our members opportunities that they could currently only dream of and build a country that could be at the forefront of a new industrial revolution.



Learning in the workplace

Romans, Cats & Underground Trains

David Barnaby, Ian Burton, Christine Carruthers, Andy Tarpy, Trish Vollans & Bev Walmsley jointly report on the North East Regional Learning Committee education event

This year's North East RLC educational event was decided to be informative and relevant to both postal and telecoms workers. We decided to visit the Postal Museum and the Museum Of London, which are situated in the same area, keeping costs to a minimum.

On Thursday we visited the Museum of London, which documents the history of our capital city, from prehistoric times through 200,000 years of history. It is located in the City of London on the old London Wall, close to the Barbican Centre, part of the complex of buildings created in the 1960s to redevelop a bomb-damaged area of the City. The museum is on the edge of the oldest part of London overlooking the

remains of the Roman city wall, a few minutes' walk from St Paul's Cathedral and the financial district.

The museum explains London's history, from the geographical, political, social, and commercial, to the buildings and monuments built by its occupants. It also gives a cultural insight to our past, present and potential future, our collective values and how they evolved from the struggles each generation faced.

The visit to the Museum of London provided a valuable insight into our current institutions and the role Trade Unions played in building and securing the foundations of our democracy.

Tibs the Great was the most famous Post Office cat. He eventually weighed 23lbs.



The old Roman London Wall and the Museum Of London behind it

Those of us working for Royal Mail appreciate the role that institution plays in our everyday lives – but we were surprised at the number of people there, not realising it would be so popular.

A visit to the Postal Museum gives you an understanding of how the service through the past centuries helped provide the glue that held the nation together. Equality was driven by public sector employees, none more so than the Post Office. The visit also highlights the technology developed to meet the challenges of the times, and illustrates the current reliance on foreign technology to provide answers to our own unique circumstances is a false economy.

One of the surprising solutions on display was the underground postal system that runs from Mount Pleasant to other sorting offices. Another were the Post Office cats. These earned their own wages by keeping the vermin population down. Tibs the Great was the most famous post office cat. Born in 1950. he eventually weighed in at 23lbs, but his weight was down to living in one of the staff dining rooms rather than eating mice & rats.



Post Office Cats Hall Of Fame

The cats should have joined a union, as they did not get a pay rise between 1873 and 1952 when a public outcry saw it raised in the House of Commons! Sadly Blackie, the last Post Office Cat, died in 1984 and as the cloth sacks were eventually replaced with rodent proof plastic sacks, the need for Post Office cats died with him.

The whole event was a good opportunity to interact with our new potential ULRs and to understand more about

how we have developed as a society.



An airmail pillar box on display at the Postal Museum

CULTURE MATTERS

Bread & Roses

Songwriting & Spoken Word Award 2019



Amy Fitz Doyley Winner 2018:

**£100
cash
prize for
top five
entries**



Steve Pottinger Winner 2018:



Ben Young Winner 2018:

**FREE
ENTRY**



Send entries to entriesculturematters@gmail.com

Deadline 14th December 2019

