

TRADE UNION SUPPORT (BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH WORKPLACE LEARNING)

The Trade Union Congress (TUC) sponsored the ambitious Building Opportunities through Workplace Learning DP that operated in England and Scotland. The main aim of the project was to develop, test and mainstream new approaches to extending participation, progression and effectiveness in workplace learning. This was primarily achieved through the creation of effective support systems for Union Learning Representatives and learners and the project sought to address two, interlocking issues:

- The significant number of members of the workforce that have a low level of skills and are least likely to receive an offer of, or take part in, learning. A number of groups including people with disabilities and ethnic minorities are especially disadvantaged through lack of access to learning;
- The fact that low skills including poor basic skills, directly damage productivity and competitiveness.

The DP comprised the TUC, the National Learning and Skills Council, the University for Industry and the Basic Skills Agency and together they steered the project at national level. Five Sectoral Pilot Partnerships were set up in the Public Sector, Print and Media, Retail, Hospitality and Leisure and Passenger Transport. Each of these Partnerships had key players from the sector, including the TUC, Trade Unions, Union Learning Representatives, Local Learning and Skills Councils, Employers, Employer Organisations, Colleges and other Training Providers.

At national level, the University For Industry developed two new learning tools to ensure that online learning was as effective as possible, particularly for basic skills learners. Both these tools were tested with Union Learning Representatives and learners. The Basic Skills Agency developed and piloted a training module for Trade Union Education Tutors to assist them to develop strategies and the skills to identify and support union representatives on Trade Union courses with their language, literacy and numeracy needs. This training module was mapped to the level 3 Certificate within the Teachers Qualification Framework. The BSA also worked with the TUC to develop an English as a Second Language (ESOL) course for Union Learning Representatives who do not have English as their mother tongue.

While the activities of each of the Sectoral Partnership varied slightly, they were involved in core and follow-up training for Union Learning Representatives on the provision of skills training, basic skills and information and advice. Similarly, they all established or identified suitable sites for Workplace Learning Centres and had learners from the target groups assessing learning opportunities.

There was also an effort to promote better Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) related to learning. This involved developing a training module for Union Learning Representatives, getting union projects, branches and workplaces to join IAG Partnerships and, at the same time, helping them to achieve the Matrix quality standard, which proved competence in the delivery of information, advice and guidance.

A [report on the project](#) is available and this contains a number of interesting case studies.

Contact

Building Opportunities through Workplace Learning

jfearnehough@tuc.org.uk

www.learningservices.org.uk

ECDB Number: [UKgb - 8](#)