



Getting Started with your Digital Champions Project

Millions of people in the UK are at risk of experiencing digital exclusion in the workplace and in their personal lives as digital technology grows.

UNISON's Digital Champions can help colleagues learn new digital skills, gain digital confidence and overcome barriers to getting digitally active.

Through peer to peer learning, Digital Champions can support colleagues with simple digital tasks such as accessing a digital payslip or setting up a personal email account, to supporting someone to access online learning opportunities.

This guide will support learning leads in UNISON branches to get started with their own workplace Digital Champions projects.

What are Digital Champions?

UNISON's Digital Champions are trained volunteers in the workplace who support colleagues to learn digital skills or undertake digital learning, development or training. Digital Champions could be existing Union Learning Reps (ULR's) or volunteers within the union. A Digital Champion needs to have some basic digital knowledge, but more importantly they need to be able to support and encourage people with digital learning.

As a volunteer Digital Champion the role could be as simple as being a visible person that colleagues can approach to be shown how to do digital workplace tasks such as check a payslip or book annual leave. A ULR undertaking the role could combine it with their additional ULR duties such as running digital drop-ins, delivering short workshops or supporting someone to access online learning.

First Steps

When thinking about whether there is a need for a digital champions project in your workplace or across your branch, ask yourself the below questions:

- Are there colleagues who regularly don't use a computer as part of their day to day role?
- Have systems such as payslips recently moved from paper based to digital?
- Is the workplace going through a broad digitisation process?

It's important to assess the need for a Digital Champions project in the workplace.

Although there are definite benefits to having a Digital Champions project in a workplace where all staff use digital technology regularly, the focus of the types of activity Digital Champions deliver is much more targeted at people who need support engaging confidently with digital skills.

Finding Champions

As mentioned above, being a Digital Champion could be built into a ULR's existing role giving them a digital focus to the learning activity they deliver. However a Digital Champion could also be someone who wants to take a more active role in the union but doesn't want to take on a rep or an activist role.

When recruiting Digital Champions in the workplace, think of departments or areas where digital skills are most at need and where people have less access to digital technology as part of their day to day role, for example waste and maintenance depots or catering services, and try and encourage recruitment from these areas. Digital Champions will be delivering peer to peer learning so it's important that they have access to and are visible to people who need support the most.

Digital Champions don't need to have loads of digital skills themselves – by being part of the Digital Champions Network they get access to short online training modules that build their own skills. They do need to have the confidence, time and patience to encourage people to learn in a way that works for the learner.

Below is a template email you could adapt to send to members when recruiting Digital Champions:

Email Header: Become a UNISON Digital Champion

Do you want to support the millions of workers in the UK lacking digital skills and digital confidence?

Your local UNISON branch is establishing a network of Digital Champions to help colleagues in the workplace with the Digital day-to-day and we need you to volunteer.

Digital Champions are trained volunteers who can support colleagues to learn digital skills, gain digital confidence and overcome barriers to getting digitally active. To become a Digital Champion all you need to a basic understanding of how to do digital tasks and the willingness and patience to help people learn in the workplace.

As the use of digital technology in the workplace and in our personal lives increases, it's important that everyone understands and is able to access digital technology. Through peer to peer learning, Digital Champions can support colleagues with simple digital tasks such as accessing a digital payslip or setting up a personal email account to supporting someone to access online learning opportunities.

As a UNISON Digital Champion you will receive online training and access to resources, a community of Digital Champions from across the UK to share ideas with, face to face events and certificates and Open Badges to demonstrate your own learning.

If you are interested in becoming a Digital Champion or would like to know more, contact **xxx**

DIGITAL CHAMPIONS



Working with your employer

Many sectors and workplaces are undergoing digital transformation projects, from small systems changes like moving from paper based to digital payslips to wholesale change like the NHS's transforming Digital Health which will enable more people to manage their own health information and care online.

With more and more workplaces digitising, employers run the risk of isolating workers if the proper support and training isn't on offer. Often people assume that everyone can use digital technology, but with over 5 million workers in the UK lacking the full set of digital skills, it's easy for people to get left behind.

Additionally, not everybody will feel confident to tell their employer that they lack digital skills, which is why having a workplace peer to peer learning scheme to support digital learning can really help colleagues navigate the digital world with confidence.

When scoping out your Digital Champions project, speak with your employer about what digital transformation projects they are undertaking and what schemes and training they have in place for staff. Digital Champions can easily compliment ongoing workplace digital projects and provide invaluable insight into what staff need in terms of digital skills and training.

A useful document to use when speaking to employers about digital skills is the governments 2018 [Essential Digital Skills Framework](#) which defined the digital skills adults need to safely benefit from, participate in and contribute to the digital world.

Below are links to some digital transformation strategies within different UNISON service groups:

Health

NHS England - [Digital Technology](#)

Health Education England – [Digital Literacy](#)

Skills for Care – [getting your organisation digitally ready](#)

Local Government

Education & Training Foundation (FE) – [EDtech Support](#)

Local Government Association – [Digital transformation programme](#)

Higher Education

JISC – [Developing staff digital capabilities](#)



Booking Digital Champion training

There are two stages to training your Digital Champions. Once we have the email details of your recruited Digital Champions, each of them will receive a personalised registration to the [Digital Champions Network](#) that allows them to access a range of short online modules and resources that will help them develop their skills both digitally and with regards to supporting learners.

As each new project group forms, a member of UNISON's Learning and Organising Department will arrange with you a time to deliver face to face training with your cohort. The training lasts for a minimum of 3.5 hours but can be extended to cover a full day and additional workshops can be created that focus on specific workplace issues or activity you may want to cover.

The core sessions are:

- **Why Digital Champions matter:** *looking at digital exclusion in the UK*
- **Digital issues in the workplace:** *exploring workplace barriers to digital inclusion*
- **What exactly is a Digital Champion:** *information about what the role entails*
- **Using our resources effectively:** *exploring the types of resources on offer to support Digital Champions and creating workplace specific resources*
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- **What kind of Digital Champion are you?:** *reflecting on the individual skills of your volunteer Digital Champions*
- **Next Steps:** *group planning on how to get your Digital Champions project off the ground*

The training can be delivered to a maximum of 20 Digital Champion and requires a room with tables and chairs for group-work and AV equipment. Participants do not need to access a computer during the training.

To book in your training session, please contact dcn.admin@unison.co.uk

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Working with your new Digital Champions

There are loads of different things you can do to support your Digital Champions deliver effective digital learning to the people who most need it.

Below are some key activities you can do to support your project:

- Use our paper based [digital learning surveys](#) to find out what digital skills are needed in your workplace
- Set meetings in advance to bring your Digital Champions together at key points during the year to share information, training and challenges.
- Create a closed Facebook group, Whatsapp group or email list for your Digital Champions to share resources and stay in contact
- Use existing campaign weeks or days such as Learning at Work Week to plan learning activities or themes
- Produce a database of the skills, strengths and interests of your Digital Champions to make sure you can match learners with the most appropriate Digital Champion
- Map out what resources you have available to use and where in your workplace they are situated.

Don't forget you can use Kickstart and Moving On funding to pay for resources, refreshments and other learning material.

Tips for working with your Digital Champions

ULR Digital Champions – If your Digital Champions are also ULR's they are entitled to some facilities time depending on what you have negotiated with your employer. This means that if they were confident, they could run longer workshops or activities or have a specifically digital focus to their ULR role.

Volunteers – If your Digital Champions are volunteers, work with them to understand what are the best times for them to carry out Digital Champion activity and what external pressures they face to carrying out this role so you both understand how much time they can realistically give to the project.

Championing digital learning at a strategic level – Through gathering information on peoples digital learning needs and supporting people who want to engage in digital learning, as a project lead you will be in a strong position to influence your workplace on the impact any digital systems changes have had on the workforce and what the workforce needs in regard to digital learning.



Top Tips for running your project

- Can you access or set up a digital learning centre in your workplace or local community so people can easily access digital devices?
- Think about how Digital Champions can mentor and support learners who are taking part on IT courses and training, including in-work training programmes.
- Link your digital learning activities to current branch or national campaigns such as voter registration or delivering workplace ESOL – think about how Digital Champions can be used to recruit and organise through these activities.
- Organise mini digital tasters on practical and quick topics e.g. shopping online or effective online searching.
- Embed aspects of digital into other learning activities.
- Celebrate your wins to show the difference Digital Champions have made to people's lives.
- Think about how Digital Champions can support your local branch officers and activists to be more digitally savvy.

To find out more or to get started with your Digital Champions project, email dcn.admin@unison.co.uk or speak to your Regional Learning and Development Organiser

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