

# inclusivelearning

e-bulletin/February 2019

# Hello.

Collaboration can really help establish a culture of learning in the workplace and in this edition, the award in Stevenage only highlights the benefits. It can really help put the spotlight on learning.

And perhaps dusting down and refreshing your learning agreement with your employer is one step towards meeting the learning challenge. It could forge a new relationship so that opportunities are not missed or forgotten. It could form the backbone to negotiate time off for learning, a common obstacle.

You could use it to create a learning steering group and help to promote learning across many public services. And a learning representative (ULR) could, with support from their branch and region, play a key part in offering support to help many people develop in the workplace.



JESS HURD/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

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## LEARNING FOR HEARTUNIONS WEEK

West London Mental Health branch is marking HeartUnions week with stalls at many of the sites across the Trust promoting the benefits of UNISON learning and UNISON membership.

“We are organising a major drive for HeartUnions week when we will be plugging the learning agenda as well as all the other work UNISON do,” explains Branch Secretary and ULR Khal Kiswani.

Organised by the TUC, HeartUnions week celebrates the positive work unions promote in workplaces across the country. It runs from Friday 11 to Thursday 19 February this year.

While West London Mental Health NHS Trust employs more than 3,000 staff across 30 sites, the branch will be focussing on three key sites for HeartUnions week: St Bernard’s Hospital in Ealing, Broadmoor Hospital and Lakeside Mental Health Unit.

While all 13 of the branch’s new ULRs were also new to UNISON activism before they were trained last year, the majority have since taken on further union roles.

“A lot of them have got bit by the learning bug and decided to supplement their ULR role with other roles such as health and safety rep or steward: the majority of the time, they get active on union learning and then get active in other things the branch is doing,” he says.

Their passion for learning is rubbing off on some of the more established branch activists, Khal says. “The ULRs support reps as well as members: I’ve got four stewards who are interested in doing their Employment Law Certificates because of the people getting involved who are passionate about learning,” Khal says.

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## Stevenage win

The learning partnership between Stevenage Local Government Branch, Unite, the employer and the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London (CONEL) was named Collaboration of the Year at the local authority's awards in December.

"This is an award the UNISON branch are very proud of," say UNISON learning rep Helen Powell and branch secretary Ann Tomlin, who have been driving the project since the council approached them last year.

The Adult Learning Project closely aligns with the branch's learning agenda, which is committed to identifying learning opportunities and encouraging members to pursue lifelong learning, they point out.

"By working collaboratively with all, we were able to meet this objective, support our members and new members through their learning journey and raise the profile of the union within the organisation," Ann and Helen say.

More than 50 workers at the council's Cavendish Road waste depot started IT and literacy classes on site last month.



## Budget bites

A four-week Healthy Cooking on a Budget course organised by Regional Learning and Development Organiser Marta Chaba for members in the Highlands and Islands late last year went down very nicely with the participants.

"I liked meeting new people, it helped me switch off from the day job, it got me back in to cooking again and trying new things," said Susan Walker.

Susan praised the course tutor. "He was calm, helpful, fun and gave positive feedback. His joy of cooking was evident. He gave us bits of cookery facts which were interesting."

Sandra Steel was equally enthusiastic. "I really enjoyed this course – I used a lot of ingredients I've never used before!" she said.

Maggie Tytler was another participant whose horizons were broadened by the course. "I liked trying food that I wouldn't normally have chosen and enjoyed the social aspect," Maggie said.

Charlee Mcnicol said the course was great. "I enjoyed learning to make new healthy meals on a budget," Charlee said.



## Haringey stall

Haringey Local Government Branch learning rep Vanya Hooshue and health and safety officer Liam O'Donohue promoted UNISON learning opportunities available to council staff at a successful learning stall in December.

With the local authority currently in the middle of restructuring and many staff anxious about their future, Vanya was keen to promote learning as a route to improve people's career and employment prospects.

"I wanted to say to people, 'Don't be defeated, you are part of UNISON – or if you're not, this is what we have to offer,'" she says.

"It was very useful: I was able to engage with staff, find out their concerns and get a clearer picture of what's needed."

Vanya, who completed her ULR training a year ago, will be running another learning stall in the council's corporate office in the near future.

National Learning & Development Organiser Oreleo Du Cran also distributed more than two dozen Skills for the Future learning surveys to people who visited the stall on the day.

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