

# Lifelong Learning Advisers

Trade Union education - special edition

This is a new role for UNISON members which has evolved from UNISON'S commitment to lifelong learning and in particular to Return to Learn and other education courses such as Women's Lives. Members who have completed R2L have the opportunity to 'sell' the course to their colleagues and UNISON wants to support these people by offering them free training and the opportunity to become an integral part of the branch education team.

Legislation recently enacted means that potential advisers will be entitled to paid release to train for this role and to carry out your duties in much the same way as stewards and health and safety reps enjoy.

What do Lifelong Learning Advisers do?

The role is still evolving but it is clear that it is a very flexible and will vary according to the circumstances and experience of the individual and the needs of their branch and workplace.

The role is not some sort of "pseudo careers adviser" but someone who can talk with their

colleagues about training and education, who knows and can promote UNISON courses, who knows where to direct people who need information about further education or how to access funding for training.

Other work that could be undertaken could include:

- Encouraging colleagues to join courses such as Return to Learn and supporting them while they are learning
- Helping to identify and highlight the learning needs of people in their workplace
- Raising awareness of lifelong learning issues in their branch
- Working with the branch to encourage learners into branch activity
- Liaising with employers and the experienced branch negotiators on lifelong learning opportunities in the work place
- Working with branch officers especially the branch education officer to promote lifelong learning opportunities

Lifelong Learning Advisers and Union Learning Reps - same difference?

UNISON's long involvement in membership education and more recently in Return to Learn led us to view the concept of the proposed Union Learning Rep differently from other trade unions.

Other unions decided that existing stewards should undergo the TUC training to become Union Learning Reps and add that role to all their other duties. ULR training is intensive and includes the negotiating and bargaining skills appropriate for experienced activists.

UNISON recognised that, for us, this was an opportunity to draw in a new group of activists, in particular a channel for successful Return to Learners into branch activity. However UNISON also realised that ULR training was not appropriate for people on the first step into union activity.

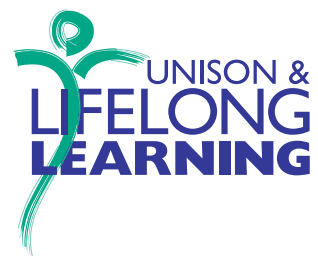
UNISON has modified the TUC delivered ULR course and renamed it Lifelong Learning Adviser

training. This training is provided by the Workers Education Association (WEA), our partner in many UNISON courses, and it covers skills such as listening skills, interviewing skills, basic survey techniques and branch organisation and development.

This difference in no way affects the rights to paid time off to undertake training or to carry out duties as an LLA.

The great strength of the Return to Learner turned Adviser is their ability to promote education to the very groups that make up the majority of UNISON members but who are in the minority at activist level - low paid, part time, women and ethnic minorities. Benefits to the branch and to UNISON in general.

Interested? Then ring the Branch Office on 01772 533072 or e-mail [janet.whalley@unison.lancscc.gov.uk](mailto:janet.whalley@unison.lancscc.gov.uk)



# CARECONNECT LEARNING



Careconnect Learning is a UNISON learning initiative. As the health and social care sector hub for learndirect, it offers courses to people who work in hospitals, care homes and other social care workplaces. It uses innovative, new and exciting courses from learndirect, which can be delivered either online, or by CD Rom and workbook.

Careconnect Learning Ltd works closely with employers to offer courses to staff with no or few qualifications and who have often been put off by traditional methods of learning. Courses are delivered flexibly to fit in with busy working and home lives.

Direct experience of partnership with employers and the flexibility of computer-based learning is proving remarkably successful at reaching learners who would otherwise be excluded, and ensures that everyone can take part in the learning revolution, regardless of their skills level, job status, qualifications, age, race, ability or gender.

An estimated 96% of care workers are unqualified and significant numbers of health workers in ancillary and support roles have no basic qualifications. Many workers doing vital jobs need to improve their communication, writing

and numeracy skills - this is essential as the requirements of their jobs change.

Everyone working in health and care now needs basic skills, including knowing how to use a computer, email and the internet, and it has become essential for many of them to gain qualifications to continue in their jobs.

Careconnect Learning Ltd has an advantage in that it understands and has practical experience of the needs of both employers and learners. It is particularly good at reaching lower paid, unqualified employees who may have been out of education for a long time and lack the confidence and skills to learn.

An example is Rona who left school without any qualifications and lacked confidence in her ability, in particular her written English. She worked as a nursery assistant in a local hospital and was keen to improve her English. She therefore decided to find out more as to what Careconnect Learning Ltd might be able to offer her.

The initial information, advice and guidance she received encouraged Rona to enrol on Word Skills Check. Although this is a diagnostic assessment tool, it proved to be an immense confidence booster for Rona. She completed the entire diagnostic in one

and a half hours at home and found that her profile across three areas of Speaking and Listening, Writing and Reading meant that she actually had better skills than she had thought.

As a result, the diagnostic itself has helped to encourage Rona to develop her own learning - she has since requested to be enrolled on other learndirect courses indicating that in the future she would eventually like to go to college.

Health and social care staff without professional qualifications are improving their computer, reading, writing and number skills. They are also developing and demonstrating their skills as care workers on customised care courses.

"I had to leave school when I was 15. That was over 30 years ago. I always thought I was stupid. However, I've now completed a computer course and I can use it as well as my own kids!"

Many health and social care providers are releasing staff from work to take up Careconnect courses. These learning opportunities are preparing care and administrative staff for changes in their working lives. These changes include the increasing emphasis on record keeping for audit purposes and the introduction of computerised systems.

**The following are some examples of how health and social care staff have benefited from Careconnect:**

- a care assistant boosted her writing skills enabling her to confidently complete work for an NVQ in Care
- an administrator learnt to use spreadsheets and mail merge on his computer which increased his efficiency and reduced his frustrations
- a housekeeping team learnt how to order supplies over the Internet

Careconnect Learning is helping employers to meet their training targets for achievement of NVQ's and the European Computer Driving License (ECDL).

There are clear benefits for the staff, for the organisations for which they work and for the people in their care, showing that Careconnect Learning Ltd is proving to be a flexible, high quality and sustainable national training provider.

For full details of the range of Careconnect's course take a look at the website [www.careconnectlearn.co.uk](http://www.careconnectlearn.co.uk)