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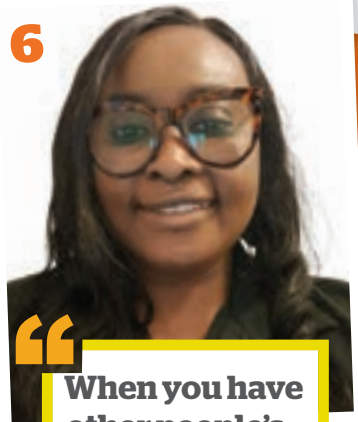
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“When you have other people's support around you, you feel, 'I have the power to make the changes that I need to make'”

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Welcome to ULearn

A UNISON College publication.

Welcome to this year's edition of ULearn, showcasing some of the best examples of the learning and training that's available to you through UNISON College.

In just three short years since I launched UNISON College at our National Delegate Conference, it has helped thousands of individual members change their personal and professional lives for the better through learning.

And it's delivering a comprehensive activist training programme that's building the ever-stronger union we need to defend our vital public services.

With events at home and around the world demonstrating the importance of our work for social justice, I'm proud to see this year's ULearn showcasing some of the many ways we're building on the achievements



“It's delivering a comprehensive activist training programme that's building the ever-stronger union we need to defend our vital public services”

of 2023's Year of Black Workers and 2024's Year of LGBT+ Workers.

And there are also profiles of some brilliant union learning reps (ULRs), articles about using learning to build stronger branches and features about members who are playing more active roles in UNISON, and where those journeys are taking them.

I hope you, too, find inspiration to learn something new this year through UNISON College.

**Christina McAnea
General Secretary**



Explore the power of learning

This new edition of ULearn celebrates the power of learning through UNISON College's national and regional education teams.

We created UNISON College to empower all our members and activists with both personal and professional development opportunities to help you move on in your union, your workplace and your personal life.

Our wide range of courses, workshops and events means that every member can enjoy the benefits of our education offer, especially if they haven't tried studying for many years.

Thousands of members across the country are taking part in our learning and training opportunities every year.

I hope the inspiring stories in this edition of ULearn encourage you to find out more about what UNISON College could do for you.

Sarah Hayes,
Head of UNISON Learning
and Organising



What do you want to learn with UNISON College?

Every member of the union can develop their skills through the huge range of learning opportunities on offer with UNISON College.

Whether you're a member or an activist, you can develop your skills through the mix of in-person, online, blended and self-study opportunities available with UNISON College.

UNISON College isn't a building: it's the name for all the member learning

“
We aim to offer something for everyone, so please check out everything we have on offer
”

Training for activists

UNISON College offers the training you need to undertake all the major union roles in your branch, including:

- * steward or workplace rep
- * health and safety rep
- * union learning rep (ULR)
- * branch officer
- * green rep.

We can also help you deepen your knowledge of employment law, sector-specific issues and mental health first aid, as well as many other topics. To find out more, visit: learning.unison.org.uk/activist-training/



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What opportunities do you want to explore? There's more useful information, including more web links and QR codes, at the end of this magazine

and activist training that's put together by your union's national and regional learning teams.

The courses take place in UNISON offices, employers' premises, learning centres and online. And they're delivered by a mix of UNISON staff and external providers.

We aim to offer something for everyone, so please check out everything we have on offer using the links on these pages. *

Supporting learning in UNISON

Many members so much enjoy learning through UNISON College that they want to help spread the message to other branch members and potential members in their workplace.

If that's you, we can help with courses on:

- * becoming a union learning rep (ULR)
- * dyslexia, mentoring, and other specialist topics
- * becoming your branch education coordinator or lifelong learning coordinator.

To find out more, visit: learning.unison.org.uk/supporting-learning/



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Learning for members

UNISON College offers more than 1,000 different courses, modules, events, workshops and webinars.

Some of the most popular include:

- * learning your way round Excel and spreadsheets
- * improving your job interview skills
- * keeping on top of your finances
- * trying mindfulness and other stress-busting techniques.

We offer many more courses than we have room to include here. To find out more, visit: learning.unison.org.uk/member-learning/



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Finding your voice in your union

Gaining skills and making friends on UNISON College courses has given Monica Pratt the confidence to keep stepping out of her comfort zone.

Monica Pratt always used to keep herself to herself at NHS England, where she works as a business manager.

But the Northern Health & Community branch member has developed a new confidence through the skills she's gained and the friendships she's made on

UNISON training courses over the past 18 months.

These days, she's speaking up in her team at work, addressing union conferences and presenting awards at big events.

And the person most amazed by this transformation is Monica herself.

"I've surprised myself on several occasions throughout this first full year since I decided to become more active in UNISON, take on more challenges and build on my confidence," she says.

Monica joined the Northern Health & Community branch when she started work for NHS England in 2018 but her sole contact with the union was when she enrolled on the occasional course she thought might help her at work.

What got her thinking about playing a bigger role in the branch was how she was treated in her previous team after a bereavement.

"I was really treated badly when I returned to work in my previous role, so I thought I will try to help people who might be going through something similar and don't know what to do," she says.

"That's how my journey started – it was inspired by something that was really unfair and the passion to help others."

Monica hasn't looked back since enrolling on the workplace stewards' training course in November 2023.

"What we learned on the course was about building relationships, so that's what I do when I get a referral: I try to build the relationship, relate with my colleague and relate with that issue so I'll be able to support them

and help them overcome the challenge,” she says.

“That’s what I’ve learned with the union – you can’t do it alone: no man is an island – but when you have support from other people all around you, you feel, ‘Yes, I have the power in me to make the changes that I need to make’.”

Monica says she has come out of her shell by becoming more active and developing herself with the support of other activists.

“In my former team, I just kept quiet and allowed things to slide but now I speak up when I feel things are not right in my current team,” she says.

“I try to challenge things in line with the policy of the organisation, so that we correct things as we go, not just leave things undone that are affecting people all around us.”

“

I’m a very shy person, but through UNISON I’ve been able to mix with other people, make new friends and build networks

”

Since last April, Monica has been taking part in the Yorkshire & Humberside region’s very first women’s leadership programme.

Over three weekend residentials and two half-day online sessions, the 12-month programme has included:

- * mentorship and coaching
- * skill-building workshops
- * activism advancement strategies
- * personal development.

“I’ve been really inspired and I’ve learned a lot,” Monica says. “These are women from across the region, and I’ve built friendships and relationships with them – we’ve bonded so strongly.”

Monica is the first to admit that all this has been a massive change for her.

“I’m a very shy person, but through UNISON I’ve been able to mix with other people, make new friends and build networks across the board, so it’s been really fulfilling for me,” she says.

“I’ve really grown a lot in character, in communications and in my inter-personal skills.”

In her first full year as a UNISON activist last year, Monica took part in Black members’ conference, women’s conference, health conference and National Delegate Conference (NDC).

“I really surprised myself at Black members’ conference because I went to the podium for the first time to support a motion,” she says.

“I was shaking but I was able to say one or two sentences about giving workers the skills that they deserve in the workplace so they’ll be able to be more productive.”

Monica stepped out of her comfort zone again when she volunteered to present one of the awards at the regional Black members’ group event for Black History Month in the autumn.

“I want to go out there to show this is what has inspired me, this is what I’ve been taught, and I’m really trying to make it happen and demonstrate that it all works,” she says. *

GETTING ACTIVE

* Use our e-learning site to explore playing a more active part in UNISON.

Have a go at our Activate! game, or find out more about some important roles in your branch.



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Login with your My.UNISON account to: <https://e-learning.unison.org.uk>



Maintaining the momentum in Newcastle

LGBT+ members in Newcastle City branch are setting up a new self-organised group to build on the success of the Year of LGBT+ Workers.

Newcastle City branch is aiming to harness the momentum of a packed programme of events marking Year of LGBT+ Workers by setting up a new self-organised group for its LGBT+ members.

“We wanted to make a big difference to our members by encouraging people to come to multiple events and take them on a journey over the Year,” Branch Officer Christine Jackson says.

“Our number one priority was to organically build a contact list over the year that we could use to help create a self-organised group of LGBT+ members – and we’ve had a tremendous response from the first mailout asking people what they want from the group.”

The programme kicked off with a launch



People were crocheting ‘bee yourself’ bees in the colours of all the various Pride flags

event last February, with speakers including the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner Susan Dungworth and Christine herself.

“Members went back to their workplaces absolutely buzzing because it was a brilliant afternoon,” she says.

In March, LGBT+ National Committee member Penny Smith delivered the new



workshop, Celebrating Our A-Spec Members, the spectrum that includes asexual (ace) and aromantic (aro) people (see page 40).

“Two members had said separately that they identify as ace / aro and

there’s just no information out there, and we said, ‘We know somebody who can help with that!’”

In April, the branch welcomed Huffty Reah from Newcastle’s West End Women and Girls Centre to mark Lesbian Visibility Day.

“She’s such a brilliant speaker you could hear a pin drop listening to her talk about her experiences of being a very visibly out



Christine Jackson shows the placard she made on a Year of LGBT+ Workers event to LGSM founder Mike Jackson

event in June in partnership with Newcastle Libraries.

“About 100 people turned up to the family-friendly event, where people were crocheting ‘bee yourself’ bees in the colours of all the various Pride flags, doing tie-dye T-shirts and painting signs,” Christine says.

“I made a recreation of the Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) banner because it felt pertinent on the 40th anniversary of the strike, and I took it to the Durham

Miners’ Gala the week before Pride where I met LGSM co-founder Mike Jackson and got him to sign it.”

In July, LGBT+ members took all the ‘bee yourself’ bees to the Pride in the City march in Newcastle and matched the flags they represented to marchers

they encountered.

“There were some tearful moments because we’d done some fairly niche flags and we’d be like, ‘Is this you?’ and people would be really touched,” Christine says. “And it just facilitated a little conversation about trade unionism and where we’ve come from and where they’d come from.”

As part of the Year, Christine also curated a collection of acclaimed LGBT+ books for branch members taking part in the Reading Ahead challenge, including titles by African-American novelist James Baldwin, Australian stand-up Hannah Gadsby and Scottish detective writer Val McDermid.

Looking at the current state of play across the country, Christine is alarmed at the way in which right-wing politicians and commentators have successfully seized the political initiative on trans rights in a bid to reverse all LGBT+ progress over the past few decades.

“We want to be in charge of the narrative on trans rights – and lesbian, gay and bisexual rights after that,” Christine says.

“I’ve said this throughout the Year: we’ve got to seize the initiative by disrupting the current state of affairs, shift that momentum and drive the change we want.” *

lesbian in the ’80s and ’90s,” Christine says.

“If I had to pick one event, that was probably my favourite because people need to know where we’ve come from so we don’t go back – because we’re not going to go back!”

The branch marked International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia in May with a picnic on the lawn outside the Civic Centre attended by 50 people.

“It was a lovely event for people to come to and sit and talk in really positive ways about how they can contribute to making things better,” Christine says.

After that came a craft

“**Huffty’s such a brilliant speaker you could hear a pin drop listening to her talk about her experience**”



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Carol McGrath offers mindfulness, yoga and other wellbeing opportunities to her co-workers, thanks to the learning agreement with Leeds City Council.

Promoting wellbeing at work

Lifelong Learning Coordinator Carol McGrath is using the multi-union learning agreement at Leeds City Council to expand the range of learning opportunities for members and potential members of Leeds Local Government branch.

Carol herself concentrates on offering tasters, workshops and courses that help staff look after their health and wellbeing, in line with the joint union-employer wellbeing strategy.

“I have colleagues who are part of the joint union lifelong learning agreement who concentrate on maths, English and ICT, but my area of interest for the members is wellbeing,” she says.

Since qualifying as a Mindfulness UK tutor during the pandemic, Carol has been delivering mindfulness courses for colleagues.

“They’ve been really popular, particularly just after the pandemic when everybody was so fraught and struggling to take

“**We’ve done things like building towers out of spaghetti to show how maths comes into everyday life and have fun with learning**”

time out and live in the moment,” she says.

“And they continue to be successful, helping people

to switch off from everything else and focus on what really matters in the here and now.”

A qualified yoga teacher herself, Carol has also led yoga classes for members that have proved very popular.

“That was basically to get people to think about how yoga is not just to support the body’s wellbeing but also the mental wellbeing of our members,” she says.

Thanks to the learning agreement, Carol has some facility time to carry out her role as lifelong learning coordinator in the branch.

“Leeds City Council might be one of the few local councils that have facility time for lifelong learning coordinators from every union,” Carol says.

“With the end of the Union Learning Fund, the facility time awarded to learning coordinators from each of the unions has been an absolute godsend.”

Carol is always on the lookout for new ways to make learning fun, both to help engage more members and to give learners the chance to explore something different that will boost their wellbeing.

“I look at what we can develop and design that will help people’s personal development in terms of learning a new skill and being able to take the time to relax and enjoy

themselves,” she says.

“We’ve done things like building towers out of spaghetti to show how maths comes into everyday life and have fun with learning: we’ve found that when people are creative like that, they can relax and feel happier and more confident when they realise they’ve gained new skills.”

The branch learning programme also includes popular workshops like Dignity in the Workplace, which helps people deal with inappropriate behaviour they’ve experienced, such as bullying and unfair treatment.

“The workshop gives people some skills and strategies to recognise what is inappropriate behaviour and how to deal with it in the workplace, because it’s unacceptable, it shouldn’t be happening and there are things that can be done about it,” Carol explains.

Carol designs the branch learning programme to include bite-sized sessions that are open to everyone at the council, whether or not they are UNISON members.

“We offer bite-sized introductions to mindfulness and confidence-building, so potential members get something that’s useful, informative and enjoyable that also shows them there are more learning opportunities if they joined a union – and

that has led to recruitment for the branch,” she says.

Carol spreads the lifelong learning message whenever she can see an opportunity.

“When we did an event at one of our schools for UNISON’s Stars In Our Schools campaign, the branch convenor went along to talk about issues like pay offers, and I spoke about what learning we had on offer,” she says.

“So people who were not in the union were thinking, ‘There’s a lot of learning going on and there are some grants to help me do this,’ and this two-pronged approach means people can see UNISON is not just about representation and negotiation, it’s about learning as well.”

Carol is always looking to expand her contact list to help her get the message out about new courses.

“When I have a learning event and get people interested, I ask them for their permission to be on my contact list to spread the word and talk to other members in their workplace about what they’ve done,” Carol says.

“As my network gets bigger and bigger, I can just put any information out through that contact list and it gets to more members that way because word of mouth is huge.” *



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Building a learning culture

Finding fun ways to get members learning is how North West Leicestershire branch keep people interested in developing themselves.



North West Leicestershire branch have developed a sustained culture of learning by consistently offering members the chance to try fun new things together on their doorstep.

Always looking to think outside the box, they've been known to give people a chance to have a go at crown green bowling at a nearby club or try

dodgeball at the local leisure centre to develop their appetite for learning.

Branch Secretary Cat Ridgway has helped shape this fun, sociable approach ever since she took on the ULR role – her first in the branch – 12 years ago.

“The ULR before me was putting on lots of maths and English courses, so I just picked that up and carried

that on but started doing more sociable things like taster sessions in sports and things like that,” she says.

Cat started by promoting the Six Book Challenge (now called Reading Ahead), the national campaign where participants pledge to read and review six different pieces of writing within a set timeframe.

“Even though reading is

a solitary pursuit, we made the whole setting up and organising and promoting quite sociable,” Cat says. “And with the bookcase we set up in the canteen, people could sit around picking books and chatting.”

More recently, one of the current ULRs and the young members' officer have linked up to launch a new branch book club, with the branch buying copies of the first book to encourage people to join.

“People from different departments in the council whose paths wouldn't necessarily cross meet up to discuss books, so the book club helps them stick to reading, which then helps them in their jobs, and they've built friendships through socialising, which is really lovely,” Cat says.

The branch has also used another national campaign, Learning at Work Week, to help build its learning culture.

“Learning at Work Week is really an opportunity where you can let your imagination run wild because learning can be trying anything new,” Cat says.

One year, they asked the local Crown Green Bowls club to host lunchtime sessions so council staff could try their hand at bowling.

“Not only did we have over 30 people take part

over a two-hour period, but we also helped a local sports group recruit new members and share their interest – and it was different, a break from work in the fresh air,” Cat recalls.

Another year, they held a dodgeball tournament one lunchtime with staff at the local leisure centre. “That was a great success – a sport that nobody knew how to play back in 2018, which was interesting in itself,” Cat says.

“It's about utilising what's on your doorstep – it doesn't take much to look around and think if there's anything we could do round here that people could feasibly do in their lunch break.”

For Cat, sustainability is all about building connections with branch members from the off. “One of the first communications new members get from us is how they can get into learning,” she says.

“And if we hold a learning event where we're letting people know what's on offer, regionally and nationally, we'll invite non-members along or ask members to bring a non-member, and we quite often get new members joining because of that.”

Listening to members about what's important to them is crucial, she says. “A few years ago, menopause was not widely spoken about but was clearly a

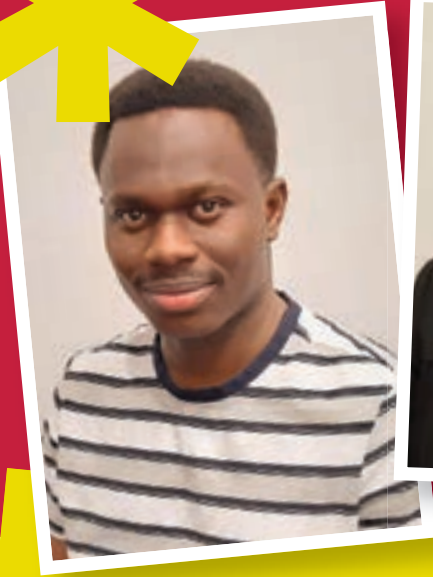
concern to many women members, so I organised a group for them to meet and arranged for a guest speaker about health, wellness and exercise on this topic.”

This year, the branch is organising a programme of events to help members deal better with stress and anxiety – issues that have emerged both through learning needs assessments and branch casework.

“We will be getting specialists in at lunchtimes to do mindfulness or a sound bath and talk about what food can help and what to avoid – it will be a programme of sessions over a series of months,” Cat says.

The branch keeps learning on the agenda at every branch meeting and sets aside a healthy budget for the ULRs to use. “We've recruited another ULR in the past year so that keeps the profile up and we have two people pushing the learning agenda from different sectors,” Cat says.

And they use the branch newsletter to highlight positive feedback as well as upcoming learning opportunities. “We include feedback from members who've been on training because it's always useful for members to see that other people are utilising the offer and what they're getting out of it as well,” Cat says. ✨



Empowering future Black leaders

UNISON College has developed a new one-day leadership course to help Black members feel more confident and empowered in the union and their workplaces.

Black members will have the chance to develop their leadership skills when UNISON College starts running a new one-day course in the regions this year.

“We’ve developed this course specifically for members who don’t know much about their branch, don’t know how the union organises, and don’t know how they could get involved,” says National Learning & Workforce Development Organiser Oreleo Du Cran, who

delivered successful pilots in three UNISON regions last year.

“It’s about looking at the skills they’ve got, developing their own leadership skills and helping them to understand their own power.”

Topics covered on the course include:

- * identifying your own skills, strengths and weaknesses
- * branch structures
- * equality legislation
- * influencing branch decisions
- * playing an active part

ONLINE COURSE

* If you’d like to take part in a Black members leadership course, please contact your regional education team: learning.unison.org.uk/regional-education-teams/

in branch meetings

* Black members’ self-organisation.

“We know Black members experience discrimination in all kinds of guises and what we want to do is try to remove some of the barriers,” Oreleo says.

“Some of our members don’t feel confident in their own abilities and their employers have not invested in boosting them, whereas

UNISON is looking to boost their skills and give them wider opportunities going forward.”

Foster carer Lorraine Johnson, who attended the West Midlands course, says she enjoyed trying new things, like speaking to the group while standing up.

“One of the many things that stood out for me is that sometimes when we speak, we sit down because we think standing up could be construed as arrogance,” she says.

“But I realised that when you stand up, you’re saying, ‘I have something of worth that I would like to say’. I came away feeling extra empowered.”

Swansea Bay Healthcare Branch member Daniel Agbosua enrolled on the course because he wanted to explore leadership from both the trade union and the professional point of view.

“I was looking at leadership in my workplace as well as leadership in UNISON because they’re both essential to me in my career,” he says.

“The course was fantastic: it was very informative, made me understand my skillset levels and, above all, gave me the skills needed to be a leader – kudos to Oreleo, who took the time to explain everything.”



Oreleo Du Cran with Eastern Region participants (from left) Juliet McLeary, Faidah Gullam, Firdos Finch and Langtone Mabwe.

Cardiff & Vale Health Branch member Ditene Favour Emono signed up because she thought the course would help her in her new role as a UNISON steward.

“Oreleo was very knowledgeable on the subject of leadership and created a learning environment where everyone could contribute freely and to help each other,” she says.

“The training was motivating and enlightening for me: it provided me with loads of insights about how the union can advocate for employees and made me more excited to be a part of UNISON.”

Ditene has used what she learned on the course to engage potential members about how joining UNISON would work for them – especially because of the extensive development opportunities available through UNISON College.

“I have actively spoken boldly about the union to almost every worker I have met since the course,” she says.

Ifeoma Ugwuegbulem, another Cardiff & Vale Health Branch member, enrolled in order to explore leadership in her career, in the union and in her personal life.

“The course was fabulous: it was transformative and empowering and I enjoyed it from the beginning to the end,” she says. “I learned so much about communication, decision-making and building confidence as a Black person: it was a really valuable opportunity.”

Ifeoma has been quick to put into practice what she learned on the course. “I want to be able to speak up for my fellow Black people, and since the course I’ve been speaking to people, my friends, my colleagues, Black and white, about UNISON – they have to join the union!” ✳



Learning from LGBT+ history

UNISON South East put together a learning-led event to launch the Year of LGBT+ Workers in the region last year.

Members and activists in the South East celebrated the regional launch of the Year of LGBT+ Workers last year with an event packed with learning opportunities.

National Black Members Committee member Bev Miller kicked off the event in UNISON Centre with a quiz that highlighted the contributions of Black LGBT+ activists from all over the world (see box).

And later in the day, writer, stand-up and historian Clare Summerskill took participants through some of the highs and lows of LGBT+ life in the UK over the past 75 years, with a performance featuring first-hand testimonies from



TEST YOUR BLACK LGBT+ KNOWLEDGE (answers below)

- 1 James Baldwin was a famous (a) actor (b) writer (c) politician
- 2 Angela Davis is a celebrated (a) activist (b) film star (c) scientist
- 3 Sunil Gupta is a renowned (a) cricketer (b) photographer (c) musician
- 4 Jackie Kay is a distinguished (a) singer (b) academic (c) writer
- 5 Which dedicated trade unionist co-founded UK Black Pride?
- 6 Which Black activist, celebrated as a trans pioneer today, played a prominent role in the 1969 Stonewall uprising?

Answers: 1 (b) writer; 2 (a) activist; 3 (b) photographer 4 (c) writer; 5 Phyllis Opoku-Gyimah ('Lady Phyll') 6 Marsha P. Johnson

some of the older LGBT+ people she's interviewed over the years for different theatre projects.

Clare's talk inspired the discussions in the afternoon workshops that followed it, when small groups looked at how people could make their workplaces more LGBT+ inclusive and what the Year of LGBT+ Workers meant to them.

Regional and National

GET CONNECTED

* Download a full Black LGBT+ quiz for your branch or regional LGBT+ event from: www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2023/03/Year-of-Black-Workers-LGBT-History-Month-Quiz-Final2.pptx



SCAN HERE

STANDING UP TO BE COUNTED

Central and East Berks Branch LGBT+ Officer Billie Reynolds enjoyed taking part in the South-East regional launch of the Year of LGBT+ Workers last year. “That was a really great event,” says Billie, who works in adult social care for Reading Borough Council.

A former branch secretary, Billie remains a steward in her branch, and also sits on the South-East LGBT+ Committee, which she represents on both the regional council and the regional committee.

Billie is also a member of UNISON’s trans, non-binary and gender diverse network. “They’re fantastic,” she says. “A lot of them are younger people, which is fabulous, and it’s fantastic to see how active they are.”

Billie originally explored the possibility of transitioning in the early 1990s but kept putting it off because the mainstream environment felt so toxic at the time.

But when her GP referred her to a Cognitive Behavioural Therapist (CBT) for work-related stress in 2008, she decided the time had come. “I learned so much through that CBT course: to take one day at a time, to live in the moment, to go with the flow,” she says.

“And that made me think I’ve got to do something about this, so in July 2009, after waiting all these years, I decided I was going to transition and be who I really am.”

For Billie, it’s vital to be visible as an older trans woman – not least to show younger trans and non-binary folk that they do have a future.

“It’s really important to be identified as a trans woman, to say, ‘Here I am – alive, and still fighting’, so that younger trans people can see that there is a way forward,” she says. “We have to stand up and be counted.”



I learned to take one day at a time and to live in the moment

LGBT+ Committee member Lucy Power and National LGBT+ Officer Mitch Coe also led a session highlighting how members and branches could help make the Year of LGBT+ Workers a success.

The day finished with a group visit to the country’s one and only LGBT+ museum Queer Britain, a short walk from UNISON Centre in Granary Square, behind King’s Cross station.

The museum hosts an evolving exhibition featuring posters, badges, video, costumes, books and magazines that help tell the story of 100 years of LGBT+ life.

The whole event created a perfect platform for the

rest of the year, says Area Organiser Clare Boorman.

“It was fantastic to see how all the ideas discussed at

the launch event came to life and contributed to making the Year of LGBT+ Workers a success,” she says. ✨



University staff expand their horizons

The University of Central Lancashire branch put on a wide-ranging programme of events for staff during last year's Learning at Work Week.

More than 60 members of staff took part in a packed programme of events during Learning at Work Week (LaWW) at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) last year.

Participants said they enjoyed the educational and the mental health benefits of the lunchtime sessions, while several also joined the UCLan branch as a result.

Branch Lifelong Learning Coordinators (LLCs) Sofia Anysiadou and Lisa

Simpson put together the programme in the months leading up to LaWW last May.

"When we took on the role as a joint venture two years ago, we thought about how we hadn't seen any UNISON learning events for quite a while for different reasons," Sofia says.

"So we thought, 'What about bringing those learning elements to the core of what the branch is doing?'"

GET CONNECTED

* This year's Learning at Work Week runs from 12 to 18 May, with the theme 'Get connected'.

Find ideas, inspirations and logos at www.learningatworkweek.com



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The duo hit upon the idea of using LaWW as a platform because the campaign branding would help publicise the events to potential participants.

"Using this nationally

recognised campaign made it a bit more relatable for people to set aside time to go on a learning event,” Sofia says.

In putting together the programme, Lisa and Sofia aimed to offer workshops and talks that would give participants the chance to learn something new while on a break from the pressures of their job roles.

“We wanted to provide a number of bespoke workshops and talks to give people the opportunity to develop their skills but also to take a productive break from their work and look after their wellbeing by engaging with other people,” Sofia says.

Sofia and Lisa were able to call on the knowledge and skills of some of their colleagues on campus to deliver workshops on Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) techniques, the history of tea (with different teas to taste), holiday Italian, first aid and British Sign Language (BSL).

There was also a guided walk round Preston Campus that explained how the university gardens are designed to create wildlife habitats, and a chance to find out more about learning opportunities through the university’s Development Portal.

“We’re lucky to have

a lot of colleagues who are super-talented and very generous with their time to give an hour to do a talk,” Sofia says.

The branch provided funding to cover refreshments at the sessions and pay the facilitators, although most of them waived their fees.

Feedback for the programme was overwhelmingly positive. “It was a great opportunity to learn and have a break at the same time, which is good for mental health and, as a result, morale and productivity,” one learner said. “Learning more about the university is a great way to make people feel part of the bigger picture.”

While they will apply some lessons learned when they organise this year’s LaWW programme, Lisa and Sofia are planning to use the same format of two sessions every lunchtime for four days, with a similar mix of workshops,

talks and activities.

“We’ve got a great pool of talented people in the institution, but we’re also open to bringing people from outside the university if need be,” Sofia says.

They’re also keen to secure formal agreement from the university that staff can use release time specified in the learning agreement to attend LaWW sessions this year.

Overall, the lifelong learning coordinators are satisfied that they’ve built a firm foundation with their first LaWW programme of events.

“We had a discussion after the week finished, and what we both loved was how people were leaving the events smiling with that feeling of fulfilment,” Sofia says. “And we also loved the emails we received later saying, ‘Thank you very much, I had a great time’.”

Sofia says that positive learning events are all the more important right now with all the finance-driven changes within the university sector pressurising staff to put aside their wellbeing to constantly do more, she says.

“So it was great to see people took these opportunities and left the sessions feeling they were worth doing,” she says. *

“We both loved how people were leaving the events smiling with that feeling of fulfilment”



Meeting other members looking to get more active on a training course has encouraged Naomi Coxon to become her branch's first-ever women's officer.

After working in schools for several years, Hull City branch member Naomi Coxon was well aware how government spending cuts were not only making life difficult for schools staff but also for the children and families they serve.

But after seeing how the previous government was promoting divisive rhetoric instead of real solutions at its party conference a couple of years ago, she decided she wanted to start playing a more active role in the union.

"It was after listening to Tory conference, on top of the evident issues in

Making the move from member to activist

schools and public services, that I became active with UNISON," Naomi says.

That's why Naomi signed up for an online introduction to the world of the union. "I saw there was a one-hour lunchtime training called Get Active in UNISON on the website and I thought, 'I'll just pop onto that and see what it actually means'," she says.

Spending those 60 minutes in the online

session, learning about different union roles, branch campaigning and the UNISON College training available to activists, turned out to be exactly what she needed.

"I've always been a member when I've had jobs that have enabled me to be a member, but I always thought the union was just something you go to when you had a problem – I didn't realise we, the members,

are the union,” she says.

Almost immediately, Naomi booked herself onto the Pathways to Activism one-day course in Leeds, which was led by Regional Learning & Development Organiser Rose Bent.

“I found it really inspiring to feel that sense of belonging for the first time, being sat in a room with people who thought in the same way I did and were doing something about it,” she says.

“The best thing about the course was the people I met: there were people there that were already quite active, and they really gave me the feeling that a branch officer role was something I could do.”

Buoyed by the confidence of the other members on the course, Naomi volunteered to become Hull City branch’s very first women’s officer. “I would never have considered it without going on the course and meeting the amazing people I did,” she says.

And encouraged by her branch to take part in last year’s National Delegate Conference (NDC) to find out more about how the union works, Naomi says he learned a lot in the company of the other Hull City branch delegates in Brighton.

“I remember getting all the paperwork through in

advance and reading all the motions and thinking, ‘I don’t really know what I’m doing’,” she says.

“But then I got to conference, I saw how it works – that it’s the members that have the power to say, ‘This is what we want UNISON to work on’.”

On her way back to Hull, Naomi decided she wanted to do more, so she enrolled on the next training course for new stewards.

“We all turned up not knowing what to expect, what we could do, what our abilities were, what we’d be expected to do, and all from a really wide range of different roles,” she says.

“But Megan and Danny who delivered the training didn’t talk down to us or anything like that and they were able to bring out things in us we didn’t know were in there already.”

Naomi credits all the different UNISON College courses she’s taken with helping her find her place in the union.

“

I found it really inspiring to feel that sense of belonging for the first time

”

“All the courses have been massively important, both knowledge-wise and for networking as well,” she says.

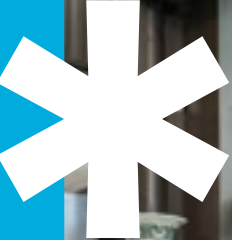
“On all the courses I’ve been on, at a certain point in the day you’ll all start exchanging your email addresses with everyone, so you’re building these little mini-networks that then turn into bigger networks.”

Being part of those networks helps Naomi better support her members, she says. “There are so many circumstances where that network-building is really beneficial for knowing where to go for knowledge if you don’t have it – being able to signpost people is pretty important.”

Naomi always highlights to members how UNISON College offers something quite different from standard employer-provided training courses.

“Every single training day I’ve been on with UNISON has been different – they know what they’re doing and you come away thinking, ‘I’ve really gained something from that’,” she says.

“The way the training is delivered makes all the difference, it makes you feel part of something, it makes it interesting, it makes it really enjoyable – and I’d say that of every UNISON College course I’ve been on.” *



Tackling racism at work

Public service organisations are changing their workplace cultures through the training they're committed to after signing UNISON's Anti-Racism Charter.

Growing numbers of public service employers are providing anti-racist training for staff and managers as they implement UNISON's Anti-Racism Charter in their workplaces.

The training commitments are a crucial component of the Charter, which is designed to help employers tackle racial disparities in pay, recruitment, progression, training opportunities and disciplinary procedures.

Nearly 40 employers

across the Eastern Region have begun putting the Charter into operation since its launch in 2022.

And almost 20 Greater London organisations have followed suit since the Greater London Authority (GLA) became the first employer in the capital to sign in 2023.

The Eastern Region Black Members' Self-Organised Group (SOG) created the Charter, with input from many Black staff members in the region three years ago.

"It's a real grassroots document that comes from the perspective of Black members in the region, which is what gives it that extra weight and meaning," says UNISON Eastern Regional Manager Alex Porter.

"But it's now being taken up all over the country as an example of best practice for tackling institutional racism within organisations."

Cambridgeshire County Council became the first upper-tier local

DOWNLOAD 

* Download the Anti-Racism Charter and explore campaign resources including a best practice webinar at: <https://eastern.unison.org.uk/regional-campaigns/making-your-employer-anti-racist/>



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Photo left: Cambridgeshire branch members Josette Kennington (right) and Thabang Thacker join county council Chief Executive Stephen Moir to promote the Charter.

authority to sign the Charter three years ago.

Since then, more than 3,700 staff have completed equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) learning, while more than 50 members of the corporate and executive leadership teams have taken part in a Compassionate and Inclusive Leadership programme.

“Two-thirds of the workforce have been through some form of EDI training since the signing of the Charter, and all of our senior leaders and elected members have gone through the follow-up Four Pillars of Inclusion programme – that on its own is worth shouting about,” says Cambridgeshire Branch Secretary Rob Turner.

The branch has a seat on the new Anti-Racism Steering Group that was launched last year to pinpoint the issues Black workers are still facing at the authority. The steering group set up a series of anti-racism listening sessions with Black staff in January that will inform future action planning.

Norwich City Branch Chair and Lifelong Learning Coordinator Debbie Rowden, who is also a member of the regional Black members’ SOG, played a central role in Norwich City Council signing the Charter three years ago.

Consistent work since then meant the authority became the first in the country to achieve full qualification

of the Charter last year.

“Thankfully, I knew the two people who lead on our EDI strategy, I knew the person who leads on training, I knew the person who deals with the strategy team itself, so I was able to connect with them and have regular meetings, because it does take focus and work,” says Debbie, who is also Black members’ officer and women’s officer in the branch.

“It’s about being able to position yourself so that you’re able to be part of the change that you’re wanting to see.”

In London, the three branches that cover the Barts Health Trust have been working to raise awareness of the new opportunities for change since their employer signed the Charter last March.

Newham Healthcare branch played a leading role in an anti-racism roadshow at Newham Hospital last November, which included

a walkabout by Branch Secretary Chris Akaluka and one of the directors to raise awareness with staff and an anti-racism workshop in the education centre on site.

And Waltham Forest branch partnered with Trust leaders at Whipps Cross Hospital to run a joint week-long anti-racism roadshow this February, which included a webinar focussed on anti-racism addressed by Regional Organiser Pam Okuns-Edokpayi.

Health Local Organiser Caron Mullins says that anti-racist training for managers will be key as the Trust continues to implement the Charter.

“The main thing is that managers are trained to use the correct policies and procedures, because – as our members have told us – it’s all well and good having lovely policies, but if they’re not adhered to then it’s pretty pointless,” Caron says.

Area Organiser Dario Lopez says implementing the Charter will represent a significant change for members and all staff at the Trust.

“The benefit is better working lives for staff in Whipps Cross Hospital and the whole of Barts Trust, because the Charter changes how people see themselves, how they can progress and the jobs they can apply for,” he says. *

“Two-thirds of the workforce have been through some form of EDI training since the signing of the Charter”



Being the best rep you can be

Branch activist Aiden Fraser is using the skills he's learning on UNISON College courses to help members and potential members who are experiencing problems in the workplace.

Aiden Fraser is always on the lookout for new opportunities to expand his knowledge and improve his skills.

"I've always been of the mind that I can always learn more, I can always improve, I can always

grow," says the Stockport Local Government branch steward and LGBT+ officer.

"So every time I get a new newsletter with new courses in, I'm looking at what I have the time and capability to do because I think if you stop learning,

you're not going to be the best person you can be but also you're not going to be the best rep, the best officer, or the best contact, either."

Aiden took on his activist roles last year, after joining UNISON when he started work at Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council the year before.

"For me the most useful part of the stewards' course was learning about structures and the way things work, and getting to have a look at the processes behind them, and how I could help individuals that way," Aiden says.

Aiden has developed his knowledge and skills on the UNISON College courses Equality in the Branch and Challenging Racism in the Workplace, the course he's enjoyed the most so far.

"Equality in the Branch was very much law-focused, which has led me to feel very confident in what I'm talking about in terms of how legally I can help members or how legally

we are protected because a lot of people don't realise they're protected by law," Aiden says.

He also learned a lot at UNISON North West's annual organising convention, Skills for Strength.

"Skills for Strength was just a great conference where I picked up loads of different information about organising and getting active that I've taken back to my branch," he says.

But Aiden doesn't only take part in union courses as a learner: he's also delivered the Trans Ally training course half a dozen times to different branches in the region, with several asking him back to do more this year.

"There was a big group and loads of discussion and practical takeaways at Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, where I was most recently," Aiden says.

"People said to me afterwards, 'You've changed my outlook' – and if I just change one person's mind or change one person's actions, that's a real achievement."

Aiden hopes that by talking about his own experience on the Trans Ally course, he'll make some contribution to banishing the term 'trans issues' from

contemporary discourse.

"I hate the term 'trans issues' because there is no issue, there is no debate – these are my rights, and they're under threat," he says.

Aiden says that all the UNISON courses he's taken so far have not only developed him as an activist – they've also helped him make the most of his role as co-chair of the council's LGBTQ+ Employee Network.

"All the really practical advice about having conversations and being an active listener on the stewards' course isn't just useful in the steward role but also in my role in the LGBTQ+ Employee Network," he says.

"So if someone comes to me as co-chair saying they think they're facing discrimination, I'll sit and listen and write everything down – that practical advice carries through to everything."

And he always makes a point of encouraging other LGBT+ staff at the council to join UNISON, he adds.

"When people come to me with issues, I tell them what we can do internally in the workplace but I always push people to join UNISON because if you don't feel supported in work, there are other routes that can help you," he says. ✨

I think if you stop learning, you're not going to be the best person you can be



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Motivating members

The chair and secretary of a branch in Cyrmu / Wales have taken part in a branch secretary training course together so they can work together on plans that engage more members.

Ceredigion County branch chair Helen Doughty and branch secretary Denise Owen have been developing new strategies to engage more of their members while taking part in the UNISON College Branch Secretary Training Course.

With several years as branch chair under her belt and no desire to become branch secretary herself,

Helen was happy to enrol on the course when Denise was first elected to the role in 2023.

“Of course, you pick up a lot over the years on various committees and in different forums, but it’s good to know all the ins and outs,” Helen says.

“And I wanted to see how I could be more helpful to my branch secretary, because

“

There’s enormous value in having time to think strategically away from the workplace

”

the amount of work that our branch secretaries carry is enormous,” she says.

The Cymru / Wales Branch Secretary Training Course is divided into two modules that run over two weekends a few weeks apart from each other.

The first weekend’s topics include:

- * the role of the branch leader
- * building stronger branches
- * leading branches in changing times.

The second weekend’s topics include:

- * reaching the standards for organising branches
- * incorporating fair representation and proportionality into branch plans
- * supporting key activists.

“For me personally, what I’ve found most useful are the different ways of thinking about problems you’re working on,” Helen says.

“We’ve been brainstorming because we’re both there and we’re both getting inspired at the same time – you almost formulate your plan of what you’re going to take back to the branch while you’re there.”

Helen says she’s learned a lot inside the sessions because the tutor and the course materials have been excellent.

But she’s also developed her ideas from all the

different conversations taking place in the breaks between sessions.

“You learn a heck of a lot from the networking because you have people who’ve been recently elected as branch secretaries who’ve got a different viewpoint or a different specialism or come from different service groups,” she points out.

“The beauty of something like this is doing it over the weekend so people can gel – you always have the most interesting chat stood beside the kettle making a cup of tea when you might formulate the next big plan!”

There’s enormous value in having time to think strategically away from the workplace, Helen says. “A lot of the time as branch officers we’re firefighting, but going on the course helps you think about what you’re going to be able to bring back for your members,” she says.

“At the end of the day, the union is only as good as its members, and that’s the thing: it’s not about doing everything for the members, it’s about motivating the members to realise that they can help themselves.”

As well as being branch chair, Helen is also education coordinator and communications officer in the branch and, at regional level,

chairs the Cymru / Wales Communications Forum.

“We’ve had some fantastic training through the forum, because we have access to an amazing range of resources through UNISON,” she says.

“It’s really nice when you see people who literally don’t know how to switch off their phone then coming on a training course and they’re able to make a video on their phone,” she says.

Helen is harnessing her communications knowledge and skills to help boost engagement with branch members through email newsletters and regular interaction on the branch Facebook page.

“We’re concentrating on comms because it’s key – and as chair of the comms forum, if I can’t be improving comms, well, I shouldn’t be there!” she says.

Helen and Denise and the rest of the 2024 cohort will join the 2025 course participants later this year.

“The plan is that there’ll be another cohort starting after the branch annual general meetings this year, and once they’ve done the first two modules, we’ll join them for four more modules,” Helen says.

“We can see that what’s left to do is going to be really helpful as we build a more forward-thinking branch.” *



Orkney walkers take the high road

Trade unionists who first got together for a wellbeing walk organised by a UNISON learning rep have gone on to launch a new union network in Orkney.

A wellbeing walk organised by Orkney union learning rep (ULR) Linda Halford has led to the launch of a new union network on the Scottish island group.

Linda organised the Healthy Wellbeing Walk in October 2022 to encourage union members to get active and connected again after the lifting of Covid pandemic restrictions.

Eight members of five different unions, including UNISON, took a guided trip around Orkney Mainland, which included the Happy Valley nature reserve and two neolithic monuments – the Standing Stones and the Ring of Brodgar.

“While the heavens opened



as we rapidly piled into the minibus that was hired to take us around the sites, the weather did clear up surprisingly quickly and the day turned out to be a huge success,” Linda says.

“Lizzie, the driver and guide for the day, was very knowledgeable about each of our stops: everyone was taken aback from the history, including myself – and I have



lived here for 31 years!”

After warming up over lunch in a hotel, the walkers held an impromptu meeting about how they could grow as a group, which led to Linda organising a ‘Union Day’ in March 2023.

Nineteen trade unionists took part in that event, with some joining over Zoom when the harsh weather conditions prevented them from attending in person.

They listened to a presentation on Neurodiversity in the Workplace by Audrey Lee (from Inverness-based Ness Care) and took part in a creative writing taster led by author and journalist Catherine Deveney.

Catherine then returned to Orkney in February and March last year to deliver a four-week Creative Writing for Wellbeing course, which was also delivered in-person and online.

All this activity has led to the launch of a new Orkney Cross-Union Forum on the islands. “The Forum is obviously in its infancy but I strongly believe it will be very successful over time,” Linda says.

As well as playing a key role in the creation of the new network, Linda has also used her 10 years of experience as a ULR to support UNISON members



“**You feel like you’ve achieved something because you’ve passed on your knowledge**”

in Orkney and beyond.

For example, she mentored a young member from the Western Isles who was taking part in the Women’s Development Programme last year – the first time the programme has run in Scotland.

Launched on International Women’s Day (8 March) last year, the programme featured six in-person sessions to develop leadership skills and explore how women can influence change across UNISON and the wider trade union movement.

Whenever the member travelled from the Western Isles to take part, Linda checked in via WhatsApp to make sure she’d arrived safely, and the two of them then used Teams to discuss the course between in-person sessions.

“At the start of the course, I contacted her to enquire how the days went, and what homework she had, not only because I was interested, but so she could hear a familiar voice until she befriended other students on the course,” Linda says.

“And between the sessions, I contacted her via Teams to offer support with the assignments.”

Linda enjoys the full support of the branch committee at Orkney Local Government branch. “They are really supportive of learning and training – they understand it’s important for the branch,” Linda says. “And they are very supportive with the training budget, which I’m very grateful for, which means no member is denied attendance at training sessions due to cost.”

Linda loves being a ULR. “I still enjoy sharing my knowledge. I get the fulfilment of coming to the end of a course and you feel like you’ve achieved something because you’ve passed your knowledge on.” *



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From active member to union organiser

It was UNISON's Black Leadership Programme that helped Jason Pierre harness his activists skills into working as a union organiser.

Taking part in UNISON's Black Leadership Programme helped former West Midlands activist Jason Pierre develop a new phase of his career as a union organiser.

Jason first became active eight years ago when he was working for a private adult health and social care provider in the North West.

He trained to be a steward the following year, when

he joined the Coventry and Warwickshire Healthcare branch after moving to the West Midlands a year later to start a new job with the Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust.

"The course was really good, and it gave you that structure and information about how to deal with workplace issues like grievances and disciplinaries," Jason says.



The course was really good, and it gave you that structure and information about how to deal with workplace issues



Jason also took on the role of Black Members' Officer and joined the regional Black members' self-organised group, where he first heard about UNISON's new Black Leadership Programme three years ago.

"I thought it was an opportunity for me to develop my confidence in speaking to large groups of people and getting the message across in an effective way," he says.

He learned skills on the course that he still uses today, and keeps in contact with some of the people on the course.

"We learned so much on those six sessions in London," he says. "Learning that 'having difficult conversations' model has been useful, as well as understanding what kind of leader I am myself."

Being part of the programme also helped him make the move from activist to organiser, he says.

"It has helped in terms of my confidence – especially when it comes to interviews," he says.

"The interview for the job I'm in now was quite tough and the programme helped me to think correctly under pressure and how to present myself as someone who's likeable."

After taking part in the course, Jason secured a

“The new job is an opportunity to put UNISON's Organising to Win principles into practice to deliver results for the branch and for the region”

one-year job as a branch organiser at Leicestershire Healthcare branch, which he started in 2023.

While he was working for the branch, he helped put together the collective grievance that kicked off the campaign to regrade healthcare support workers (HSWs) in Leicester hospitals to better reflect the day-to-day work they do.

And when more than 94 per cent of HSWs at the Trust backed strike action in support of the grievance, Jason also helped organise the first wave of strikes.

"At one point, I was managing picket line duties, where you've got people coming together from different sites to support the HSWs, and it felt great to be part of something big that was making a change," he says.

Last year, Jason moved to Scotland to take up a new role of local organiser, now mostly based at the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde CSV branches, although he also spends some time at the union's Scottish office in Glasgow.

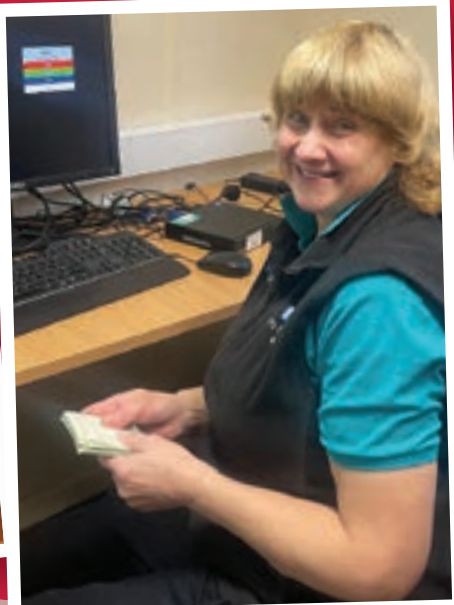
Jason was keen to take the chance to do more union organising in a job made possible by the union's Branch Support & Organising Fund (BSOF), which helps branches achieve local organising goals.

"The new job is an opportunity to put UNISON's Organising to Win principles into practice to deliver results for the branch and for the region," Jason says.

"I also want to increase the profile of Black people working in UNISON Scotland so that we come across more representative of the population to members."

Jason continues to use the knowledge and skills he developed as part of the Black Leadership Programme.

"Ravi Subramanian, the West Midlands Regional Secretary, talked to us about learning what people are interested in and helping them with that – and that's something I definitely took from the course that I still use today," Jason says. ✨



Getting NHS staff online at work

NHS staff in a London Trust gained the digital skills they needed to access their emails and payslips during dozens of dedicated learning sessions delivered by two UNISON organisers last year.

Two dozen soft facilities management (FM) staff across the Barts Health Trust got to grips with the computer skills they need to check their payslips and emails and access the staff intranet thanks to training from UNISON organisers late last year.

Using their new digital skills, the soft FM staff (who include cleaners, laundry workers, gardeners, porters, kitchen workers, security staff and receptionists) can now check their payslips and emails and

access the staff intranet for the first time.

“When soft FM staff were brought back in-house, Regional Organiser Pam Okuns-Edokpayi wanted to do something for members to bring them up to speed with computer basics,” says Local Organiser Caron Mullins.

“Because a lot of them had never touched a computer keyboard before, they didn’t have the skills to access their pay slips and email or the staff intranet. A lot of them could

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<https://www.learnmyway.com>



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do stuff on their phone, but the thought of going onto a computer was mind-blowing for them.”

Area Organiser Dario Lopez designed the programme after consulting with colleagues in Learning and Organising Services (LAOS), who were able to signpost him to useful online resources.

“The meeting helped me with some of the resources we could use to put something basic together, such as Learn My Way, which I used to help



Newham Hospital.

Each day was divided into three one-hour sessions for two to five learners at a time, covering:

- * keyboard basics
- * Word essentials
- * using email and accessing payslips on the Trust system.

This approach meant that learners had the time and attention that the minimal training originally delivered by Barts had failed to provide, Caron says.

“Where the Trust had showed them how to get onto the computer, that was literally someone saying, ‘You press this, you press that,’ and they weren’t given the chance to do it themselves, so just spending that bit of time with them really helped,” she says.

The learners had a range of skill levels, Dario says. “We had a mixture of groups – some of them knew a little bit more and some of them really struggled to find particular characters on the keyboard,” he says.

The sessions were open to all soft FM staff, not only UNISON members. “Because this was a partnership project

with the Trust, it was for members and non-members, but that gave us a bit of a recruitment tool as well,” Caron says.

One of the challenges in delivering the programme was the very different learning and training facilities at the various sites that make up the Trust, Dario says.

“At Royal London, we were able to use a big room with four or five computers,” he says.

“But at St Bart’s, we had less space and could only use laptops, when people needed bigger screens and proper keyboards to have a learning experience that was more user-friendly, but we still managed to give them skills they could build on.”

Caron says that they’d ask the Trust to provide similar facilities across all the different sites if and when they provide further digital skills training in future.

“If ever we did anything like this again, we’d insist that everybody had their own computer,” she says.

Nevertheless, the learners were so pleased with their training that many of them asked if the union could organise more sessions.

“It was very rewarding to see you were giving them something they could take away and hopefully further develop,” Dario says. *

me with my lessons and exercises,” Dario says.

The 12-day programme of digital skills training ran across the four main sites that make up the east London-based Trust in November and December last year.

Dario delivered the sessions at St Bart’s, The Royal London and Mile End Hospital, while Caron tutored the learners at

“It was very rewarding to see you were giving them something they could take away”



Learning new approaches to organising

Talking to potential members about joining UNISON works best when it's more of a conversation than a pitch.

Chiara Campolo is spreading the union message to their co-workers in the staff team at Bristol Students' Union (Bristol SU) with the help of the knowledge and skills they're picking up from UNISON training courses and conferences.

Chiara joined the University of Bristol branch three years ago when they started work at Bristol SU, which runs the day-to-day activities and services to support students at the university.

They were one of a group of members who became active last year when their employer launched a pay review without consultation.

"Our workplace decided to do a pay and reward review last year but they weren't negotiating with us, even though we are a recognised

union," Chiara says.

"That's when we started organising meetings and being more visibly involved with the union."

Chiara and a colleague enrolled on the UNISON stewards' training last autumn. "Everything we learned was useful and we got loads of resources from the course we can use to look up if we have a case," they say.

"We've still got a chat going on Teams with the



Learning is definitely one of the big selling points I use when talking to people about joining



other reps from the training, which is really helpful if we have a question or just want to ask what other reps think about something."

Chiara learned more about effective ways to build membership when they took part in a workshop on organising conversations at last autumn's Young Members' Conference in Swansea.

"Everyone where I work knows that I'm a UNISON rep and if they have any questions, I'll often say, 'You can join the union and then we can sort it out' but I think that comes across as a bit pushy sometimes," they say.

The workshop facilitators suggested a different route. "They said it needs to be



workers' rights, completed the TUC Certificate in Employment Law last year, and are currently undertaking the Diploma in Employment Law.

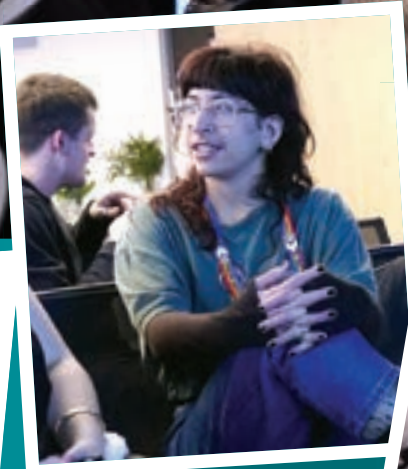
"The diploma is a lot more intense than the certificate and it's quite a lot to do it on top of a full-time job," they say.

Chiara is also exploring further development opportunities through the union as well. "I've been looking at all of the courses on the Skills Academy because I'm always interested in learning more – especially if it's free!" they say.

"There are so many things I want to learn and the only things that are stopping me are always time and money – so if at least one of them can be removed, that's great."

Chiara always promotes all the learning opportunities available through UNISON College whenever they're talking to potential members about joining.

"Learning is definitely one of the big selling points that I use when I'm talking to people about joining UNISON because it was a big selling point for me – not that I needed to be sold it, to be honest! – because it's a very material benefit from your membership," they say. ✨



Chiara Campolo (above) in conversation



more of a conversation than a pitch, and that was really useful – it really made me think about it in a different way."

Chiara's assessment of the whole event – their first UNISON conference – was positive. "The conference in general was really good and I thought everyone was quite friendly, so overall I really enjoyed it, it was a good experience," they say.

"Conferences where people table motions are what I do in my day job, so it was a very interesting experience to be on the other side and see how UNISON does it."

Chiara's UNISON activism reflects their long-term commitment to employment rights: they wrote their masters' degree thesis on Covid and



We'll never walk alone

Whether he's supporting UNISON members facing discrimination or campaigning against homophobia on the football terraces, Paul Amann knows that the key to achieving change is turning the silent majority into active allies.

When Paul Amann joined UNISON 30 years ago, his journey into activism started in the union's self-organised groups.

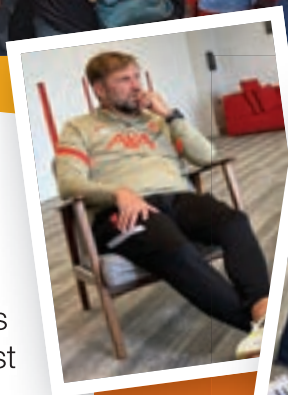
"As a young mixed-race gay man, I got involved in self-organisation, through what was then lesbian and gay self-organisation and also in the Black members' self-organised group," he recalls.

But he soon became a workplace activist as well, training to become a steward and a branch officer while he was a member of Nottingham County branch in the 1990s – training that he credits with his successes supporting members facing a wide range of workplace issues.

"I've been able to help people keep their jobs

because I was taught properly how to represent members, how to keep records and how to support discrimination claims," he says.

After working for both Nottinghamshire County and Nottingham City Councils in the 1990s, Paul embarked on what has now been a 22-year career in skills and



workforce development in the early 2000s.

Now employment and skills principal officer at Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA), Paul says he's been using skills he developed in UNISON throughout his professional career.

"I think the skills I've learned as a UNISON activist are highly transferable into my professional job role," he says.

"I have to negotiate, I have to engage with people, I have to follow processes, I have to document things – all of those are no-brainers for the workplace."

Although he's had to step back from public-facing union activism as his more recent professional roles have come with political restrictions, Paul has retained his connections with self-organisation through his role on the LGBT+ Conference standing orders committee (which ensures the smooth running of the annual event).

But he probably makes his most high-profile contribution to the LGBT+ community as the chair of Kop Outs, the official LGBT+ fan group for Liverpool FC that he founded in 2016.

"I've met with board members, senior management and fellow fans and tried to use some of the insights from initiatives like

Kick it Out and Show Racism the Red Card (SRtRC) that are transferable to LGBT+ fans of the game and, indeed, people who are in the game but not necessarily out," he says.

"The learning journey has been absolutely immense – and what has transformed our community's ability to enjoy football hasn't so much been our minority of LGBT+ activist fans but turning the vast majority of decent fans from being bystanders into active allies."

Over the 2010s, Kop Outs were able to persuade most Liverpool fans to stop using a long-standing chant about Chelsea supporters because it included a homophobic slur.

But when some started singing it again in the early 2020s, the club supported the Kop Outs statement on social media and then posted a short film about the issue featuring a conversation between Paul and the then manager Jürgen Klopp.

"That's had millions of hits to this day, and the joy of that was that it allowed that conversation to be heard by vast numbers of our fans," says Paul.

"At the following home match against Chelsea, sporadic attempts to start the homophobic chant were shut down by fellow fans who tapped people on the shoulder and sang loudly over it – it was a watershed moment for us in getting the decent majority of fans to be active allies."

Paul says there are huge parallels between the terraces and the workplace. "We have so many decent people in our fan base and in our workplaces but sometimes we need to know how to tap into them in an effective way to ensure that dignity and respect are afforded people whatever their situation," he says.

"My UNISON background of working in committees, engaging with different stakeholders, from fellow workers through to senior executives and politicians and general secretaries helped equip me for the challenge of engaging with fellow fans, football executives, communications outfits and others, to achieve things by tapping in to shared identities and shared values in a way the organisation couldn't argue against." *

“The skills I learned as an activist are highly transferable into my professional job role”



Standing up for admin staff

A new charter at Derbyshire Community Health Services should create more learning opportunities for admin and clerical workers at the Trust.

North Derbyshire Healthcare branch union learning rep (ULR) Emma Round was thrilled when she found out about UNISON's Admin Charter for Change at

last year's health conference.

The Charter is a six-point plan that that health branches are using to persuade NHS employers to give admin and clerical



Admin staff in the NHS can sometimes be forgotten about, but this Charter shows our Trust recognises that admin staff are very important



staff the recognition and the opportunities they deserve.

“I was really excited when I saw it on the agenda – I was just so thrilled that there was something for me,” says Emma, who works as a secretary / administrator for Derbyshire Community Health Services NHS Foundation Trust (DCHS).

Once she returned to work, Emma sent a copy of the Charter to the DCHS staff governor for non-clinical staff Hazel Lea.

Hazel had launched an Admin Forum at the Trust only a few months earlier and could see the Charter’s potential for DCHS.

Hazel, Emma and DCHS People Promise Manager Karen Guy then immediately set about writing a bespoke version for the Trust, inspired both by the six pledges in the UNISON Admin Charter for Change and the seven elements aimed at improving the experience of all NHS staff in the NHS People Promise.

“This was a great opportunity to align the UNISON Admin Charter to the NHS People Promise and the DCHS values: this is a promise we must all make to each other – to work together to improve the experience of working in the NHS for everyone,” Karen says.

“Only by making Our People Promise a reality

will the NHS become the best place to work for all – where we are part of one big team that brings out the very best in each other.” Emma, Hazel and Karen sent their draft to the Admin Forum for feedback from admin staff themselves, and Hazel raised the issue with various committees at the Trust, keeping Emma in the loop at all times over the six months it took to draft from start to finish.

“It was very much a team effort: although I made the initial suggestion and was part of the process, Hazel did a lot of the behind-the-scenes work,” Emma says.

Emma and Karen were both present when Hazel signed the DCHS Admin People’s Charter last September, alongside DCHS Chief Executive Jim Austin and Chair Julie Houlder.

“Some people have said, ‘This applies to all members of staff’ and, to be fair, the principles would apply to any member of staff,” Emma says.

“Admin staff in the NHS can sometimes be forgotten about, but this Charter shows our Trust recognises that admin staff are vital to what we do, and that we are valued and appreciated.”

As a ULR, Emma hopes that the DCHS Admin People’s Charter will enable more admin

staff to take up learning opportunities both through UNISON and the Trust.

“I’ve been approached by people about learning and about joining the union actually, so the Charter is having those kinds of benefits already,” Emma says.

“People are showing more of an interest in learning and that they’re also associating my name with being a union learning rep, and I’m more than happy for that connection to be made.”

As a Mental Health First Aider and a wellbeing champion within the Trust, Emma is an advocate for the mental health benefits of learning.

“Learning is one of the things that’s essential to wellbeing and a person’s sense of self,” she says.

Whether she has organised a course in the workplace, or signposted a colleague to study online with the Skills Academy, Emma always enjoys seeing the difference it makes to anyone who completes a course.

“I enjoy seeing people achieve something, and what that means to them,” she says. “And if it’s something I’ve helped them with, then I’ve had a hand in helping them do something that will benefit them in the future, so I feel I’ve achieved something then, too.” *



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Promoting the plus in LGBT+

Asexual and aromantic members are combating the discrimination they face with a workshop, a factsheet and a new network.

Out asexual Penny Smith has developed a new workshop exploring asexual (ace) and aromantic (aro) identities that proved very popular during UNISON’s Year of LGBT+ Workers last year.

A long-time member of the union’s bi+ network, Penny came out as a bi-romantic asexual in an article for the Out in UNISON

newsletter in 2020.

“It means that I’m romantically attracted and can form romantic relationships with persons of any gender, but I don’t feel sexual attraction to anyone,” she wrote. “I love to hold hands, kiss and cuddle but I don’t need sex or particularly enjoy it.”

Penny then started talking to LGBT+ National

FACT SHEETS

* Ace / aro factsheet

www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2024/08/2024-ace-aro-factsheet-v2.docx



SCAN HERE

* Ace in the UK

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/resources/ace-report>



SCAN HERE

Officer Mitch Coe about what they could do to promote more ace and aro awareness, as these are two of the identities covered by the ‘+’ in ‘LGBT+’.

They started by planning and writing a workshop on ace and aro identities that Penny ran as a pilot at the 2023 LGBT+ Conference.

“As we were competing with five other workshops at the same time, I expected attendance to be me, my assistance dog George and my friend Christine, who was my dog-sitter at conference,” Penny recalls.

“But 25 people turned up, 20 of them said they were somewhere on the asexuality spectrum, and they asked to form a network, which blew me away.”

Since that pilot session, Penny has delivered the workshop to the LGBT+ self-organised groups in the Eastern, Northern, North West, South East and South West regions as well as in some branches.

“People have said that it was thought-provoking; that they’d learned something new; and that they’d not considered before what the ‘+’ in ‘LGBT+’ actually meant or realised what identities it covered,” Penny says.

Last year being UNISON’s Year of LGBT+ Workers helped promote the workshop, Penny says. “The Year certainly made it easier to say, ‘Hey, we’ve got this training you can have’,” she says.

“But now the Year has come to a close, we’re very

keen that we roll on through with all the work that we do – that’s really important.”

Penny is keen to see the workshop reach out into all parts of the union in future. “I’d like it to go further because it was the whole union that voted to change ‘LGBT’ to ‘LGBT+’ in 2019,” she says.

“And this is a whole-union issue, because reps could have someone who is ace or aro come to them for help about facing discrimination at work – and we’re not covered under the Equality Act.”

The new ace / aro network, the first of its kind in a UK union, drafted the ace / aro factsheet you can find on the UNISON website, and Penny hopes even more people will join as its profile is raised in the year ahead.

In a further sign of increasing ace visibility in UNISON, asexual activist Yasmin Benoit addressed the 2024 LGBT+ Conference, where she also chaired a panel session with two members of the ace / aro network and an ally.

Yasmin, who had also addressed a bi+ network meeting earlier in 2024, is the co-author of the 2023 Stonewall report *Ace in the UK* and became the first out asexual to lead the Pride in London parade last year.

““From 2023, expecting

to be a room on my own with a good friend and the dog to what happened at conference last year – I couldn’t have dreamed progress would have been that quick,” Penny says. “It just shows that if people can see themselves, they will come.”

While she’s keen to organise some ‘train-the-trainer’ sessions so that more ace / aro members can deliver the training, Penny has loved running the sessions so far.

“It’s amazing: I never thought I would be able to bring my whole self to my activism, so that feels really good,” she says.

“I’m now in my fourth year representing the National LGBT+ Committee on the board of ILGA-Europe and I’m the first out ace board member there – and that’s all because UNISON gave me the tools and the courage to be able to be me, which is fantastic.” *

ONLINE HELP

* Any UNISON member who identifies under the + (which includes ace / aro members) is part of the bi+ network and can join by contacting out@unison.co.uk



Uncovering Black history in Leeds

Black members explored hidden histories on the award-winning Leeds Black History Walk last year.

UNISON members investigated the Black community's deep roots in Yorkshire & Humberside when they took part in the Leeds Black History Walk last summer.

Jointly organised by the regional Black Members' Group and Heritage Corner Leeds, the walk was led by Joe Williams, the actor and writer who's been running the award-winning tour for the past 16 years.

"It causes you to readjust yourself: you see Leeds in a different light, and you see Black people in a different light," Joe says.

The tour introduces a wide range of Black people with connections to Yorkshire, including:

- * Olaudah Equiano, the Nigerian abolitionist who visited the county in 1791 on one of his pioneering political book tours
- * Prince Alemayehu, the

Abyssinian prince who died in Leeds aged 18 in 1879

- * Sarah Parker Remond, the American abolitionist invited to speak in the city during the 1850s by the Leeds Young Men's Anti Slavery Society
- * Pablo Fanque, the 19th century Black circus owner who is name-checked in The Beatles' song Being For The Benefit of Mr. Kite (and is the subject of a solo theatre show by Joe himself).

But Joe reaches much further back than the 18th and 19th centuries. "There's a temple in York that the Romans built and partly dedicated to the Egyptian goddess Isis because they revered Nile Valley civilisation," he says.

Egypt's significance for world civilisation has been obscured ever since the Ancient Greeks appropriated its culture, he points out. Even the



names of goddesses like Isis or our words for iconic Egyptian structures such as 'pyramid' and 'obelisk' come from Greek.

"The French philosopher, the Comte de Volney, says that Egypt is the foundation of Western arts and science but that got obfuscated by the northern Europeans who came late to the table of civilisation and have shaped it in their own image," Joe says.

The Leeds Black History Walk emerged out of the Leeds Bicentenary Transformation Project, the community heritage project launched in 2005 to mark two centuries since the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in 2007.



“The Leeds Bicentenary Transformation Project was very grassroots: Black people in the community wanted to know about ancient African history and its relevance to today, the transatlantic slave trade and the Black British experience,” Joe recalls.

“So after this four-year project, the Leeds Black History Walk became the legacy project to share the rich information we’d amassed, to represent each other’s humanity and see each other as human beings.”

But even while the bicentenary project was busy re-humanising the local Black community, others were trying to do

the exact opposite: Joe can remember a University of Leeds academic at the time telling students he believed Black people were less intelligent than white.

“The statement that Africans are less intelligent is made regularly in Britain but it’s never refuted – it’s as if you can’t say it only because it’s not ‘politically correct’,” Joe says.

Last summer was the

“You see Leeds and you see Black people in a different light after the Walk”

third time that the regional Black Members’ Group and Heritage Corner Leeds have collaborated on a walking tour for UNISON members.

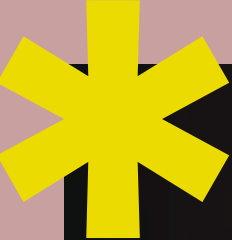
“Many people return again and again because there’s so much information over 6,000 years of history, you really can’t process it all in two hours,” Joe says.

“It’s really nice that people come back and then the discussions evolve because you don’t get that anywhere else in society.”

The repeat bookings have prompted Joe to reflect on how he can deepen the links on the tour between Black British history and the history of social protest and the labour movement.

“The Lascelles family, who made their money from sugar plantations in the West Indies developed toll roads in Yorkshire – and there were two riots in the 18th century because people had difficulty accessing key places, markets, employment,” he says.

“Unions evolved out of protests like this, which are inseparable from where the financing came for Britain’s social development, so I do think there’s a natural partnership between telling the story of Africans in Yorkshire – and Britain – and explaining how unions came about in the first place.” *



Helping members access learning online

Newcastle City Branch publishes its course guide online to help make them more accessible to learners who prefer using their phones, tablets or computers to print copies.

Newcastle City branch chair Louise Cameron is helping the branch take its learning offer to more members by improving its online communications.

“Learning is so massive in our branch, and we organise things so quickly, so as soon as you send the course guide to print, it’s out of date,” she says.

“And while hard copies are good because a lot of the members in our branch don’t have access to computers, many people use their phone for everything nowadays.”

Louise found that the most obvious solution for sharing the course guide online was to use Sway, the web-based presentation programme that’s part of the Microsoft

365 suite of applications. She was already using Sway to put together a newsletter in her the council role.

“The really good thing is that you can create documents in Word or PowerPoint or whatever you’re used to using, and then you go and create a Sway from that existing document: it does all this

magic and you get this fabulous result,” Louise says.

“And once you’ve created your Sway, it’s a live document, so if you want to add a maths course or an embroidery course, you can just go in and update the Sway behind the scenes, so members are always getting the most up-to-date version.”

While there is a learning curve involved in getting to grips with the programme, regular use helps you really speed up, Louise says.

“Now, it’s a bit of a fuff-on at first and you have to be patient because it changes things that it thinks you want to do but you don’t,” she says.

“So at first, it was taking me a week to fiddle with a document to get it right but now I can do a 50-page document in a couple of hours.”

As well as adding new courses as and when needed, the branch can also update the listing for each individual course as bookings come through.

“If a course is getting booked up, you can add something to say, ‘Only three spaces left!’,” Louise says.

The branch is also looking to add short videos to help learners find their way to in-person courses.

“You can film a worker saying, ‘This is the space that we use for training at

Eldon Square’ and we can show people what the room looks like and where the toilet is or tell them how they don’t need to bring a pen,” Louise says.

“Or you could add a video of our ULR Caroline Collinson saying, ‘I’m Caroline, if you get lost, you’re looking for me, this is who I am’.”

Hosting the Sway version of the course guide on the branch website can also help smooth the process of securing release to attend a course, Louise says.

“If you want some time off to enhance your skills and your manager doesn’t believe you – which sometimes happens with low-paid workers – you can signpost them to the website and they can see everything on there, which helps them embrace it,” she says.

“And then when the manager’s on there, they may find some training for

themselves as well, so that’s a win-win-triple-tick for that!”

While overhauling online communications around learning, the branch takes care to continue to look after members who find hard copies more accessible.

Fresh printouts of the updated course guide are left in the Learning Zones and on every floor of the Civic Centre once a week for members to flick through during breaktimes. Plus there are posters in all the Learning Zones and throughout the Civic Centre with a QR code that members can use to sign up for courses.

Newcastle City is also one of many branches that use Microsoft Forms to survey their members about particular issues, Louise says.

“We use Microsoft Forms a lot for consultation, so if one of the Self-Organised Groups (SOGs) says ‘We want to investigate poverty’, we create a form that people can fill in online and honestly, the involvement of members has been fantastic,” she says.

“That means we have everything on hand to show evidence to the employer during negotiations – like the feedback from members who want sanitary products to be available in the toilet so they don’t have to log off for an hour to go and get them from a shop.” *

Learning is so massive in our branch, and we organise things so quickly, so as soon as you send the course guide to print, it’s out of date



Bringing the sunshine

Rachel Cruz is spreading the equality message as her branch's LGBT+ Officer.



EDF Energy Branch LGBT+ Officer Rachel Cruz is not kidding when she says she wears the T-shirt and lives the life.

A proud trans woman, Rachel has spoken at the union's LGBT+ and National Energy Conferences in the last year.

She's the site lead for the Doxford LGBTQ+ Supporters Network who organises EDF's involvement in Sunderland Pride.

In the digital world, Rachel plays an active role on LinkedIn, where she promotes equality and diversity to her thousands of

followers on the platform.

And when she's not busy with any of that, she can be found getting the party started from behind the DJ decks, where her uplifting musical style is translating into ever-increasing demand.

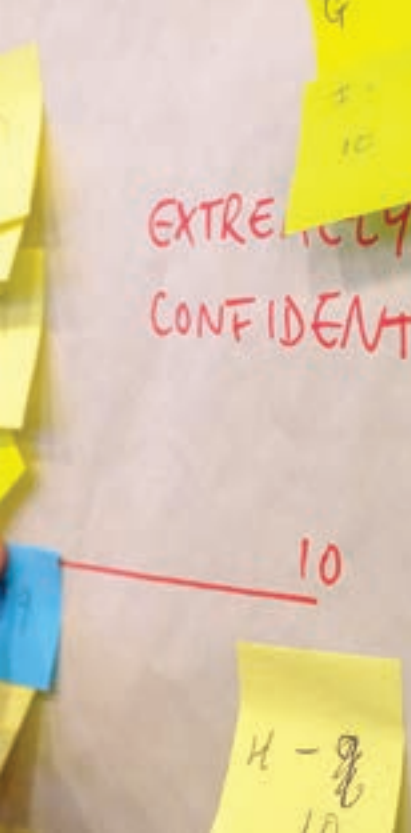
It simply made sense to become her branch's LGBT+ Officer, Rachel says. "I wanted to take on the LGBT+ Officer role because I wear the T-shirt and I live the life!" she says. "I wanted to show that anything is possible."

Rachel sees the role as an opportunity both to mentor and to educate. "I've had bags of life

experience that's priceless for this role – I get people approaching me wanting to join simply because of who I am," she says.

Born in Liverpool in the 1960s, Rachel remembers how right it felt to put on her mum's shoes to play in the Wendy house as a child.

“I always say, 'Let's make today so good that yesterday is jealous!'”



But by the time she was dressing up in her teenage bedroom, that good feeling was fighting a battle with the hardcore heteronormativity of the late '70s and early '80s.

“By the time I’m in my 20s, I’m dressing up in secret and then throwing stuff away – and this cycle keeps repeating,” she recalls.

She was in her 40s before the crisis came to a head, when the prospect of getting married forced her to set out on another journey instead – to self-acceptance as a trans woman.

That meant rebuilding almost her whole life. So after finding a new job, she set out on her first

journey to work as Rachel.

“I got to the general office door and I just froze – I was so close to not going in,” she says. “But I just took a deep breath, opened the door and I stepped inside because Rachel was here and here to stay she was.”

Struggling with feelings of low self-worth for some time after her break-up, Rachel was at one point seriously contemplating taking her own life and later had to deal with being made homeless when someone she was sharing a house with assaulted her.

But she’s met every challenge head-on.

She started work at EDF four years ago. “I’ve been for interviews at companies where I’ve walked down the office being laughed at, so it was really important that I came to somewhere that championed equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I),” she says.

“I came to EDF because everybody’s welcome – and now all the senior executives know me and they’re all really good with what I do.”

Rachel helped ensure LGBT+ visibility during UNISON’s Year of LGBT+ Workers last year and supported the branch’s drive to support diversity through its training programme, which included running UNISON College’s Trans

Ally Training, as well as sessions with Show Racism the Red Card (SRtRC) and Wearside Women in Need on domestic violence.

“What I like about UNISON is that our branch is very can-do, so things get done. And I’ve got to do so many amazing things because I’m part of it.”

The first UNISON LGBT+ event Rachel attended was the 2023 LGBT+ Conference in her home city of Liverpool.

“That was amazing because that was my first time I’d been back since I left in 2007 and my first time as Rachel, so to be in the city centre as me, walking past offices where I’d worked, walking past the Liver Building, was the most amazing moment ever,” she says.

Rachel travelled to Edinburgh for the 2024 LGBT+ Conference, where she spoke in support of motions on LGBT+ inclusion at work and respect for gender identity and pronouns in the workplace.

“My strength for UNISON would be utilising my personality to deliver stuff and that’s what I want to do,” Rachel says.

“My glass is always half full. I’m always there to bring the sunshine wherever I go. I always say, ‘Let’s make today so good that yesterday is jealous!’” *



Moving up to nursing

Completing a pre-degree module has helped Geraldine Thompson enrol on a nursing degree.

Operating Theatre Assistant Geraldine Thompson has begun a nursing degree with The Open University (OU) after completing the K102 Introduction to Health and Social Care module with UNISON's support.

"I knew that I wanted to study nursing at university, and the K102 counts towards the degree, so it was a good way to get back to a bit of uni work before committing to the full degree," she says. "The K102 is a taster that gives you an idea of what the degree will be – and you can do the module and still get that qualification even if you don't move on."

Geraldine, who works in Causeway Hospital on the outskirts of Coleraine in Northern Ireland, says that the additional study sessions laid on for K102 students by UNISON made a real difference to her.

"I hadn't been in education for a while, so it was good to get that bit of extra support," she says.

"We went through what was

expected and talked through what they were looking for on each assignment – the study sessions were very helpful that way."

UNISON College also delivered online interview skills sessions for members who were applying for places on the nursing degree at the same time as Geraldine.

"They talked through what to expect at an interview and I found that really helpful just to get an idea what the interview for the degree would be like and what sort of questions they would ask, as well," she says.

Although Geraldine completed the K102 five years ago, she was only able to enrol on her nursing degree when she secured a full-time job at the hospital a year ago (nursing students with the OU must have a permanent contract).

"The degree is very full-on because I work full-time as well as studying, but the K102 prepared me for that because I was working while I was



doing that as well," she says.

Geraldine has also completed UNISON's Future Health Leaders Programme, which aims to help participants identify how they can lead positive change for colleagues and the people they care for in the health service.

Since exploring how to set up a student support network while she was on the programme, Geraldine also has been involved in establishing a network in Northern Ireland, which is set to launch later this year. *



I hadn't been in education for a while, so it was good to get that bit of extra support



Jacquie's passion for the power of learning

UNISON staff who worked closely with Jacquie Jennissen-Green pay tribute to the learning advocate who died suddenly late last year.

North East Lincolnshire Branch Secretary Jacquie Jennissen-Green, who died suddenly at the end of last year, was passionate about helping members and activists develop themselves through learning and training.

“Jacquie really believed in the power of learning, at any age, to build individual people, families and communities – and to build trade union influence and strength,” says Regional Education Officer Dan Wood.

“When we rolled out UNISON’s lay tutor training programme in our region, Jacquie was immediately on board, because her aim was to develop our branches by unlocking the skills, knowledge, enthusiasm and potential within our members and activists.”

One of the first lay tutors to graduate in Yorkshire & Humberside, Jacquie trained a group of new UNISON stewards last autumn.

“She was so enthusiastic about the experience – she brought energy, enthusiasm and compassion to everything

she did,” Dan says.

Jacquie also helped to create and develop a Local Learning Hub in Grimsby, which means activists can be trained locally, instead of having to travel to UNISON’s regional centre in Leeds.

“The regional education team will strive to embed the Local Learning Hub model as an appropriate, ongoing and enduring legacy of Jacquie’s beliefs, efforts and inspiration,” Dan says.

Regional Organiser Michael Parkinson had been helping Jacquie put together a team of activists and stewards with the knowledge and skills to build a stronger branch and secure better deals for more members.

“We worked together, with activists, to challenge and improve our influence over a number of employers in north-east Lincolnshire, always aiming to bring about a better working life for UNISON members which Jacquie was so passionate about,” he says.

“I will miss her absolute dedication, inspiration,



and the fun person she was to work with.”

Regional Organiser George Ayre had got to know Jacquie well while working with her in his various UNISON roles over the past eight years.

“I saw Jacquie last year when she came to Leeds to take part in mentoring training,” he recalls. “That summed her up – developing her skills so she could pass on the experience and knowledge she’d built up to others.”

Jacquie always had the interests of members at the forefront of everything she did, George says. “She had a formidable presence, but when you got to know her, she had a big heart, and always encouraged positivity for everyone around her.” *

* Jacquie Jennissen-Green, born 7 June 1966, died 1 December 2024



Where do you want to go next?

To take the next step and explore the power of learning through UNISON College, just use the QR codes or the weblinks to find the webpage you need.

I want to explore **UNISON College** ...
Everything you need is here:
learning.unison.org.uk



UNISON college



Member learning

I want to find out about **member learning opportunities** ...
Find the next course for you at:
learning.unison.org.uk/member-learning/

Come say Hello!

We hold UNISON College events in workplaces, branches, regions, the national office and online. And we aim to attend all of UNISON's conferences. There's usually a member of staff or an activist on hand to answer questions, provide materials, and showcase what we offer. **So please come and say hello!**

I want to know more about **activist training** ...
Find out more at:
learning.unison.org.uk/activist-training/



Activist training



Support

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Regional education

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The UNISON logo, consisting of the word 'UNISON' in a white, serif font with a stylized white wave graphic above the letters 'I' and 'O'.

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