

The Learning

Co-ordinator

# HANDBOOK

**What is a Learning Co-ordinator  
and what do they do?**

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Updated May 2025



 **UNISON  
College**

The Learning

Co-ordinator

# HANDBOOK

**This handbook was created by East Midlands LLCs during their training in October 2022 and March 2023 and updated in May 2025**



# What is a LLC?

Learning Co-ordinators (LLCs) are UNISON Branch Officers who oversee member-learning on behalf of the branch. Their responsibilities can be broken down into 4 headings:

1. **Working with the Branch**
2. **Co-ordinating the ULRs**
3. **Co-ordinating Learning**
4. **Working with the Employer**



<https://learning.unison.org.uk/>



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## WORKING WITH THE BRANCH

Can include:

- Attending Committee meetings
- Reporting to the Branch
- Building relationships with branch officers
- Asking for a budget and resources
- Being the link to the ULRs
- Promoting learning
- Making the case for learning
- Gaining employer support
- Overseeing the ULRs
- Creating a sustainable branch structure
- Ensure a link between learning and recruitment
- Provide articles and images for branch comms

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## CO-ORDINATING ULR ACTIVITY

Can include:

- Maintaining communication with ULRs
- Reporting to branch
- Actively recruit new ULRs
- Providing support
- Helping develop ULRs
- Organising regular ULR meetings (check-in & support)
- Reviewing facility time
- Asking for help from the branch
- Mapping workplaces
- Recognise good work
- Mentoring and enthusing
- Delegate tasks
- Discuss further training for the ULRs
- Create a 'team'
- Sometimes providing a 'reality-check'

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## CO-ORDINATING LEARNING

Can include:

- Promoting events and courses
- Identifying support for events
- Understanding funding available
- Identifying resources
- Providing support to ULRs organising events
- Working with the branch, make sure they are aware and supporting
- Providing direction to the ULRs
- Conduct Learning surveys
- Evaluate activity
- Liaise with providers

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## WORKING WITH THE EMPLOYER

Can include:

- Overseeing learning agreements
- Ensuring time off for ULRs
- Negotiating time-off for members
- Linking with existing negotiating body and the branch
- Taking issues to the branch
- Communicating & work with the training lead
- Seeking funding for courses
- Demonstrating our value
- Highlight learning needs of the workforce
- Ensure that the focus is not solely on skills for that job

# 1. Working with the Branch

Keep the branch informed & aware of the learning available to members

To advocate & champion the learning of the members

Be the link between the ULRs and the branch

Help the branch to grow

Lead on Learning Agreements

How would you sum-up the role?

## WHY WOULDN'T YOUR BRANCH 'ORGANISE AROUND LEARNING'?

It's easy to forget the stress the branch are working under. Here are some reasons why they may not be able to focus on member-learning

**UNSUPPORTIVE EMPLOYERS**

**TIME CONSTRAINTS**

**FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS**

**OUTSOURCING**

**SICKNESS RATES**

**COMPETING PRIORITIES**

**REPRESENTATION**

**DON'T KNOW ABOUT UNISON LEARNING**

**VS**



**MEMBERSHIP SPLIT ACROSS EMPLOYERS**

**LACK OF ACTIVISTS**

**PAY SQUEEZE**

**MEMBERSHIP APATHY**

**RECRUITMENT & RETENTION**

**MORALE**

**JOB LOSSES**

**LEARNING NOT SEEN AS CORE UNION ACTIVITY**



Benefits of organising  
around  
*Learning*



Recruitment



Retention  
(value for  
money)



Creates an  
engaged  
community



Improves  
employer  
relations



Address work  
issues (e.g.  
sickness)



Visibility  
within the  
workplace



Helps  
increase  
activist  
numbers



Supports  
members to  
develop and  
progress



Empowers  
members



Supports  
branch's  
campaigns

= *Positive*

## 2. Co-ordinating ULRs



### QUESTION

Why did you become a ULR?

Knowing that could help find future ULRs

Wanted to get involved but being a steward seemed too scary. This is really positive

I love helping people!

I've done loads of UNISON courses & wanted to help organise more

An activist said I'd be good

Felt 'stuck' at work. The ULR is a whole new life!

The union had helped me and I wanted to give something back

I'm already active promoting equalities. This fits perfectly.

I wanted to share one of my own interests

I missed out on learning myself

I have a background in education

Attended a branch engagement event

Just got an email and thought "that's up my street"

It was an opportunity for my own development



## QUESTION

Why wouldn't a member become a ULR?

Knowing that could help find future ULRs

Don't know what a ULR is!

Don't have the time

won't get my manager's support

*Unions are all about strikes aren't they?*

Before I know it you'll make me a steward

There's too much work to do - I'll let my team down

*It's too scary!*

There's already a ULR.

My own experience of learning isn't good.

I'll be on my own

Employer may discriminate against me



# Recruiting ULRs

## WHO TO TARGET

EXISTING  
ACTIVISTS

APPRENTICES

NEW MEMBERS

THOSE WHO'VE  
ATTENDED A  
UNISON COURSE

THOSE WHO  
ATTEND  
EMPLOYERS'  
TRAINING

THOSE WITH A  
LEARNING  
BACKGROUND

THOSE WHO  
ALREADY  
VOLUNTEER  
E.G WELFARE  
CHAMPIONS

ATTENDEES AT  
BOOK SWAPS

NON-MEMBERS  
INTERESTED IN  
LEARNING

MEMBERS  
SUPPORTED BY  
THE BRANCH IN  
DIFFERENT WAYS

BELIEVE IN THE  
UNION BUT  
AFRAID OF BEING  
A STEWARD

UNISON  
CONTACTS





# Recruiting ULRs

## HOW TO GO ABOUT IT

AT LEARNING  
STALLS

ATTEND COURSES  
AND TALK TO  
LEARNERS

ASK AS PART OF  
THE COURSE  
EVALUATION

GET THE WHOLE  
BRANCH  
INVOLVED

ALL-MEMBER  
EMAILS

MAP WORKPLACES  
AND FOCUS ON  
KEY AREAS

INCLUDE IN ALL  
BRANCH  
COMMUNICATIONS  
E.G. NEWSLET

BE CLEAR WHAT  
THEY WOULD DO

INVITE  
POTENTIAL ULRs  
TO ATTEND  
MEETINGS

RUN A ULR  
INFORMATION  
SESSION

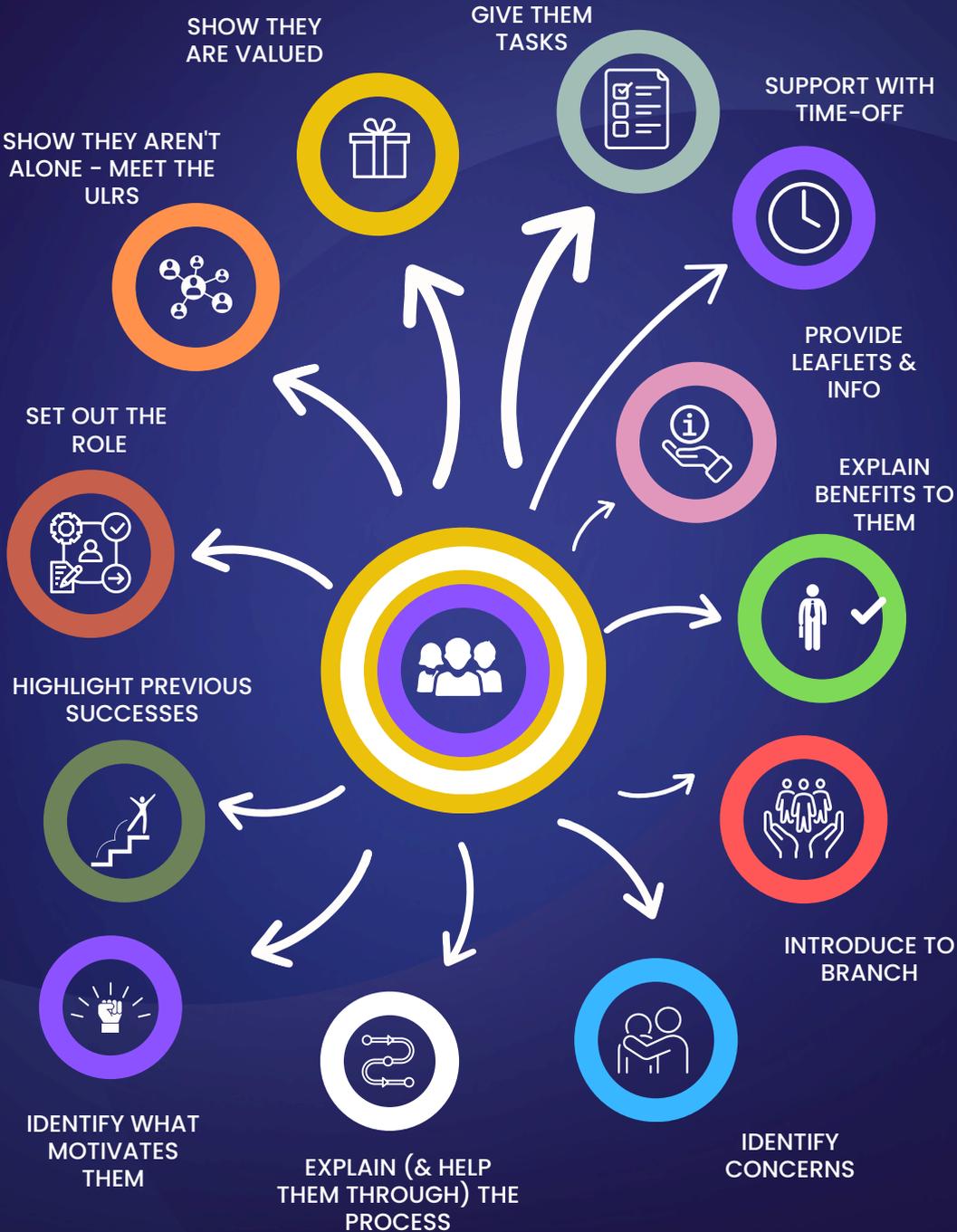
ASK THE  
EMPLOYER TO  
HELP

PUBLICISE THE  
BENEFITS TO  
THEM

SPEAK AT SOG  
MEETING



# SUPPORTING NEW ULRs BEFORE TRAINING



# SUPPORTING NEW ULRs AFTER TRAINING

- Meet up
- Find out what they've learnt
- Manage expectations
- Find out about their ideas
- Congratulate them
- Identify their interests
- Be available
- Identify concerns

What do you want?	What do they want?
A confident ULR	To feel supported
A happy ULR	To see a pathway forward
To identify their skill sets	Opportunities to get involved
To identify further training needs	Know they are listened to
To ensure they understand the role	An action plan
To make them feel that they belong	Know what's expected of them
Agreed actions	Freedom to be creative
To ensure they understand the branch	Dates of ULR meetings
A relationship	Facilities available (including time)

# ABC (D&E) OF ULR SUPPORT

## A - APPRECIATION

Recognise good work  
(no matter how small)

Thank them

Tell the branch/region

Nominate for an award

...but don't embarrass  
them

## B - BENEFITS

What motivates them?

Boost confidence

Provides experiences

Supports job  
prospects

Gives a sense of value

## C - COMMUNICATE

Be clear

Meet for a 1-2-1

Send updates

Build a relationship

tell them what they  
mised

## D - DEVELOP

Help them explore

Let them have a go

Identify what can be  
improved

Ensure they feel a  
sense of ownership

Let them lead

## E - EMPOWER

Involve them in  
developing the aims

Ask for their help

Make meetings  
enjoyable

Let them take the  
credit

Find further training

*"The quickest way to lose a volunteer is to make them feel  
isolated and uninvolved"*

**A-Z of Volunteer Management**

### 3. Co-ordinating Learning



LEARNING IS MORE THAN JUST COURSES. WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF ACTIVITY A BRANCH COULD CARRY OUT?

Learning surveys

Reading Challenge

Newsletters

Accredited qualifications

Promote courses by local providers

Quick Reads and bookswaps

Webinars

Lunch & Learn

Speakers

Learning at Work Week

Shadowing/mentoring/coaching

Linked to themed days

Promote UNISON courses

Stalls

Digital Champions

Continued Professional Development

Case studies

Collaboration with the employer

Enrolment sessions

Functional skills

Informative/health walks

Online learning

## 4. Working with the employer

### REASONS TO INTERACT WITH LINE MANAGERS ON LEARNING MATTERS

FACILITY TIME FOR ULR	
HIGHLIGHT THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES	
REQUEST TIME-OFF FOR LEARNERS	
NEGOTIATION - THEY HAVE REFUSED TIME-OFF FOR MEMBER	
SUPPORT APPRAISAL PROCESS (SUPPORT THE INDIVIDUAL)	
ASK THEM TO PROMOTE OUR COURSES	
ASK THEM WHAT IS NEEDED	
ENCOURAGE THEM TO THINK 'OUTSIDE THE BOX'	
FEEDBACK ON YOUR SURVEY FINDINGS	

### THE ROLE OF THE TRAINING MANAGER....

- OVERSEE MANDATORY TRAINING
- CONDUCT TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS
- PROVIDE TRAINING
- SUPPORT THE BUSINESS NEEDS
- OVERSEE APPRAISAL PROCESS
- COMMISSION AND PROCURE TRAINING
- DELIVER TRAINING
- PROMOTE OPPORTUNITIES

### LINE MANAGERS' PRIORITIES

SAVINGS/BUGET

TARGETS

STAFFING (RELATIONSHIPS, RETENTION, SICKNESS ETC)

RESOURCES

POLICY

REGULATION & POLICY

PRESSURES FROM ABOVE

### THE TRAINING MANAGER, FRIEND OR FOE?

- THEY HAVE THE SAME AIMS
- THEY CAN PROVIDE ACCESS TO WORKFORCE
- HAVE EXPERTISE
- MAY BE UNABLE TO DELIVER ALL THEY WISH
- HAVE THE SAME BARRIERS E.G. MANAGERS
- COULD PROMOTE UNISON LEARNING
- WANT TO WORK WITH ULRS TO PROMOTE THEIR COURSES
- COULD TRY AND CONTROL WHAT WE WANT TO DO

= potential friend

# LEARNING AGREEMENTS

## KEY ELEMENTS OF LEARNING AGREEMENTS

An Introduction - Purpose

Definitions

Roles & Responsibilities - Commitments

Equalities

Resolution of disagreements

Establish a Learning Committee

Facility time - ULR and Learning Co-ordinator

Time off for the learners

Review date

Reference Government skills agenda, legislation etc.

## PROS AND CONS - WHY SHOULD WE HAVE A LEARNING AGREEMENT?

POSITIVES	NEGATIVES
<i>Provides a reference document</i>	<i>Pointless without ULRs in place</i>
<i>Both sides are clear</i>	<i>Can be very hard work</i>
<i>Provides protection for ULRs</i>	<i>Could just sit in a drawer unused</i>
<i>Future proofing in case of change</i>	<i>May not get reviewed - gets out of date</i>
<i>Confirms national agreements</i>	<i>Just a tick-box exercise?</i>
<i>Raises profile of UNISON Learning</i>	<i>Potentially take a very long time</i>
<i>Writing &amp; negotiation can build relationship</i>	<i>Can cause conflict with other unions</i>
<i>Use it to recruit &amp; organise around</i>	<i>Can be restricting</i>
<i>Creates a forum where we can negotiate around skills</i>	<i>Negotiation could distract from ULR activity</i>

