

Language, Literacy and Numeracy in Local Government

The Union Role



Why Unions?

- ◆ Moser : *“union-led programmes are often seen by learners as credible and safe”*
- ◆ Unions : important position of trust and confidence in workplace
- ◆ Able to advocate and negotiate in the workplace
- ◆ Public sector – union role important. Use and invigorate existing structures

Why ULRs?

None of this would be possible without the outstanding work of our union learning reps who have unlocked the potential of individuals written off by the system. ULRs are showing the world that unions are relevant to the needs of the 21st century workforce: our key message is getting out – unions help people get on at work, as well as get even.

Brendan Barber, TUC General Secretary



What Do Union Learning Reps Do?

- ◆ Union Learning Representative activities
 - promoting learning
 - initial advice and guidance
 - information about courses
 - negotiating with employers
 - working with providers
 - accessing learning resources



Learning Rep profile

- One in six learning reps are from minority ethnic communities
- Just over one in five learning reps were not previously union activists
- Learning reps are active in a wide range of economic sectors just under half in the public sector, a similar number in the private sector and a small proportion (6%) working in the voluntary sector.



Our Achievements

- ◆ Longstanding high quality reps training.
- ◆ 12,000 ULRs
- ◆ 67,000 learners via the Union Learning Fund in 2005
- ◆ 10,000 learners taking national tests in those programmes



BUT...

“12 million workers have a reading age of children – Poor results from £6 billion scheme.”

- ◆ Guardian newspaper headline 24th January 2006

Why a Union Academy?

- ◆ Demonstrate union commitment – next steps
- ◆ Improve support framework for unions
- ◆ Give unions a stronger voice
- ◆ Stronger influence on providers
- ◆ More support for union representatives on public bodies
- ◆ Build support within unions at senior levels



Union Academy

“The establishment of this academy is an excellent way of developing effective skills support networks to help unions engage in skills development at local, regional and national level, often working through their local college. It is another good example of the hub and spoke model, which we believe essential to improve how good practice is identified and disseminate. Its key role in further developing union learning representatives (ULRs) will be vital.”

Trade Unions in Local Authorities

- ◆ Unison – 1.3 million members
- ◆ Amicus – 1.2 million members
- ◆ TGWU – 807,000 members
- ◆ GMB – 572,000 members

- ◆ But there may be others.



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