



## Suffolk learning providers working well with trade unions

**S**uffolk has a good range of learning providers. Those that are profiled here have all been working successfully with trade unions from various workplaces across the county. This edition of Common Ground has given them space to say a little bit about themselves. The contact details provide a useful starting point for learning reps and others to make a first approach to what can sometimes seem large and rather daunting organisations. They will do their best to help you but if they can't, they will be able to put you in touch with someone else who can. If you want more information about learning providers, contact your union or TULL.

### West Suffolk College

**Contact:** Jenny Bower, Skills for Life Manager  
**Tel:** 01284 716291  
**Email:** Jenny.Bower@westsuffolk.ac.uk

**Area covered:** Western Suffolk, with local learning centres in Sudbury, Haverhill, Newmarket, Thurston, Stowmarket, Mildenhall. Also work in Norfolk, with a centre in Thetford.

West Suffolk College, at Bury St Edmunds, has been offering onsite Skills for Life courses at Tesco stores in Suffolk over the past two years. The course offers a flexible menu of learning which gives employees an opportunity to improve their IT, literacy and numeracy skills, and gain national qualifications.

The college works closely with the USDAW union learner reps, and the USDAW county learning coordinator. After an initial meeting to discuss the

course, the learner rep then publicises the course and encourages staff to come along.

Generally employees attend the sessions on their day off or after their shift, which shows a high degree of commitment. Every regular attendee has gained at least one qualification during the 11-week programme.

Employers are offered an embedded IT/Skills for Life course, with 2 tutors running it. The college will



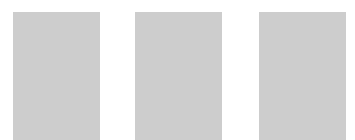
offer the new ICT qualifications when they come out in September, as well as continuing to offer a chance to get a national qualification in English or maths.

Language courses are offered to employers who are actively recruiting in the new accession countries such as Poland. All classes are offered onsite and are free.

**Photo: Staff and Usdaw members at the Tesco store in Bury St Edmunds, who have successfully completed their Skills for Life and IT course. All of them gained a qualification in maths, English or IT.**



Leading learning and skills



## Lowestoft College

**Contact:** Chris McGuinness, Head of Centre, Skills for life  
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**Email:** c.mcguinness@lowestoft.ac.uk  
**Fax:** 01502 500031

**Area covered:** Based in Lowestoft and covering the area that includes Leiston, Bungay, Beccles and Gorleston.

Chris has been working with various local TUs and employers, such as Crown Artist Brush, Europack and Jeld-Wen. Courses are all focused on a subject of interest, including IT skills, keeping your body healthy and computer maintenance. Skills for life are then embedded into the courses to enable participants to make the most of the learning opportunities.

All the courses lead to the national test if someone is interested. Some students have started on basic computer maintenance and have now progressed to an intermediate level. The courses are proving popular and successful. Chris is keen to continue making links with workplaces to offer appropriate courses.



**Employees from Jeld-Wen find out how computers work from the inside.**



**Contact:** Martin Peel or Tim Granville  
**Tel:** 01473 295401 or 0845 603 1059 (lo-call rate)  
**Email:** martin.peel@iag.suffolkcc.gov.uk

**Area covered:** all Suffolk

'Nextstep' offers a unique service to anyone, including union learning reps and employers, as they can give impartial answers to questions about training programmes and opportunities for union members and employees. They produce a newsletter, which ULRs might find useful. "We are always happy to meet with learning reps either at their workplace or at events, like the recent Learning Days in Ipswich and Lowestoft," says Martin Peel, IAG, nextstep Manager.

Are you a learning rep wanting to take your skills to a new level? Some ULRs have gone on to train further by taking up an NVQ in Advice and Guidance, (Levels 3 and 4), which 'nextstep' offer in conjunction with Suffolk College. Enrolment for this takes place in September.

Redundancy counselling can be offered and there may be help for training available for those being made redundant.



## Suffolk College

**Contact:** Steven Phipps  
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**Area covered:** Ipswich and surrounding area

Steven Phipps, Workplace Skills for Life Co-ordinator for Suffolk College, has been working in partnership with the Royal Mail ULRs for some time now. Together they have delivered several successful 'Literacy through IT' sessions. Suffolk College have more courses to follow, including business related subjects and 'Managing Diversity' training.

Learning at Work Day (25th May), during Adult Learners Week, enabled union members and others to make contact with learning providers. Steven also found that the TULL learning Saturday, held in Ipswich, was a good way to make new contacts and enable people to get information and a taste of the courses he runs. New learners, ULRs and project co-ordinators all found his maths taster worthwhile and interesting.

Steven also recently ran an interesting short session on 'Learning Styles' with the Fire Brigade Union (FBU), at the Ipswich Fire Service HQ. This will be repeated for the Ipswich ULR network soon.

## WEA - Workers Educational Association



**Contact:** Margaret Todd  
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**Area covered:** All Suffolk

WEA specialises in work with the health and social care sector. They particularly focus on 'Return to Learn' courses, which give those who have been out of education for a long time, the chance to refresh themselves and acquire new skills, including study skills. After doing the courses many participants go on to take up other new opportunities. The course builds confidence and enables people to explore new directions with their learning.

The WEA has recently worked with midday meals supervisors in schools across Suffolk and Norfolk. Another successful project has been taking place with Waveney District Council, where employees from the leisure and works departments have taken up 'Introduction to IT' courses.

**John Cole,**  
refuse  
loader and  
UNISON ULR



Learners and  
staff attending  
various union  
and IT courses.

## Otley College

**Contact:** Bill Cattermole, Work based Learning Manager  
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**Area covered:** All Suffolk, Essex and Norfolk

Otley College has been working successfully with the GMB, engaging employers and promoting opportunities to employees. Steve Walker, GMB Learning Project Co-ordinator, identified appropriate businesses in the region. A fun Learning Day was a good way for the college to meet and talk with individuals about their interests and learning needs. A computer software programme was used to spark people's interest in literacy and numeracy and participants were given the chance to take up further training to improve their skills.

Europack, in Beccles, is one of Otley College's successes. Learners took a basic IT course, held on site, on Friday afternoons. They went on to achieve a level one literacy qualification. The courses succeeded because they were held in the workplace at times convenient for learners.

The Co-op Distribution Centre in Ipswich has also seen several courses successfully run in the company boardroom, including one for a small group of employees with learning difficulties. The Union Learner Rep and the General Manager worked together to promote the courses and support learners with flexible working hours.

Otley College welcomes the opportunity to further develop links with unions. This is a good way to promote lifelong learning in the workplace.

## The @Tulip Project

**Contact:** Paula Reeves or Marion Maxwell

**Tel:** 01603 614322

**Email:** tued@ccn.ac.uk

**Area covered:** Suffolk and Norfolk

The @Tulip advisers will travel out to workplace learning centres across Norfolk and Suffolk and to enrol learners and provide tailor made courses on site. Current courses:

- Beginners Spanish
- Computing for the Terrified as taught courses
- English for Speakers of Other Languages in Care homes.

Skills for Life courses can be tailor made for a specific work environment.

"We provide excellent IT facilities and a wide range of Learndirect courses. We can support ULR's with training and information. We are learner friendly in our approach and courses can be timed to allow for shift working patterns," says Paula.

"We are happy to discuss specific requests for training following workplace surveys and offer presentations to employers and union groups. Trade Union Studies (City College Norwich) has courses for union members. Course books available on request."

# In brief

## 10 good reasons

### Review available

We have produced a brochure with the LSC for Suffolk, outlining a variety of benefits and advantages of workplace learning and the benefits of working with unions. Ten examples of good practice in local workplaces are featured, with a particular focus on the business advantages. Copies available free through TULL



### Management seminars

Two seminars for managers were run by TULL recently. They were aimed at developing managers' understanding of the TU role in workplace learning, and highlighted models of good practice, explored the issues related to working with trade unions and identified ways of moving forward and overcoming difficulties. Feedback from the sessions was very positive.

### Tempting tasters

Two TU learning days in Suffolk were run recently. As a result, several of those who participated have now signed on for other courses. One person commented, "It's years since I left school but I really want to find out more about digital photography."

A radio programme was produced by ULRs for USDAW, UCATT and CWU at the Ipswich learning day. This can be put onto the unions' websites.

### European Social Fund (ESF)

TULL have successfully applied for European Social Fund (ESF) funding to carry on and to develop further the work that has been taking place with learning projects in Suffolk. The focus of the new project is on ULRs, non-traditional learners and engaging employers.

### Local union learning reps' Network meetings

We have been arranging meetings in Suffolk to enable union learning reps to meet and network with others working in their area. Networking can prove useful when trying to build up numbers for courses, exchange local information and counter the feelings of isolation that ULRs can feel.



Bob Read from Acer (2nd left) and Jocelyn Davies from Training Matters (5th left) with staff from The Co-operative Society and Ipswich Buses

## Training Matters

**Contact:** Sue Nicholson

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**Area covered:** All Suffolk

**Training Matters (Suffolk County Council) is working with many ULRs across the county delivering Skills for Life courses including literacy, numeracy, ESOL and ICT.**

"Most of our learners have been successful in achieving adult literacy and numeracy accreditation and qualifications in ICT. All Skills for Life courses are free to the employer and the learner and are delivered in the workplace or convenient community education centre", says Sue.

"Earlier this year we were pleased to deliver, in partnership with the Association of Colleges in the Eastern Region (ACER), a pilot course for ULRs called 'Making it Happen', which built on the basic skills awareness covered in the ULR training. The course was greatly enjoyed by all who attended and it is hoped that we will be able to deliver this to more groups in the future."

As part of its extended role Training Matters can facilitate a range of other courses in partnership with ULRs, for example:

Skills for Families, Beginner Modern Languages, Food Hygiene, Emergency First Aid, Assertiveness and Confidence Building.

If you would like to discuss how we can support training for your workforce anywhere in Suffolk please contact Sue Nicholson.

**Trade Union Learning Link Suffolk (TULL) aims to promote union participation in learning across the county. The organisation was formed in 2001 and is funded by the Learning and Skills Council for Suffolk.**

**For further information contact:**

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