



Heinz workers keen to Return to Learn

Employees at Heinz in Worstead are really getting behind Lifelong Learning thanks to the support of Usdaw's Union Learning Representatives.

IT courses have become increasingly popular among Heinz employees with many completing the PC for Beginners course, progressing to CLAIT (Computer Literacy & Information Technology) and the advanced CLAIT Plus course. But IT isn't the only type of learning available; some employees are taking advantage of brushing up skills to improve their writing or numeracy skills, and Spanish and digital photography classes have also proved very popular with employees.

Over the last three years, Heinz has put great emphasis on training and developing its employees. Through the Eureka Learning Project, with support from the company, USDAW has carried out training needs analyses among employees

and arranged to put on a variety of courses. These are run at a learning centre provided on site by the company, with support from the Learning and Skills Council for Norfolk and TULL. Many employees embarking on learning courses haven't studied or taken part in education for thirty years and for some, returning to learning was a nerve-wracking prospect. In its three years, Heinz can boast of many employees that have overcome their fears and grabbed the opportunity of Lifelong Learning with both hands.

One of Heinz and the USDAW Eureka Learning Project's success stories is Paul Sandell, who has been a factory operator at Heinz for over 20 years. Paul is one of five on site Union Learning Representatives and he commented: "As a union Learning Rep, I offer advice and support to my colleagues and promote learning throughout the factory. I talk to my workmates to see what courses they are interested in and in turn liaise with local training providers. It is also my job to negotiate shift changes for learners with their managers. As well as arranging courses, I also participate in the courses that are of interest to me. I have successfully completed the beginners, CLAIT and CLAIT Plus I.T. courses and received my certificates in recognition of this. It's a great feeling when you receive your certificate – it makes it all worthwhile!"

USDAW have introduced a Library Box –funded by USDAW, the GMB union and the LSC, to encourage employees to share books, language tapes and CDs. A partnership with the local library has been established. Funding for a PC has been found for employees to use to assist in their learning.

Heinz employees work various shifts covering 24 hours, seven days a week, which can prove difficult for shift workers wanting to start doing courses. The learning providers need to be flexible and run sessions around shifts where possible.

For further information contact Lynn Jones Eureka Project Manager at USDAW (Union of shop, Distributive and Allied Workers) on tel: 01603 409665 m: 07986 131698.

Union Networks Going Local

Local Groups of Union Learning Representatives met in Kings Lynn and Norwich recently. Building on the established Norfolk Union Learning Representatives Network, smaller local networks are enabling ULRs from different unions and workplaces to get together to exchange ideas and to learn about current issues.

One topical issue which was addressed was the impact the new Government initiative, to introduce voluntary national tests for adults in literacy and numeracy, might have on unions and their members.

The TGWU has established a learning committee in Gt. Yarmouth and is working with TULL to expand to include other ULRs in the area.

For more information contact your union or TULL.

More projects ... More Unions

Other union learning projects supported by the LSC Norfolk are undertaking excellent work which will be featured in future editions of Common Ground. These include

Unison 0870 889 0373

Working in different sectors:-

- Schools meals supervisors
- Health workers
- Care workers
- Highways

Courses designed to meet the needs of some workers such as Meals Supervisors together with access to a range of general courses for others.

CWU Neil Colby 01603 281308 m 07801 364088

Working with postal and telephone workers to establish learning opportunities and local learning points.

Back-Up Project Jackie Buxton 07966 211716

Setting up a wide variety of work-based learning opportunities, including BBC Skillswise and webwise sessions, plus Bitesize and e-learning.

Trade Union Learning Link Norfolk (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 Norfolk.

The Learning and Skills Council is responsible for the largest investment in post 16 education and training ever seen in England. Their aim is to raise participation and attainment through high quality education and training.

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Norfolk unions putting workplace learning high on the agenda

Thousands of Norfolk employees are learning on and off the job as part of a nationwide drive to promote Lifelong Learning. Courses with broad appeal such as aromatherapy, computer skills and numeracy have helped boost workplace learning in the county. And to further increase learner numbers, a luxury learning bus packed with high tech IT equipment and plasma screens is touring work places around the county to introduce workers to the joys of Lifelong Learning.

The Learning and Skills Council Norfolk and TULL (Trade Union Learning Link) are working closely with unions and employers across Norfolk to promote lifelong learning in the workplace.

The take up of Norfolk organisations embarking on Lifelong Learning projects is dramatically increasing with employees and unions engaging in a wide variety of learning and training opportunities. Some of the courses successfully undertaken include beginners and advanced IT, skills for life –such as letter writing and number skills, and non-vocational courses such as digital photography, Spanish and Indian head massage.

This edition of Common Ground gives some examples of the work taking place in Norfolk.

IT without Tears

An ‘IT without Tears’ course has proved an eye-opener for print worker Toni Warren. Over the last 18 months, Toni has been bitten by the IT bug and is about to embark on her fifth computer course as part of the trades unions’ Lifelong Learning initiative.

Toni is one of 12 employees of Great Yarmouth-based engravers and printers Downey & Company to take advantage of a range of free courses - including crash courses in French or Spanish in the run up to the summer holidays, IT and even Indian Head Massage. Many of the courses were run by staff from Great Yarmouth College at the printer’s premises.

Organised by Will Martin, the Graphical Paper Media Union (GPMU) Trade Union Learning Representative, and with the backing of the company, the courses are designed to make staff aware of the benefits of Lifelong Learning. “The morale and confidence of many of my colleagues has surged ahead now they have taken their first steps on the ladder of Lifelong Learning. The aim is to encourage people to increase their level of skills, which is great for both individuals and for business,” he said.



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Learning Skills Council

If you would like copies of this leaflet or more information about the new qualifications in English or maths please contact your union learning rep or the Norfolk National Test Helpline that can put you in touch with your nearest National Test centre on 0800 03 80 007.

On the buses and down the docks with the Transport and General Workers Union in Great Yarmouth



Exciting times for lifelong learning

Employees of ASCO, Stevedores and the Port Authority at Great Yarmouth Docks have proven themselves accomplished learners with a staggering 90% of employees taking up some form of Lifelong Learning since the launch of the learning project eighteen months ago.

Many of those employees are now on their second or third course and are true ambassadors for the

Second chance with First Group

'First' (Eastern Counties) workers have encompassed Lifelong Learning through a partnership between the company and the Transport & General Workers Union (T&G), with 70% of the 134 employees embarking on learning courses.

'First' bus drivers have joined a variety of courses including art, IT and basic skills with future requests for German, Italian and DIY classes.

Cooperation and flexibility from local training providers and the employer have ensured the programme has turned into a huge success. Local training providers have worked around employee shift patterns and 'First' is developing an on site learning centre with PCs for learners' future use.

John Taylor, Training Manager for Eastern Counties, said: "Kenny Barron from the T&G Union instigated Lifelong Learning at the Yarmouth depot about 18 months ago and it has blossomed across the entire company. As of next month, all of our depots across the region will be on board with Lifelong Learning. The benefits to the employer and the company are evident; literacy, numeracy and overall learning levels have improved and employees are working as a team more. 'First' is highly committed to the development and training of its employees and fully supportive of any lifelong opportunities they wish to pursue."

Lifelong Learning programme. In partnership with the Transport and General Workers Union (T&G), employees have taken up a range of courses including IT, digital photography and stress management.

Robin Harvey, a Cargo handler at ASCO is a union Learning Rep and has embarked upon training courses himself. Robin's commitment to lifelong learning has extended through to his family with Robin, his wife and his mother all enrolling on a beginners IT course. Family members of ASCO employees are also welcome to enrol in courses of their choice to aid in their learning and development.

Barbara Aldous, Operations Supervisor at ASCO, said: "We support the lifelong learning programme 100%. Learning gives our employees confidence, which benefits them, and in turn benefits the workplace. We are very accommodating to employees taking up new learning opportunities – if they've got the initiative to start a new course then we will fully support them."

Kenny Barron from the T&G, is supported by the LSC Norfolk and TULL to help develop these projects and others across the county. Kenny said: "Lifelong Learning continues to be a huge success for companies right across the Great Yarmouth area and I am very proud of what the Union Learning Reps are achieving within their respective companies. These are very exciting times and it's great that there is so much enthusiasm for Lifelong Learning.

The T&G Union is fully behind promoting learning opportunities for members and their families and is dedicated to building relationships between its members and education."

ASCO Union Learner Reps Gerry Scrivener and Robin Harvey both sit on the Great Yarmouth Learning Committee. Here, Union Learner Reps from a variety of Yarmouth companies involved in Lifelong Learning meet to share best practice and to marry employees' training course needs.

'First' employees and on site Union Learner Reps Stu Jones, Alick Calvert and Paul Bensley are all keen to promote learning throughout the Yarmouth depot and have built excellent relationships with their learners and training providers.

Learner Rep Stu Jones, said: "The average age of our workforce is 40 plus and for some it was initially a daunting prospect to get back into learning. But now many of our employees are engaged in some form of learning and their confidence has soared. It is really good for morale and some employees have commented on how good it is to know almost as much as their grandchildren do about computers! Lifelong Learning is about overcoming the fear factor and breaking down barriers."

He added: "I am really proud of how far the Learning Reps have come with their projects. I am using Great Yarmouth as an example of best practice as to what can be achieved with forward thinking and dedicated Union Learning Reps."

Kenny Barron, TGWU, 078798 43910

Working with the docks, bus companies, manufacturing and others, to recruit, train and support learning reps and set up courses, using a range of providers

GMB partnership learning cuts the mustard

The GMB union has come up with a unique and proactive way to promote workplace learning to Norfolk organisations with the tour of a learning bus packed full with laptops, a plasma screen and other high tech IT equipment. The luxury £350,000 Keystone Development Trust Multi-Mobile bus project is used across the county to get people motivated about learning opportunities.

The learning bus recently travelled to Unilever Bestfoods in Norwich, which manufactures Colmans Mustard, Knorr and Helman's food goods. Unilever employees visited the bus between shifts and had the opportunity to trial a bite size IT course, consisting of basic computer skills, using the Internet and typing skills.

Ten Union Learning Representatives have been recruited at Unilever and they will be responsible for promoting and organising the learning opportunities available to Unilever's 200 employees in Norwich. In

support of Unilever's dedication to staff training and development, the company has the 'Nice Little Learner' scheme whereby every Unilever Bestfoods Norwich employee is entitled to £200 towards any certified course of their choice, be it wine tasting, IT or scuba diving. Unilever is also working towards launching an e-learning centre where employees can find out about various learning opportunities available to them via the Unilever website.

Unilever's Norwich site HR Manager Ronnie West, said: "Unilever places great emphasis on staff training and considers learning and development as fundamental to the company and its employees. As an employer, I feel we have



an obligation to work with our employees on their personal development and it is important that we introduce innovative ways to encourage their involvement in various aspects of learning. At Unilever we are dedicated to raising awareness of all of the opportunities available to our employees, and hope that through the take up of both vocational or non-vocational courses our employees will become passionate about learning."

Steve Walker, GMB Project Worker, said: "It is great news that Unilever has ten employees committed to becoming Union Learning Reps and we will be supporting the reps in their roles as much as possible. The great thing about Lifelong Learning is that both the employee and employer benefit from it; for the employee there is increased confidence at their personal successes and the employer benefits from a more contented workforce that is increasing skills and more adaptable to change."

Richard Crook from TULL added, "The removal of barriers to learning is fundamental to getting adults back onboard with learning if it is to be a success. Cost, time, travel, childcare, lack of confidence and many other barriers need to be addressed. Where employers and training providers, such as Norfolk County Council's Norfolk Adult Education department or Norwich City College, are working with unions, many of these issues are being overcome with the unions driving the learning agenda forward."

Steve Walker, GMB, 01603 625260

Working with small manufacturing companies, public sector workers and others to set up new learning projects. Courses have ranged from digital photography to fishing and from reflexology to improving literacy and numeracy.

FIRST at Eastern Counties



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IT without Tears Toni is a firm supporter of the initiative and it has led to her securing a new role within the company. She commented: "If it hadn't been for the help and advice I received from my Learning Rep and the GPMU I would not have had the confidence or the skills which have proved really helpful in my new position at work."

Established over 100 years ago, Downey & Company is a printing firm specialising in the engraving and printing of fine stationery. Will was one of the first Union Learning Reps to be recruited when the LSC Norfolk supported the 'GPMU Norfolk Learning Zone' project which now receives funding from the National Union Learning Fund.