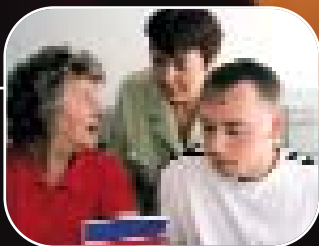


Promoting Lifelong Learning
Nine Steps to a Smarter Workplace





This brochure lets Usdaw members and learning reps say in their own words what our campaign for Lifelong Learning means to them. No one can fail to be moved by some of these stories. When we launched our campaign for Lifelong Learning there were many people who did not think that access to learning was an issue that a trade union should take up.

The last two years have shown that not only is it an issue for every workplace where we have members, but that without our involvement in campaigning for learning our members will continue to miss out and remain on the wrong side of the learning divide. Our campaign has shown that our members want access to learning.

Key to making learning accessible is our emerging network of union learning reps. That is why Usdaw sees it as so important that learning reps get statutory rights in the same way that safety reps have statutory rights. That is why we proposed to the Labour Party National Policy Forum that Labour Party policy should be to give learning reps their rights. We are pleased that the Labour Party and the Government have now made it their policy to give statutory rights to learning reps.

Just as our movement developed safety reps and a Labour Government gave them statutory rights to help make the workplace safer, now we have developed learning reps and, in partnership with the Labour Government, we anticipate they will get statutory rights.

Trade unions helped make workplaces safer. Now we must help make them smarter.



John Hannett
General Secretary

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Introduction

Two years ago, at our 1999 Annual Delegate Meeting, we launched our Campaign for Lifelong Learning. Since then we have supported thousands of our members who have wanted to Return to Learn. Our work to promote Lifelong Learning has taught us a lot. We still have a lot to learn but a number of things have become clear.

Our members want the opportunity to Return to Learn

There are three big obstacles that we need to help our members overcome to Return to Learn.

Our members often lack confidence in their ability to Return to Learn.

We have to build up our members' confidence to Return to Learn, and through our growing network of learning reps Usdaw is uniquely well placed to do this. We can also ensure that the learning is 'bite sized' so that members can gradually build up their confidence, and ensure real difficulties with Basic Skills can be addressed.

Our members have busy lives and find learning inaccessible.

Learning often takes place at times that are inconvenient or at venues that are too far away for all but the most committed. By negotiating that learning is provided in or near the workplace and at convenient times, Usdaw can make learning accessible.

Our members often find learning too expensive to contemplate.

If something has to go, it is the luxuries, and learning is a luxury if the kids need new shoes. Usdaw can publicise Government programmes to give grants to learners such as Individual Learning Accounts, but we can also negotiate and campaign for learning to be more affordable.

Our experience is that if we remove these three obstacles, many of our members will grab the opportunity to Return to Learn. This brochure contains many examples of our members speaking in their own words about their experience of Return to Learn, and what it has meant for them.

To promote Lifelong Learning, we have to get organised

To deal with these obstacles, we have to do what we are good at – get organised! We are learning what this involves. It has become clear that there are nine features that a workplace where we are organised for learning will have. We are calling these the Nine Steps to Getting Organised for Lifelong Learning. The following sections of this brochure each explain one of these nine steps.

As with all the work of the union it is the lay activists who are at the heart of what we do. So it is the union learning reps who have done most to promote learning. Throughout this brochure learning reps explain themselves what each of these steps involves.

Our campaign has involved many people – as learning reps and as learners. This brochure lets them tell you their story in their own words.

Amanda Coll, Ethel Austin

In December 1999, Ethel Austin recognised Usdaw as the trade union to represent its employees and since then I have never looked back.

I was encouraged by my work colleagues to stand to become a union rep, although at the time I was a little unsure I was the right person for the job. I went ahead and made it my job to get the best training I could.

I left school at the age of 17 and have received little education since, so going back into a learning environment was daunting. My expectation was that everyone else would have had some form of education since leaving school. That was not true. We were all in the same situation.

I began my training with a three-day Usdaw course run by Usdaw's Training Officer. This course was fantastic. He put everyone at ease and made everyone feel equal and although I was very nervous, I was able to contribute to group discussions and put my opinions forward. This in itself was a huge achievement for me. He informed me of further courses I could attend, and I can truly say that this was the seed to my continuing education.

Since attending my course in January 2000, I have since gone on to achieve the Home Study Course, part 1-3, become a learning rep and attended a Stage One Union Rep course. I am currently finishing an NVQ Assessor course. I have gained my Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT) certificate with the TUC and I am currently carrying on with Integrated Business Technology Stage 2 (IBT2). I have also successfully completed an Introduction to Counselling course, something I have wanted to do for a number of years, yet I have never had the confidence to do it before.

Yes, I have attended these courses and gained certificates, but personally I have achieved a whole lot more. Within twelve months I have watched myself grow and flourish as a person.

I feel more comfortable within a group of people. I am more relaxed in a classroom environment because learning as an adult is much more informal. My confidence has grown tremendously. I am much more aware of who I am and what I want and what I can achieve.

I have taken on my role of learning rep very seriously and currently been involved in the opening of Ethel Austin's Learning Resource Centre. I feel it is my role to encourage people back into education, to let them know what my own fears, worries and concerns were, and to encourage and help people who may feel exactly the same way I did twelve months ago.

Education has given me my life back. It has developed me as a person and has encouraged me to help others. Above all, it has given me faith in myself and has helped me make a lot of new friends.

Thank you, to all those who have encouraged and supported me.



Step 1

A Partnership to Promote Learning needs an agreed Policy Statement

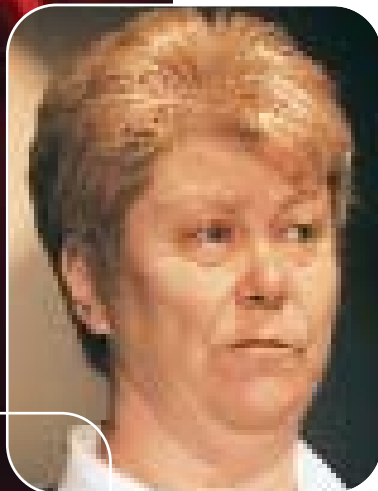
It is possible to promote learning for our members without the co-operation from the employer. A number of our reps have performed small miracles with little help and assistance from their employers. For example, in a retail store in our Southern Division the union rep attended a union learning rep course, and after a great deal of effort arranged an Introducing Computers course for our members at the store where she worked. The local college agreed to run the course at a learning centre near the store.

However, if we are to succeed in getting Adult Learning to our members, we need to secure the co-operation of employers. This co-operation cannot just rely on the good will of individual sympathetic managers but needs to be set down in a jointly agreed policy.

Just as we have negotiated agreements to promote health and safety in the workplace, so we need to negotiate agreements to promote access to Lifelong Learning.

These agreements need to specify the responsibilities of each party to promote access to learning, recognise the role of the union learning rep, and establish an approach to setting up site level steering groups or mechanisms where there can be regular discussions on how to work together to promote access to learning.

Usdaw has now begun to negotiate a number of joint policies on Lifelong Learning, and an extract from one is reproduced opposite.



We had a good relationship with our training manager, so we got lots of things done. We got the company to give paid release for reps to be trained as learning reps. The company agreed to let everybody have a key skills assessment in company time. We had promotion days for learning and for Individual Learning Accounts. There was a lot happening.

But then our company was sold to new owners and that's when it was so important to have agreed a joint policy. When we were taken over, the new owners agreed to abide by all our current agreements so they had to continue supporting our Lifelong Learning work.

Kathy Davis, senior steward, Littlewoods Leisure

Extracts from the Lifelong Learning Policy – Redcats (UK)

1. Introduction

Redcats (UK) supports the principals of Lifelong Learning. The changing nature of work means we all need to update our existing skills and learn new skills on an ongoing basis. We therefore encourage a culture of learning and continuing personal development of all colleagues.

2. Scope of the Policy

... Redcats (UK) is committed to working in partnership with Usdaw and Sata to promote Lifelong Learning activities throughout the company.

5. Lifelong Learning Steering Group

We are committed to maintaining a Lifelong Learning Steering Group consisting of Usdaw and Sata reps, line managers/team leaders, members of the HR team and other interested parties by invitation. The Steering Group will meet regularly to monitor and review current activity, discuss ideas and information, and plan new initiatives to promote Lifelong Learning...

The Key Components of a Joint Policy

There are a number of key components in a Policy to form a partnership to promote access to Lifelong Learning:

- The Policy should make clear senior management's commitment to working with Usdaw to promote access to Lifelong Learning.
- The Policy should ensure that there is a partnership to promote access to training for the job a person is doing, but also access to career and personal development. In short the policy should cover all forms of learning that improves the individual's skills and employability.
- The role of the union learning rep needs to be recognised and supported, including the need for the learning rep to attend appropriate TUC and Usdaw training.
- A Policy needs to describe the means to implement Lifelong Learning initiatives. These may take the form of a site level steering group or in smaller sites take the form of ensuring that promoting Lifelong Learning is a regular item at local forum meetings.



Step 2

A Partnership to Promote Learning needs a Site Level Steering Group to Promote Learning Initiatives

Often learning reps can manage to make great progress on their own without any help or support from a joint company/union steering group. However, this places a great burden on individuals and becomes very difficult if things start to go wrong.

A steering group is responsible for promoting the learning initiatives on or near the site. It helps to ensure that both the company and the learning reps can each play their role in promoting access to learning, and that the work of all sides is co-ordinated and does not cut across each other.

The core of the steering group is the representatives of management and our Usdaw learning reps. Together the steering group plans all the learning promotions and initiatives at the site. This can range from learning promotion days and the promotion of Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs), to the setting up of courses in or near the site and negotiating with the local college or learning provider.

It is often valuable for the steering group to co-opt a representative from the local college onto the group so there is a solid accountable link to the college. It can also be valuable to co-opt a local TUC learning services or Usdaw project worker to help keep the steering group up to date with developments.

It is important that clear terms of reference are negotiated for the steering group so that everybody understands its role. On smaller sites, it may be that an existing forum could carry out the role of the steering group.

A Manager's View

The 'Skills for All' campaign at Croal Mill, in my opinion, has really demonstrated 'Partnership' in action.

The joint steering group, in particular, has been a catalyst for making things happen and keeping us focused.

The steering group is proving to be a really valuable asset. We all get a fair and equal chance to share ideas and contribute and together we decide how to take things forward. It has most certainly been the driving force behind our onsite learning centre, which will open to staff in April 2001.

***Barrie Southern, Production Support Manager,
Littlewoods, Croal***



An example of the Terms of Reference of a Steering Group

Lifelong Learning Steering Group – Littlewoods, Shaw

Membership of the Steering Group

In line with the company's Lifelong Learning Policy, the Shaw steering group will be a joint forum comprising of six union learning reps, an Usdaw project worker, three nominated managers from the Shaw Distribution Centre, and a nominated member of the training department. Where the nominated learning reps from the committee are unable to attend meetings, reserve reps will be nominated to deputise.

The committee will reserve the right to invite/co-opt other relevant people both internal and external to the organisation to assist with activities as appropriate.

Role of the Steering Group

The overall role of the steering group will be to promote, initiate, support and monitor Lifelong Learning activities within the Shaw Distribution Centre. It will endeavour to make learning opportunities both inside and outside the company as accessible as possible and enable all employees to maximise their own individual potential.

Responsibilities of the Steering Group

The responsibilities of the steering group will include:

- Develop and promote a range of onsite learning initiatives to encourage individuals back into learning.
- Monitor and evaluate the activity and feedback.
- Explore new initiatives, both internal and external which will support the learning process (e.g Individual Learning Accounts, etc).
- Identify funding opportunities to assist with learning activities.
- Link with local Further Education colleges and other outside bodies to maximise potential for learning opportunities.
- Ensure there is effective communication with all relevant trade union and company structures about the aims, objectives and progress of the project.

Meeting Arrangements

The group will meet on a bi-monthly basis or more often as the group decides is necessary. Minutes and action points from the meeting will be recorded, a précis of which will be available to all staff via the noticeboards.



Step 3

Without a Network of Trained Learning Reps, we cannot Promote Lifelong Learning

The foundation of all Usdaw's work is our network of lay reps. So just as we need health and safety reps to promote safer workplaces, so we need learning reps to promote access to learning.

Reps need access to training. The standard training for a learning rep is a day release course spread over five weeks. The training helps reps to be able to talk on an equal footing to employers about Lifelong Learning. There are also follow-on briefings on special topics such as Basic Skills.

Where there is a partnership to promote learning, the learning reps will work with company staff to promote access to learning through some kind of site learning committee. Where there isn't a partnership established the learning reps will promote learning as best they can off-site.

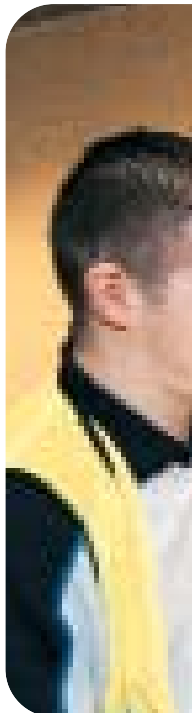
Udaw now has over 140 trained learning reps, involved in promoting access to learning. At the moment there is no legal entitlement to paid release for learning reps to be trained or for the time they spend performing their duties. Arrangements are negotiated locally.

Udaw proposed to the National Labour Party Policy Forum that there should be statutory rights for learning reps. This was accepted, and now the Labour Party and Government are committed to introducing legislation to give learning reps statutory rights.

I did a union Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT) course to try and improve my prospects at work. Now I am doing Integrated Business Technology Stage 2 (IBT2). I wouldn't have gone on it if the union reps hadn't put the leaflets on the noticeboard. I had no time to go and look for a course myself.

I wouldn't hesitate to go on another course. When people see their friends and colleagues at work going on a course they feel encouraged to go along. You have nothing to lose.

Julie Ford, Reality, Martland Mill, Wigan



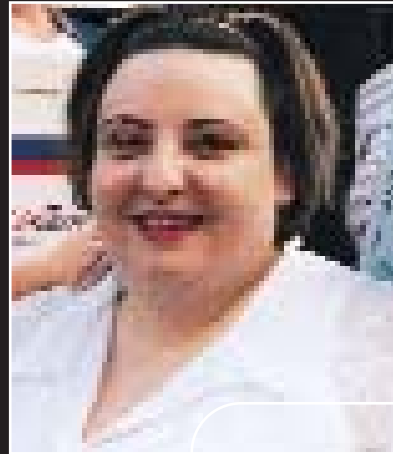
Michelle Kelly

I have been a union rep for many years, a role which I really enjoy. After attending the learning reps course, I was fully on board with the Lifelong Learning concept and strategy.

I could see a way forward of how I could assist my members by giving them the opportunity to develop themselves, but knowing that many of my members did not have confidence to go back to college. I thought if we could deliver the courses onsite where people were in the comfort of an environment they knew and could also go along with their friends, this could and would break down barriers. I sent out a questionnaire to see what my members would be interested in. The results gave me a great buzz and I started organising my first courses, Information Technology (IT), Spanish and sign language.

These have now been running and have been well attended. If anyone was to ask me was it all plain sailing, well my reply would be: "No it was not, however, the feeling you get when you see your first course start, is an incredible feeling and I would do it all over again. My members are now doing courses and achieving certificates for passing exams. If that's not worth it, what is?"

Michelle has now been seconded to the Usdaw Lifelong Learning project and is looking forward to working on the Basic Skills project and also working within other Reality sites.





What first motivated me to do a computer course was that, although I had some very basic knowledge, every time I used our computer at home I would have to rely on my daughter to get me out of trouble when something went wrong.



She would come in and tap on the keyboard so fast I never got to see what she had done, although my problem had been fixed.

So I would say yes, my inspiration and help came from my daughter. I then decided it was time I enquired about a **Basic Skills** computer course. It lasted twenty weeks. I found time because I enjoyed doing the course. It gave me more confidence, so much so I sat three tests, database, spreadsheets and word processing, and passed all of them.

Looking back on it, the hardest part for me was having the courage to attend for the first week. Although the course was mainly friends out of work, I found that those friends became close friends. We shared a common interest and that was to learn more about computers. My skills on computers have increased and I find now that my daughter is not coming in as much to assist me, although there are times when I still have to rely on her, but not as much.

I recommended the course to my wife who is also an employee of Reality and she has enrolled. I have already enrolled on another course and started to learn Spanish, which I am also enjoying. I have already put it to use when I went on holiday. Once again I was surprised to find that the Spanish I am learning has given me more confidence to communicate with Spanish people.

I would like to thank my union (Udaw) and my shop steward for supporting me. Without their assistance and hard work in setting up these courses I don't think I would have ever taken part.

Barry Herniman, member, Reality, Raven Mill

Helping our members help themselves

I have had to fit the course in with my home-life and working hours. I struggled at first as I have no PC at home to practice on, but I have just passed my word processing module, and this has spurred me on.

I am enjoying the course and the challenge of learning new skills.

I would not have been able to afford the full cost of the course. I needed the Individual Learning Account.

Lesley Buttall, member,
Reality, Bolton

My name is Alan Arnold. This is just a short letter telling you why I decided to start learning about computers. When I found out that there was a computer course coming up at work I decided that it was about time that I tried to better myself.

It is good getting to grips with new technology after all it's everywhere. It also looks good on your CV, you never know what it might lead to. I'm hoping to do all the computer courses and then go on to further education.

Yours sincerely

Alan Arnold, member,
RCS Distribution



I am writing to let you know how glad I was to have participated in the course using my Individual Learning Account. Before I attended college I was so afraid of the PC that I avoided it at all cost.

Since attending the course, I now feel so confident and use the PC whenever I have a spare minute. It has helped me so much in my job and I am looking forward so much to attending more courses in the future.

The staff at the college are so friendly, nothing is too much trouble and their patience unending. I cannot speak too highly of the course and the staff.

Many thanks for the opportunity.

Pam Marshall, member,
Reality, Bolton

Step 4

To Promote Learning, a Site Needs to Develop a Partnership with a College or a Learning Provider

One of the major barriers for Usdaw members becoming involved in Adult Learning is that learning has been inaccessible. Courses are often arranged at times and in locations that are difficult to attend, and don't fit in with shift patterns or the busy lives of workers and carers.

A partnership with a college involves agreeing with the college that they will run courses at times and in ways that suit our members. This involves four things – where the learning will take place, when it will take place, how it will be run and how much it will cost.

In big workplaces, colleges may agree to use a learning centre provided by the employer or even agree to equip a learning centre. In smaller workplaces, colleges may agree to deliver learning onsite using laptop computers, or in a learning centre near the workplace.

When we approach a college to provide courses, we represent a number of learners. We have the strength to negotiate that courses are delivered in a style our members want, at convenient times and at a reasonable price.

By using our collective bargaining power we can make learning more accessible in ways individuals, on their own, cannot.

When I first advertised the European Computer Driving Licence course, the interest in our building was tremendous. Seventy members put their names down to enrol on the course.



I met with Bolton College who were originally looking to charge each member £150 for the course.

Because there were so many members interested, I was able to negotiate the price down to £90 and saved each member £60 out of their Individual Learning Account (ILA). They also agreed to provide a class exclusively for our members.

Jackie Eccles, learning rep, Reality, Thynne Street, Bolton

Wigan and Leigh College Business Development Unit is working in a very effective partnership with Usdaw and the company at Littlewoods Croal Returns Centre to promote learning through the 'Skills for All' campaign.

This three-way partnership is particularly powerful in that the 'top-down' commitment of the company is complemented by a 'bottom-up' approach through the union learning reps.

The learning reps have a pivotal role in taking the Lifelong Learning agenda out to the membership and encouraging and supporting members to Return to Learn, particularly to those who would never have otherwise considered doing so.

Partnerships between companies, unions and providers are becoming increasingly influential in widening participation in learning especially amongst non-traditional learners and this has been demonstrated at Croal where we now have over 170 people signed up for learning programmes from Basic Skills to Information Technology (IT) courses.

But I think the particular success of this partnership lies in the fact that we have a proper consultation method, a steering group, and that there is a mutual respect and collective belief amongst all three partners about the value of learning. The most important factor of all however, is that the initiative at Croal is 'learner centred'. In other words it puts the needs of the learners above everything else.

Catherine Caine, Wigan and Leigh College



I started a Spanish course at night school last year but the course fell apart so I was absolutely delighted to hear I could study at work. Both my daughter and myself signed up straight away. It's so convenient to study at work. The weekly course starts at 3pm and finishes at 5pm, which fits in with my shift and doesn't interfere with my home life – it's great. It couldn't be easier.

The company have been very helpful and encouraging – Lifelong Learning has certainly given staff a morale boost and made coming to work much more enjoyable.

**Lynn Acroyd, member,
Reality, Raven Mill**



A Learning Centre for City Centre Workers

Usdaw has worked with Manchester City Council and other organisations to set up a city centre learning centre that would be accessible for shopworkers and other workers who work in Manchester city centre. The learning centre, called The Workshop, opened in August 2000 and is already being used by Usdaw members.

After we ran some free Information Technology (IT) taster courses, our members were more aware of what the learning centre was about. Members asked if we could run some language courses, so we decided to try. Usdaw learning reps contacted the nearby MANCAT College to see what was available, how much it would cost and if a tutor would come to the Workshop to run the course.

We advertised the courses within Co-op group headquarters to find out which languages our members were most interested in. Spanish and Italian were favourites. We helped the members take out an Individual Learning Account (ILA) to pay for the course. We then tried to work out which nights and times were best for our members.

We ended up with two nights of Spanish and one night of Italian – with ten in each class. We could have doubled this but the availability of tutors was limited. The college has been amazed because they always expect a good number of ‘dropouts’, but there have been no ‘dropouts’ from these courses. Several members have now indicated that they want to go on to do a follow-on course called the Bronze Award.

As learning reps, we have learnt that working with members at the beginning helps to establish what type and level of learning is required and gives the member confidence to attend.



Working with a good provider also helps. In this case MANCAT College and the Workshop worked closely with Usdaw learning reps to enable us to give our members what they wanted.

**Joan Lyall, learning rep,
CWS Group and Bargaining for
Skills/Usdaw project worker**

I am an employee of Reality within the Burnley call centre. I recently completed a computer course I had seen advertised at work. After speaking to my union rep to gain further information about the courses available, I then enrolled.

This course was very beneficial to me and gave me an insight into adult education.

When I had completed the course I was at a loose end and wanted to continue with Adult Education. Having enjoyed the experience, I am now a student at Burnley College two evenings a week studying Law and Psychology and in a couple of weeks I am starting to study Criminology.

I am very grateful to have been given the opportunity to attend the course through the union.

I also feel that a learning centre within Burnley call centre would be very beneficial to my colleagues and myself.

Debbie Chadwick, member, Reality, Burnley

Everyone needs to start somewhere. That's what I keep saying to myself. Trouble is, I've been thinking it for far too long now. How much longer, I dread to think. Thank goodness Lifelong Learning came along!

When Michelle Kelly, our rep, came to tell us about Lifelong Learning, I thought right, now is the time to do it. Computers have always been interesting to me, so that was the first one that caught my eye. I nearly missed out on the sign language course, as it was full by the time I made my mind up to do it. When someone had to drop out (for personal reasons), I jumped in straight away.

This is something that I've always wanted to do, and not just for selfish reasons (I suffer from a conductive hearing impairment called otosclerosis). I have often thought about how everyday things affect people with hearing difficulties, as it is one of the few disabilities that people cannot see, so do not realise that the problem is there. It might be something as simple as asking the time of the next bus, or instructions of how to get somewhere. I am also on the committee of a tenants association, so I hope that my sign language will prove to be an asset.

Jan Albert, member, Reality, Raven Mill

Step 5

To Campaign for Learning you need to Identify the Learning Needs

In the past, employers put notices on noticeboards asking for people to come forward for an interview if they wanted to get involved in learning, 'develop their talents' and so on. This has rarely produced good results. With a network of union learning reps, it is possible to get responses that go far beyond what an employer can organise.

A good way to identify learning needs is to organise a questionnaire. Learning reps will design a member friendly questionnaire, distribute it to the staff they work with, encourage them to fill it in and return it. Sometimes learning reps go as far as helping members to fill in the questionnaires.

The results are then analysed to see what learning people want. Then discussions can start with a local college to see what courses they will provide onsite and how courses can be arranged about shift patterns.

The questionnaires also create a lot of discussion and raise the profile of the campaign for Lifelong Learning and Usdaw.

The questionnaires can then be repeated each time a course programme is developed – as often as once or twice a year.

Ann Murphy works for the TUC's Bargaining for Skills unit at Usdaw and she helped me put together a learning pack which I sent out with a questionnaire to every member of staff. I got some excellent feedback to the questions. We asked what had stopped people learning in the past. I tried to gauge how many people would use a learning centre if it was provided. I also asked what kind of courses people wanted to study.



After I had analysed the information I contacted local colleges for help and advice. As a result a learning centre and training room was set up on the premises. A learning bus supplied by Tameside College visits every Monday and Thursday to give computer courses to staff.

**Michele Kelly,
learning rep,
Reality, Raven Mill**

Sample questionnaire...

USDAW

*The TUC in the North West
Bargaining for Skills Unit*

Tibbett & Britten

Learning Centre Questionnaire

Learning can be anything that helps you to develop your knowledge, skills and understanding. People learn in different ways throughout their lives, often through formal education at school etc, but more often than not, they learn informally through job related training or even hobbies and personal interests.

Regardless of how learning takes place, it has become increasingly important that we carry on updating and learning new skills particularly if we want to remain employable.

However, it is often very difficult for people to get the opportunity to update or gain new skills as flexible and irregular working patterns prevent them from accessing any learning opportunities outside of work.

That is why the Bargaining for Skills Unit and unions are working together to look at the possibilities of the Open Learning Centre and how best it will serve you.

Please complete this as soon as possible and give to your Shop Steward/Learning Representative as soon as possible. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask your union representative.

Thank-you for your time and support

The Shop Stewards Committee

Learning Centre Questionnaire

Personal Development

Writing a CV Assertiveness Study Skills Interview Skills

Other please state

Business/Vocational Courses

Customer Care Introduction to Management Report Writing

Health & Safety Presentation Skills Stress Management

VQs Please state subject

Hobbies & Leisure

Please state what hobbies and leisure activities you would like to see Learning Centre

Interested to learn something new, which of the following ways prefer to use

Printed Materials Audio Tape Computer Based Packages

Group Work Learning through the Internet

Classroom Environment Other

How likely are you to use the Learning Centre?

Very likely 12-2pm 2-4pm 6-8pm

Other

Name:

Job Title:

Age: 16-24 25-40 41-59 60+

Hours of Work: up-to 8hrs 8-16hrs 16-30 32+

Do your work hours/patterns change? Yes No

How important is learning to you? Important Unimportant

Why would you personally want to learn

To increase confidence Promotion Develop new skills

Qualifications Personal development Enjoyment

To help children Other

Are you studying/learning at the moment (i.e. college, evening class open learning or training courses) Yes No

If yes, what are you studying?

Have you opened an Individual Learning Account

Yes

No

What if any, would prevent you from learning?

Childcare commitments Travel/location Time Age

Not relevant to me Lack of confidence Shift patterns

Fear of exams Lack of interest

Do you feel you would benefit from advice & guidance about the type of learning/course to suit you?

Yes No

Would you use a Learning Centre Yes No Possibly

What subjects/activities would you like to see in the Learning Centre?

Computer Skills

Basic Introduction Intermediary Skills Advanced Skills

Language Courses

French German Spanish Italian Sign Language

Other Please State

Basic/Key Skills

Form Filling/Letter Writing Reading/Improving Spelling

Verbal Communications Skills Basic Accountancy/Book Keeping

Arithmetic Skills Understanding Wage Slips (Tax, National Insurance etc)

Step 6

Members need Accessible and Regular Advice and Guidance

People in work rarely get access to professional advice and guidance, which can help them take stock of their skills and their aspirations.

This kind of advice can help people get an understanding of the skills that they could develop to improve their employability, or to work towards their personal ambitions.

When a partnership to promote Lifelong Learning is agreed with their employer and a steering group is set up, learning reps can arrange for advice and guidance professionals to come onsite.

Members then get the opportunity to take stock of their situation. Often these interviews can help members understand much better how they can improve their skills and employability.

Good advice and guidance helps ensure members get on the right course for them and are less likely to drop out.



In July 2000, Usdaw learning reps within the CWS Group, with the Group on board, decided to run a promotion day for Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs), and to involve the local college MANCAT.

We promoted ILAs and the college provided an Information and Guidance Councillor. Members could learn about what an ILA was and how to use them and then speak to the Information and Guidance Councillor who was in a position to point the learner in the right direction to start any new learning.

Usdaw has found out that one of the main reasons learners drop out is because information and guidance is not given at the right time. Working together with professionals we can ensure that the courses offered are beneficial to our members.

**Joan Lyall, learning rep,
CWS Group**



As a child I changed school often because my dad's job in the Forces involved moving house a lot. As a result, I attended three different secondary schools and my education suffered. At the end of my schooling I achieved four GCSEs, which I don't think was too bad considering, but at the back of my mind I always felt that I was capable of better.

In the Autumn of 1997 a colleague and I decided that we would have a go at the computer course that was being offered 'free' by the union, more for something to do during the winter months than for any academic reasons. It was a 'drop-in' course. This meant that we could study during the hours that suited us and this fitted in nicely with work and school-run commitments. Whilst in the classroom we worked our way through the study manuals at our own pace. If we got stuck there were always a couple of tutors on hand to give advice or to explain things. At the end of the course there was no formal examination. The certificate we received was based on pieces of work we had completed in the classroom throughout the weeks we had attended.



The whole experience gave me confidence to try my hand at another subject – you could say it had given me a taste for learning. I decided to try studying something that was of real interest to me and in the summer of 1998 I enrolled on the Human Physiology A/B Unit (equivalent to learning GCSE and A level both together at the same time) at Preston College. Although it sounds like I just waltzed in and signed up, it wasn't quite as straightforward as that. I agonised for weeks over whether I would be up to studying at this level, having only studied to GCSE level before. I also worried that I would be in a class full of youngsters who all knew each other and that I would stick out like a sore thumb as the 'oldie' of the bunch. Nothing could have been further from the truth – the ages of the students in my class ranged from late teens and early twenties right through to people in their fifties and each of them came 'alone'. At that first lesson we all felt a bit nervous, none of us knew what to expect, but in no time at all we began getting to know each other and I made some really good friends. The work itself was quite hard at times but it was a subject that I really enjoyed and this made it easier to stick at it and achieve passes in both the A and B unit at the end of the year.

After this there was no stopping me and, to date, I have the equivalent of eight GCSEs, two A levels, certificates in computing, deaf awareness and British sign language. On top of this, two years ago I finally summoned up the courage to start taking driving lessons and passed first time after eight months of lessons. I feel that I have taken control of my life and that I am decided in which direction I am heading. I feel very strongly that if the desire and determination is there, anyone can achieve anything they want to. You just have to believe in yourself and the fact that we all have the ability if we try. People are all made of the same basic ingredients so there is no reason why one person cannot achieve what the next person has. I am sure that most of us at some time have thought about learning something new or trying again for those subjects that we did not pass at school. I didn't pass my maths GCSE at school but I did finally gain this qualification last year. I know that many times over the years I told myself that one day I would try again for it. Going along to that computer course gave me the confidence to eventually have another go at it.

Step 7

Organise Regular Promotions of Individual Learning Accounts and Learning Initiatives

In workplaces that are organised for learning, the steering group often organises learning promotions. These can take many forms depending on the workplace and the time and the space available.

One of the main barriers to members participating in learning is the course costs. It is therefore very important to promote Individual Learning Accounts as a means to help pay for learning.

Individual Learning Accounts are a Government scheme that enables individuals to get a grant of £150 to help pay for their learning.

On promotion days, the learning reps have a stall and use this to help people apply for an Individual Learning Account.

Often a number of organisations will participate. This can include the local college who publicise courses. The company training department could be on hand to explain any initiatives they have planned.

In July 2000, we did a promotion for Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) in CWS Headquarters.

Members were given information about ILAs and how to use them. Over 50 ILAs were taken out by members as a direct result of that promotion. One member said "I came to work as usual and now I am going home with £150 towards my learning and with the correct information on courses that will suit my needs."

Joan Lyall, learning rep, CWS Group





We launched our 'Skills for All' campaign at Croal Mill with a promotion day in the staff restaurant and it worked really well. We didn't realise just how many members were interested in Lifelong Learning.

We organised the day through the Lifelong Learning steering group and had information stalls in the canteen about courses we hoped to run in our learning centre as well as what is available at local college. We also promoted Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) on the day and had experts from Wigan and Leigh College on hand to give proper advice and guidance about what would be suitable, so members knew the courses they were signing up for were the right ones.

We had already given out a questionnaire to all members to find out what interest they had in learning and received about 230 replies.

All the learning reps played a really important role in getting the members involved. It is nice for us to be involved in something positive for a change. It certainly gave the union a high profile.



Shaun Bird, learning rep, Littlewoods, Croal Mill

Step 8

A Site Organised for Learning will Offer a Range of Learning

When a site gets organised to promote learning, the steering group and the learning reps can begin to develop a wide range of learning initiatives.

The most popular learning is 'Introducing Computers'. Wherever learning is made accessible and affordable there is a great demand for 'Introducing Computers' courses.

However, there are many other topics members want to study. Learning that directly increases opportunities in work, such as key workplace skills like communications are popular. Other courses members have

wanted include sign language, Spanish, Italian and, in one case, a 'Pathways' course to develop confidence to Return to Learn.

Many members know their Basic Skills are not so good and have signed up for 'Brushing-up on Basics' courses.

Lifelong Learning is not just about training for the job you do now. It is also about career development and about personal development. The range of learning our members want access to reflects this.



When I first started working as a stand-in manager I was told on Friday I would have a team from the following Monday, and no training was given. This led to a lack of confidence in some areas and this stayed with me for several years, because although I gained a permanent position, there was still no training given.

I was very grateful to the union for giving me the opportunity to change this situation via a NED Management Course at the Halton College.

I have gained confidence and also learned some new skills and at the same time made some new friends.

My success on this course has given me the confidence I needed to continue onto the follow-on course in the near future.

Thank you.

June Urquhart, member, Reality, Widnes

Brush-up on your Basics!

Many Usdaw members know that their basic literacy and numeracy skills are not up to scratch. For some this is because they have not had the opportunity to practise these skills through their lives. In short, they have become rusty.

Others have not learnt their basics because they missed out on a lot of schooling because of sickness or for some other reason. Some have a learning difficulty like dyslexia that requires specialist tuition.

Whatever the reason it is not always easy to admit you have a problem with the Basics – especially to your employer. Union learning reps have a key role to play in helping members get a chance to ‘Brush-up on their Basics’.

Brush-up on your Basics!

Need to get back to learning but don't know where to start?

- Improve your Reading and Writing Skills
- Improve your Maths
- Basic Skills Skills

Unions, JD Williams and Oxfords College have joined forces to provide:

- FREE TUTORING** to help with individual's needs
- ON SITE COURSES** run by the college in the local learning centre
- FREE CONFIDENTIAL ADVICE AND GUIDANCE** to help you decide what and how you need to learn
- RECOGNISED QUALIFICATIONS** with MQI (MQF)

ONLY 50 FREE places are available for your local representative to take to members. Book now! **0800 123 4567**

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT WWW.USDAW.CO.UK

The company that I work for employs approximately 150 people and we have about 95% membership.

I became really active in promoting learning after becoming a learning rep in 1999. From there, I arranged for a number of courses to be delivered onsite by Goole College. These were really successful but mainly computer based.

Having gone on to do the ‘second bite’ learning reps course, which concentrates on addressing Basic Skills at the workplace, I realised that Basic Skills was something which we needed to look at. We advertised the opportunity for members to ‘Brush-up on your Basics’, and so far have done 30 assessments. Which when you think about it is a fifth of the workforce. I even went for the assessment myself!

The interviews took about 45 minutes, 15 minutes of which was in members own time and the remainder in company time.

I know that Basic Skills is such a sensitive issue so we are working with the Adult Education services so they can provide onsite, near site or even home tuition for some of our members. It’s all about what suits them and their needs.

As far as I am concerned ‘Brushing-up on your Basic Skills’ means everyone is a winner. The company certainly benefits from increased skills, the union is able to get something positive for their members and the members not only get the skills they need to stay in a job, but hopefully the confidence to go on and learn something else.

Adrian Gascoigne, learning rep, Sundora Foods, Hull

Step 9

Learning Campaigns should be Linked to our Site Organising Strategy

Usdaw can only campaign for Lifelong Learning because we are strong and well organised. In turn, Lifelong Learning is adding value to union membership and helping to raise the profile of Usdaw, and so build union membership and organisation.

So it is important that where we promote Lifelong Learning initiatives, we also work to build the union. If we don't we will be less able to develop the opportunities our members are entitled to and deserve.

Just as union membership results in a safer place to work, so union membership is resulting in better access to Lifelong Learning opportunities.

Promoting access to learning is not separate from the work of developing union organisation – it is part of developing union organisation.

Laptop Learning in Retail Stores

We arranged with the WEA for them to run 'Introducing Computers' in some stores using laptop computers.

This has raised the profile of our branch and changed the minds of people about Usdaw.

Members in the stores didn't see a lot of the union – except for their in-store reps. Their perception of us is now changing from just seeing us fire fighting when there is a problem to seeing us helping them access learning programmes, and helping them get new skills.

They have seen us coming to them, not waited for them to come to us.

**Paul Pike, learning rep,
Manchester Tesco branch**



Lifelong Learning at Littlewoods, Shaw has really given Usdaw a high profile and for all the right reasons. Our members are seeing the reps involved in something really positive which can benefit them. That's given us all a real boost.

Raising the profile of the union has really helped our branch with recruitment as well. We are a big branch with nearly 3000 members, so communications and reaching new members can be difficult.

Back in December, we organised a joint promotion day at work around Lifelong Learning and the response we got was brilliant. We set up stalls in the staff restaurant. We gave information about courses and learning opportunities in the area. Local colleges were also involved giving advice and guidance to our members about what courses were most suitable for them.

We also promoted Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs), which was a real success. It meant that Usdaw was helping lots of members get access to £150 to help them with the cost of courses, so you can imagine the impact this had on recruitment. We had people queuing up to join the union! On the promotion day, 394 members took out an Individual Learning Account and the number is still growing.

Another thing that has helped is that the unions, both Usdaw and Sata, have been working to get an onsite learning centre. We issued a questionnaire to everyone. Once again we raised awareness about the union and improved our communications. This not only helped us to find out what and how people would like to learn, but also gave reps the opportunity to come into contact with members and to recruit those who were not. When the centre opens in April, everyone will see it as a great achievement for Usdaw.

The fact that we now have 18 trained learning reps all promoting and supporting learning onsite means that it is very high on our agenda, right along there with recruitment. We have a joint company/union steering group to oversee all the Lifelong Learning initiatives onsite and in particular to set up the learning centre. With 24 reps onsite we also have a union 'Lifelong Learning co-ordinator' who makes sure that we co-ordinate and pull together the union activity and that's my job!

Our branch recently received the Divisional branch recruitment award and I got the individual award. Together we have recruited over 1000 new members over the last year. It is no coincidence that this has happened at the same time as our Lifelong Learning promotions.

Our reps see Lifelong Learning as a real opportunity to organise and an even bigger opportunity to recruit.



Denise Gordon, learning rep, Littlewoods, Shaw

Usdaw would like to place on record our thanks to many organisations that have helped our campaign.

We have received financial support from the DfEE through the Union Learning Fund. Without this support we would not have made nearly so much progress.

Help and wise words have always been provided by the TUC teams at Bargaining for Skills and Learning Services. More importantly the TUC has been at the forefront of the campaign for rights for learning reps.

Some colleges have been in the forefront in helping us promote Lifelong Learning. In particular, MANCAT College in Manchester, Tameside College, Hull College and Wigan College have all made crucial contributions.

Finally we would like to thank all the learners and learning reps who have agreed to be quoted and made this brochure possible.



Usdaw
*Union of Shop, Distributive
and Allied Workers*

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