

Are you holding the missing piece?

Become a Union Learning Rep

Education

Learning

Member

Employer

ULR

 **nipsa**
Union Learning
...a fresh opportunity to learn

What is a Union Learning Rep?

In recent years, the development of a new role for trade unions in promoting learning at work has had a significant impact on increasing motivation and enthusiasm for learning among employers and employees.

In particular, the key role of the Union Learning Rep (ULR) has been instrumental in raising interest in training and development, from among unskilled workers to highly qualified professionals; from those with real literacy, numeracy and ICT needs, to many who benefit from simply refreshing their skills.

The ULR is a new category of union activist. They are trained in advising members on learning needs and opportunities. They have demonstrated that they can complement and add value to employers' efforts to engage workers in learning.

They share a level of trust with their members, and can often engage with those who would be embarrassed about admitting their learning needs to their employer.

Their work mostly involves face-to-face meetings and other direct contact with their fellow workers. But they also work with employers and training providers to identify the range of learning opportunities.

What is the job of a ULR?

- Raising awareness of the benefits of learning.
- Working with employers and employees to identify learning needs.
- Providing advice and guidance to employees.
- Negotiating learning agreements with employers, including time off to learn.
- Securing equal opportunities in learning.
- Helping employers and unions to establish learning centres.
- Negotiating and arranging provision with training providers.
- Monitoring the quality of provision.
- Assisting employees to access funding for learning.
- Supporting innovative workplace developments such as Union Learning

The Benefits to Employees

There are many advantages to employees in having a trained and supported ULR on site, such as:

- A familiar face, someone who they know and who may have helped them in the past.
- A person who is completely independent, whose advice they can trust.
- Someone who they know will treat everything they say in confidence.
- The opportunity to get advice in the familiar surroundings of the workplace.
- Information about learning opportunities, that are available both inside and outside of work.
- A person who is properly trained and informed, capable of representing their learning needs and interests with their employer.
- A source of reliable information about everyday training matters, as well as new and existing learning and skills initiatives such as Skills for Life, NVQs and Learndirect.

The Benefits to Employers

All organisations benefit from having a skilled, trained and efficient workforce. The ULR provides the vital information, support and encouragement that enable employees to update and acquire the new skills necessary in the world of work and beyond.

The ULR helps organisations to:

- Promote a positive attitude to learning and skills amongst employees.
- Improve the skills and employability of the workforce, helping them to become more adaptable to change.
- Increase participation in workplace learning.
- Provide accessible independent advice and support for employees about learning, at shop level, where it is needed.
- Introduce and help develop a “learning culture”, where training and education are highly valued in the workplace.

How to become a Union Learning Rep

Discuss becoming a Union Learning Rep with your Union Branch Secretary, Full-Time Officer or Union Learning Co-ordinator.

Find out more about Union Learning Reps' training. Details about the next course in your area and course content will be available from your Union and ICTU NI.

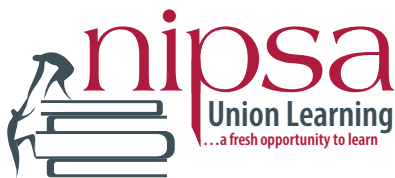
Approach your employer for paid release to attend the course, spelling out the benefits to the organisation and employees. Consult your Branch Secretary, Full-Time Officer or Union Learning Co-ordinator. Committee or Full-Time Officer if you are unable to get release.

What support do ULRs receive?

All ULRs are given training for their role through courses provided by unionlearn and individual unions. The courses are all accredited through the Open College Network. After initial training, ULRs can also access training on specific issues such as Skills for Life (literacy, numeracy and ICT).

ULRs also receive ongoing support from Union Learning Co-ordinators and Union Learning Fund Project Workers and individual unions, including the following:

- Organising briefings and newsletters to update ULRs on new government initiatives and areas of work.
- Developing networks and co-ordinating gatherings of ULRs to share experiences about promoting and organising for Lifelong Learning.
- Providing links with other bodies such as unionlearn and providers who can assist the ULR.



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