

# Project Round Up

## Another Successful RMT Learning Project

**Theresa Williams, Project Manager**

The second RMT Learning project spanning over the two years from March 2010, has seen more and more integration of learning into the union's business. It has been fantastic to see all parts of the union engaging with learning and understanding how learning brings benefits for members. From Company Council members realising that IT could help them to be better at their roles to the Branch Secretaries wanting to help members get the training they need, in order to get on, learning is having a positive effect.

The two years have seen many new people take up the role of Union Learning Rep (ULR). The enthusiasm that many ULRs exhibit is infectious and is what makes being part of the RMT Learning team so rewarding. ULRs are making a very real difference to members' lives.

I am happy to say that the project's success has resulted in further funding, until 2014 (subject to review in 2013). I am looking forward to difference we can make over the next two years.



Top L-R: Teresa Williams, Graham Chesters, Emily King, Bill Hendy  
Bottom L-R: Ivor Riddell, Sharon Allen, John Dougherty, Lindsay Rutland

## Bournemouth's Budding Photographers

South West Trains ULR Mark Carter started his role during the 2010-2012 project. Once trained, he was keen to start encouraging colleagues to learn. He had soon set up a range of activities including a photography workshop which resulted in an exhibition hosted by his employer.

Mark also arranged for photographs to be displayed at a 'World of Work' event in Swindon Railway Museum. This work was also extremely well received at a show held in the Houses of Parliament hosted by Unions 21.

The 'Changing Faces Portrait Project' had learners using their new skills shooting the images for South West Trains 2012 Guards' Handbook.

There is also a website showcasing some of the fabulous photos taken by the learners in Bournemouth: [www.redstop.co.uk](http://www.redstop.co.uk)



Mark Carter, taken by colleague Damien Taylor

# Employers Back RMT Skills for Life Schemes

Over the past two years, as well as promoting clauses for paid release for Skills for Life learners in Learning Agreements, RMT Learning has helped put in place schemes that offer support for members wanting to improve their skills in English and maths. This includes incentive schemes with East Coast and Network Rail.

These schemes enabled the employers to demonstrate a real commitment to any employee who wanted to develop their literacy, language and numeracy skills and show the value they placed on employees achieving qualifications in English and maths.

East Coast agreed to pilot the extension of the Shine Reward Scheme to provide employees with a financial reward for gaining qualifications in literacy, numeracy or ESOL.

ULRs had already set up successful learning programmes at Learning Centres across the East Coast network that had helped show the employer the benefits of good literacy and numeracy skills at work. To demonstrate their recognition of these benefits, East Coast was willing to offer the reward payment.

Network Rail agreed to run a groundbreaking pilot scheme to pay-back learners for the time they put into attending a literacy or numeracy course.

It was agreed the scheme would be run across three locations: Doncaster, Liverpool and Bristol and during the first three months of the pilot scheme over 50 members attended an adult literacy or numeracy course and achieved a qualification.



Network Rail workers trying out their maths and English skills

Each member followed a learning plan tailor made for them. They were put forward for an exam when their tutor felt they had succeeded in building on their existing skills in reading, writing or maths and were ready for the test.

Bristol Union Learning Rep Gary Abbot said “I can’t express how proud I am of every single one of the lads that completed the courses here in Bristol. It has been a huge achievement for each one of them and I am already seeing how it has affected their confidence for the better.”

There had been no previous agreement with Network Rail that outlined any payment for members undertaking literacy or numeracy training so this pioneering development helped encourage members to take up the opportunity. Although the deferred payment undoubtedly offered an initial incentive to anyone signing up for a

course, many found this was quickly exceeded by the benefits of up-skilling in English or maths.

Adam Potts from Liverpool said: “The payment was a great incentive but after doing the course myself I feel that the benefits and lifelong skills that I’ve learnt far outweigh the initial monetary incentive.”

The success of the pilot scheme has proved that there is demand for literacy and numeracy training among Network Rail employees and that they are willing to put in the work to achieve a qualification. During the next project we will look to Network Rail to extend the pilot scheme to offer deferred paid release to others wishing to improve their skills.

Learners working towards Entry Level 1, 2, 3	40
Learners working towards National Certificate in Adult Literacy	108
Learners working towards National Certificate in Adult Numeracy	71



# Learning Agreements



The signing of the Stagecoach East Midlands Learning Agreement

Learning Agreements are key to the long term sustainability of the learning agenda. They provide a framework for ULRs and managers alike to work within. A good agreement will give some definition to the word ‘reasonable’ found in the legislation regarding ULRs’ rights, and will give clearly laid out benefits for learners, particularly those learners needing the most support.

Expectations were more than exceeded when during the lifetime of the project seven new or improved Learning Agreements were signed off. These were with:

- Stagecoach East Midlands
- National Express East Anglia
- London Underground
- First Great Western
- Two local workplaces at Network Rail
- London Overground

Number of written learning agreements	7
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## Union Learning Reps’ Training

ULRs put the learning agenda into practice by ensuring that they have the right skills to carry out their important role well.

Over the life of the project, 82 new ULRs were appointed many in areas where none had existed before. These ULRs went through the stage 1 five-day training course, the majority at the RMT’s education centre in Doncaster. Around half of all ULRs also took further training during the two years.

Most ULRs will have had the opportunity to attend at least one Development Day arranged by their RMT Learning Development Worker. These days were organised to look at opportunities and issues relevant to ULRs with a certain employer, or in a distinct geographical area.



ULRs taking Dyslexia Awareness Training, 2011

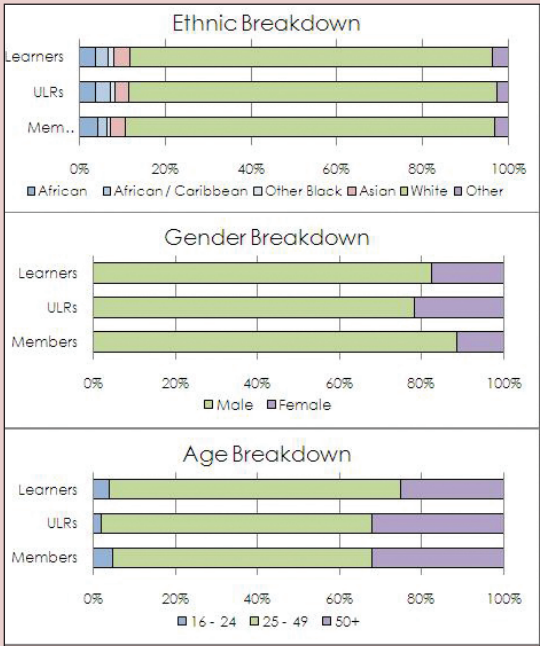
Number of new ULRs completing Initial Training	82
Number of ULRs completing accredited follow on training	91

## From all Backgrounds

The RMT Learning Project has been monitoring the backgrounds of ULRs and learners to ensure that people from all backgrounds are being reached. A snapshot of the breakdown of the RMT’s membership was taken in 2010, to give a baseline with which to compare the backgrounds of ULRs and learners.

Over the life of the project the backgrounds of learners and ULRs has been broadly the same as those of members as a whole. There were slightly fewer under 25 ULRs, but this is probably due to the fact that it can take a while after becoming a member to decide to go forward as a candidate. This delay means that many young members (under 30) are over 25 by the time they become a ULR.

The area of equality monitoring which was noticeably different was that of gender. There is a greater percentage of women ULRs than there is a percentage of women members. There are also more women learners. This can be viewed as being very positive, female ULRs are going on to take other roles within the union, including Company Council rep and delegate at the AGM.



# Getting the Recognition



While all learning is great, it's even better when you have learnt and to what level. The RMT Learning. Getting accreditation for the learning gives an enormous amount of satisfaction, particularly when you have a qualification before. Formal certification can help you and get onto higher level courses.





# n that Learners Deserve



When you have something to show what  
RMT Learning Project promotes accredited  
learning they have done can be provide an  
early for those who have never gained a  
can help also help learners get promotion



# Book Swap Libraries are Everywhere!

*"Books shouldn't be daunting, they should be funny, exciting and wonderful; and learning to be a reader gives a terrific advantage."*

— Roald Dahl

Across the whole of England, from learning centres to less obvious places such as workplace rest rooms and maintenance depots, Book Swap Libraries have been set up by RMT Union Learning Reps (ULRs). There is even a plan to set some up in the staff recreation areas on ferries. Over the last two years they have become one of the most visible signs of ULR activity.

A very simple idea, but very effective; Book Swap Libraries have been a quick win in the workplace, raising the profile of what the ULRs do and helping them engage with potential learners. Cheap to set up, and other than an occasional tidy up, they can be pretty much self-sustaining. There is the potential risk of running out of books but, without exception, the libraries have grown as people tend to bring in more than they take out.

RMT Lead ULR for Southern Railway, Sandy Cassidy told us that before Book Swap Libraries, the usual topics of conversation in the mess room were work related, but now you are just as likely to hear a conversation about the books people have read and would like to read, some of the ideas that people read in the books and what type of book one person or other preferred.

RMT ULR (now Council of Executive Member) Mike Sargent said "the best part about reading is not just the joy of reading a good story but how it enriches conversation and personal interaction between people. It is just amazing".

From these libraries have come other initiatives such as the Six Book Challenge, aiming to encourage less confident readers to undertake to read six books within a set period of time; and book clubs where people get together, choose a book to read and then meet up to discuss the book in detail.

Paul Owen, a ULR for London Underground said that he "set up my book swap shelf with the intention of getting people on-site to share literacy with each other and hopefully to try something new, something they wouldn't normally read if they were purchasing a book. I started out by asking a couple of people in the depot to construct a small bookcase and filled it with a set of quick reads. Since then there has been a steady stream of books, surprisingly with the odd non-English text appearing every so often. So it is nice to see that the book swap is bringing diversity."



Gary Lord (ULR) shows off the Union Learning Library at Chesterfield bus depot

## Unionlearn Award for Mo Ilyas

**Mohammed Ilyas, Lead ULR, at Northern Rail is very active having set up many different courses and encouraged countless colleagues to learn. So it was no surprise that he won the regional ULR award from Unionlearn in the Yorkshire and Humber Region, half way through the project.**



Hilary Benn presents Mo Ilyas with his Award.



# Everyone should have access to a Learning Centre

Over the course of the project, RMT Learning have continued to negotiate with employers to provide space and facilities for a series of Learning Centres.

As well as a place to attend courses, Learning Centres allow people to access e-learning in their own time and at their own pace; to complete homework and reading for other training they may be taking; and to look for training opportunities. They are also a means for people who do not have access to computers at home to get familiar with them.

The most recent Learning Centre opened was at London Underground (LU) Arnos Grove depot (Ash House), where a room was fitted with computers and desks and is now a fully equipped Learning Centre. In March 2012, the first 'Knowledge Access Point' was launched at LU Griffith House, and it is hoped this will be rolled out across the network. Discussions are also underway for a Learning Centre at Brixton depot and a full Learning Centre elsewhere in Griffith House. LU ULRs Dean O'Hanlon, Stephen Brennan, Des Rice and Vicky Marton have helped to bring about these achievements.

December 2011 saw the opening of the Mansfield Learning Centre at the Stagecoach East Midlands bus



An unused space at Mansfield bus depot

maintenance depot. The centre is a fully equipped IT suite and is registered with UK-Online. The depot has over 150 members of staff who can now access both formal and informal learning opportunities with the support of West Nott's College, who Sarah Gill (RMT Lead ULR) negotiated with to be the preferred education provider. Sarah said, 'Working to get this centre up and running has been a long process, but it shows what we can achieve if we are prepared to work in partnership with the employer. I am looking forward to all the new courses being set up.'

As well as opening Learning Centres, significant improvements have been made at several existing centres. Additionally, a laptop library was put in place to improve the learning facilities at London



Transformed! The new Learning Centre at Mansfield

Underground Seven Sisters station and provide laptops for learning around the LU network. LU Lead ULR Bjorn Bradshaw-Murray said, 'The laptops have enabled us to provide communication skills and IT tasters at several locations on LU. These would not have been possible without the laptop library'.

It has not always been possible to set up Learning Centres. In these places RMT Learning and ULRs have had to be resourceful; this has included using laptops and any space that can be accessed for a few hours a week. For example, meeting rooms, offices and even a locker room have been used as temporary learning centres. This has enabled workers to attend courses at their workplace instead of having to go to the college.

## RMT Learning Conferences

There were two RMT Learning Conferences for ULRs during the Round 13 project. In 2010 the conference in London was all about 'Putting Learning into Context' helping ULRs to know how to signpost members for non-learning matters, react to barriers and negativity, get ideas for workplace learning activities and to understand the historical context of learning.

The 2011 conference was held in Doncaster. The content of this conference was based on requests from the ULRs, wanting to know more about funding and resources for 'Making it Happen'. This then was the theme of the conference. ULRs learnt about the importance of evidence gathering, how to keep activities affordable and the tools available for ULRs.



RMT ULRs at the 2011 ULR Conference

## RMT Learning – Working for the Union

**The RMT Learning Project was successful in promoting learning across the union during the past two years, raising the profile of the adult learning agenda with RMT officials, representatives and members.**

During the two years of the Round 13 RMT Learning Project, presentations were delivered across the union to Branch meetings, Regional Council meetings and conferences. This provided an opportunity for RMT representatives and members to find out more about Union Learning Reps and how they can support members. The message about learning has also been conveyed through newsletters and short videos.

RMT Learning also ran Fringe events at the AGMs in Aberdeen and Fort William, giving delegates an insight into the RMT's Union Learning Fund Project and highlighting some of the achievements of Union Learning Reps across the trade union. In Fort William the delegates were given a short presentation about the history of working class education and how this links in with the modern day trade union initiatives to encourage good quality learning opportunities for working adults.

The RMT Learning Project has also been responsible for helping RMT reps to improve their literacy, numeracy and computer skills. Many RMT reps have attended computer courses set up by their local ULRs. In March 2012, Northern Rail Company Council Reps attended a tailored ITQ learning programme to improve their ICT skills to help them with their union role.

The company appreciated the value of this initiative supporting it with paid release.

The increasing number of active Union Learning Reps within the RMT and the growth in members accessing learning opportunities via the union is evidence that the message about ULRs and adult learning is becoming more mainstream.



A Seminar for Branch Secretaries



### Meet the team

Have you got a problem, or maybe an idea? Do you not know where to start, or what to do next? Give us a ring – we are here to help.

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### Changes to your contact details

Please give Lindsay Rutland a quick call if you change your telephone numbers, address or e-mail – we need to keep our records up to date! If we don't have your correct contact details you may miss out on important information.

## ULR's get Mentoring Training

During the two year project a group of ULRs from Network Rail undertook mentoring training. The ULRs had noticed that there was not enough support for some apprentices coming into the workplace to complete the second year of their course. This seemed to be a particular issue for female apprentices, who were often entering a workplace with no other women.

With the training, the ULRs felt that they would be able to better support apprentices, and many of their managers agreed. The Network Rail Development Worker from RMT Learning is currently monitoring the ULR mentoring of apprentices, in order to create a body of evidence to show how apprentices could be better supported in the future.



Some of the Apprentices at Railcare Wolverton