



## UNITE (AMICUS) GPM SECTOR

### LEARNING & SKILLS E-BULLETIN NO 2

SUMMER 2007

#### UNITE LEARNING REPS IN ACTION

Katie Siwek and Kevin Gillespie work at the Polestar Varnicoat plant in Worcestershire and have worked together to provide a variety of learning opportunities for their colleagues at the plant.

Katie is Polish and has worked as a drum stitcher in the finishing department for two years. Many her colleagues in the department are migrant workers and when she found out about the role of the Union Learning Rep (ULR), she was sure that she could provide support for both migrant workers and the existing workforce at the plant.

One of the key issues that addressed is communication and helping workers to develop their language skills. The ULRs approached Worcester 6th-Form College to run some English courses. The college came up with the solution of running the

course in a local pub close to where a lot of the migrant workers live near Pershore in Worcestershire.

Enthusiastic about the difference that Learning Reps can make Katie said:

**“Being a Learning Rep has promoted the value of being in the union to all our colleagues. For migrant workers being in the union means that they feel that their terms and conditions are protected and that they have a voice when it comes to any employment or contract issues.”**

Kevin added: **“We are always looking at how we can get all sections of the workforce involved in more learning. Working together and building on what we have in common is important.”**



#### AYLESFORD NEWSPRINT

In a company who make 100% recycled paper, they are replacing a 50 year old paper making machine with up-to-date technology, by 2007. This means that the existing workforce needs to get the new skills, so they can make the transition.

Unite (Amicus) ULRs were keen to help the staff through this and find out what the skills needs of the workforce were. They have recently completed a learning needs survey, and from this see that many people want to gain IT skills, brush up on their numeracy skills and a high number of people wanted to learn a new language.



Paul Baker, the Unite Branch Secretary has said: **“Lifelong learning is a major**

**benefit and necessity to help our members to promote confidence gain skills and keep pace with future technology.”**

After meeting with the Kent Adult Education, they have now been offered all numeracy courses free and ITQ courses, funded through Train to Gain. Marisa George, the Training Manager has also made the commitment that people will have time off for training and said that she would like to see all 375 staff being offered the ITQ qualification. She also said that for those who do not qualify for funding, the company will pay.

Members who wish to register to receive a copy of the e-bulletin, please send an email to [ashraf.choudhury@amicustheunion.org](mailto:ashraf.choudhury@amicustheunion.org) and it will be sent to you once published.

## NEW PROJECT TO AID SUCCESSFUL RETIREMENT

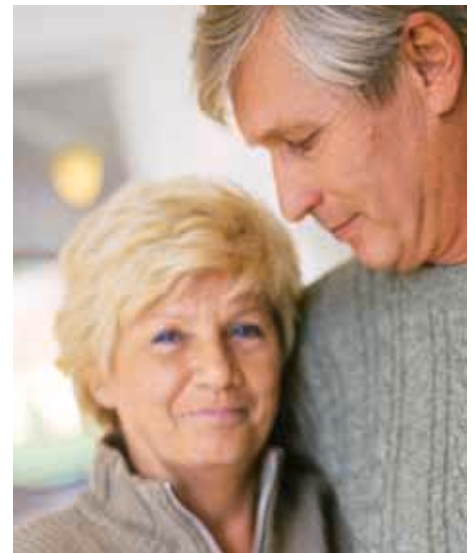
The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), the adult-learning organisation, has set up a new project encouraging people to plan for their retirement.

The project comes at a time when pensions' planning is crucial for all, particularly in light of low expectations surrounding the future of the state pension, and an ageing population.

Anne Hansen, Project Leader for the Successful Retirement project at NIACE, said,

**"All planning information and education services provided by The Successful Retirement project are free and assist individuals to review the options that are suitable for them."**

**George Dawn, Managing Director of Mensa Printers, commented, "NIACE used a delivery style that helped to clarify a complicated subject. The training has helped to build a better understanding of the options available and it has given staff the confidence to start planning for their retirement."**



## TRAIN TO GAIN

Train to Gain is a government skills programme that was introduced across England during 2006 and is at the very heart of the Skills Strategy and it will build on the achievements of the Employer Training Pilots (ETP).

It offers employers free training for employees to achieve a Level 2 qualification (or a Skills for Life qualification) if they do not already have an equivalent qualification and there will also be some provision for training at Level 3 as well. Like ETP, Train to Gain offers opportunities for trade unions to get involved at the workplace level to promote and support a training initiative that offers paid time off for employees to achieve qualifications. <http://www.traintogain.gov.uk/>

## SECTOR SKILLS AGREEMENTS

*Sector Skills Agreements (SSA) are fundamentally altering the way skills are demanded, delivered and developed throughout the UK.*

Put simply, the SSA is about matching the training and skills needs of the printing industry, with high quality training provision and support. They are designed to give employers the opportunity to shape the development of training to meet short, medium and long-term business needs.

The SSA is a five stage process which has been running from April 2006 and is due to complete in September 2007.

Stages 1 and 2 included surveys and interviews with employers across the five sectors that Proskills represents. In the print industry, this involved a survey of over 900 employers and 200 one-to-one interviews.

The result is a comprehensive report on employers' views on training and an audit on the courses and qualifications available.

At stage 3, Proskills will identify any gaps between what the industry is demanding, and that which is currently supplied.

We will then, in conjunction with employers and other stakeholders, develop a set of deals that aim to address these problems.

The deals or Sector Skills Agreements will be ready by September 2007.



# BPIF PARTNERSHIP AT WORK – THE LEARNING AND SKILLS CLAUSE

*Last year Unite signed a groundbreaking national partnership agreement with the British Printing Industries Federation (BPIF). An important part of that agreement is the Learning and Skills clause that commits employers to negotiate with the union on planning training needs. Here we take a closer look at what the Learning and Skills clause involves and what chapels can do to make sure that the clause is implemented where they work.*

## Why have a learning and skills clause?

Efficiency and productivity in the printing industry depends on employees obtaining and maintaining high levels of skill, and the need for training and development of individuals in order to achieve this. Any skills development and training should always be geared to the needs of both the company and the industry, and could include off-the-job training where facilities allow.

The learning and skills clause means that companies will plan their future skills requirements together with Chapels and that all aspects of training and development will be jointly discussed. Union Learning Representatives are essential to this process.

- Unite can provide tailor-made training for ULRs, chapel reps and managers to help them to work efficiently together on the clause.



## Training Plan

A Training Plan is a useful document which takes account of the need to train and develop existing adult workers as well as the need to recruit new entrants into the industry. The plan provides a blueprint for the three phases of developing a joint approach to training:

- Foundations
- Actions
- Review
- ***Unite can provide a model training plan for your workplace***

Unite members will give full support and cooperation to company learning and skills activities training, including off-the-job training at external venues and in-house training programmes on the company's premises. This will include cooperation in the form of their own participation in skills development and through assisting in the development of other employees. Chapels will be encouraged to have ULRs.

## Benefits

- Enabling effective recruitment and development of people
- Provides a positive alternative to the introduction of a compulsory training levy
- Secures employee involvement in the development of company training plans, and employee support for their implementation
- Commits companies to invest in training at realistic levels, with the resulting budget allocation spent within the company in addressing the company's own priority skill areas
- Management and chapel representatives to co-operate fully in relation to necessary changes.

# At a glance....

## The Learning and Skills Clause

A joint approach to learning and skills:

- Commits companies to plan their future skill requirements and actions necessary to address these in consultation with chapels
- Provides for industry trainee intakes to be reviewed at national level on an annual basis, with agreed recommendations made following reviews
- Commits employees to support and co-operate with company training activities
- Commits companies to allocate an amount equal to 0.5% of their payroll costs to training within their companies
- Confirms that disagreements in relation to learning and skills issues may be referred to the national disputes and differences procedure
- Confirms that Government will act to introduce statutory measures in relation to compulsory employer contributions if these provisions do not generate sufficient investment in training and development.

## UNITE GPM LEARNING AND SKILLS E-BULLETIN

If you have any comments, views, photographs or articles for inclusion in our next bulletin please forward them to:

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