

FBU *U-learn*

The latest news from Fire Brigade Union Lifelong Learning

Winter 2009-10

A fond farewell



page 3
NESCOT SUCCESS!



page 4
**DIVE INTO LEARNING
AT WORK**



page 7
**DISTANCE LEARNING BRINGS
COURSES CLOSER TO YOU**

Inside this issue...



Welcome from the FBU Learn Team

Contents

<i>Farewell to a dear friend</i>	pg 2
<i>The impact of Learning At Work day</i>	pg 2
<i>East Sussex FRS</i>	pg 3
<i>West Yorkshire Skills Challenge</i>	pg 3
<i>Dive into Learning At Work</i>	pg 4
<i>Commitment to Lifelong Learning</i>	pg 5
<i>Stretford firefighters success with I.T. training</i>	pg 5
<i>Skills for Life tutor</i>	pg 6
<i>Distance Learning in your area</i>	pg 7/8
<i>Norfolk Fire and Rescue Learning Agreement</i>	pg 9
<i>Red Watch try their new found sign language skills</i>	pg 9
<i>Remember, remember the 5th November</i>	pg 10
<i>Kerrie Joins FBU-learn team in Kent Fire and Rescue</i>	pg 10
<i>London's Learning Agreement signed</i>	pg 11
<i>West Thames College</i>	pg 12
<i>The National Education Programme 2010</i>	pg 13/14

Editorial Team: *Bob Fitz-Gerald*
Tim Davis
Steve Brinkley
Graham Humphrey



Welcome to the Autumn issue of FBU-learn, I hope that you will find it informative and interesting. It is, of course, the first issue since the tragic and early death of Paul Fletcher - National FBU ULF Co-ordinator for region 12. We have included an article that Paul had written for FBU-learn and a short look at what he achieved and his personality that made him such fun to work with. I also had the pleasure of attending the Learndirect National Awards with Paul's mother and father and Steve Apter, ACFO IOW FRS. Paul had already won the Southern Learndirect ULR of the year and was a national finalist at which Steve accepted a 'Highly Commended Award' on Paul's behalf. He will be very much missed.

Since the last edition the FBU ULF project has again been at the forefront of providing information, advice and guidance for our members and providing a variety of learning opportunities. We now have learning agreements in 27 brigades, that gives the FBU the opportunity to discuss and negotiate issues around learning whether at home or at work. We have also increased the number of brigades that have signed the Employers Pledge and three brigades have attained the Go Fire Award supporting skills for life in the workplace. The FRS, for the first time, has also taken its place in a Sector Skills Council - Skills for Justice (Sfj). Sfj has taken responsibility for workforce development including IPDS, NOS, NVQs and the introduction of additional qualifications.

Sean Starbuck, national officer, is already closely involved in ensuring that the FBU is represented within the Sfj and will sit on the national joint group that has been set-up. This has also widened the role that the FBU and the ULF project have within the TUC SSC committees and strengthens our ability to ensure we get the best out of Sfj for FBU members.

At Annual Conference in May we saw the EC statement on embedding the ULF and Lifelong Learning overwhelmingly supported and now union policy. The changing role of the Regional Education Officer into the new Regional Education and Learning Organiser (RELO - just roles off the tongue!) is a challenge that has not been underestimated.

Trevor Shanahan
ULF Manager

Farewell to a dear friend

We say goodbye to a valued colleague and friend as the sudden death of Paul Fletcher is announced.

On August the 24th 2009 whilst attending a routine incident for IOWFRS Paul suffered a heart attack and sadly passed away. As the ULF Co-ordinator for Region 12, Paul made a huge impact on the FBU's learning agenda both regionally and nationally. He had recently been promoted to Crew Manager, elected Regional Chair (along with a host of other FBU commitments) and, had just handed over the role of Regional Learning Co-ordinator to Kieron Hall.

Paul was a larger than life character who took ideas on and made them work. His ability to cajole, persuade and coerce people into getting involved was legendary; as was his lack of need for sleep. It wasn't unusual to receive work related emails from Paul at 1 or 2am and whilst we would scold him at times for doing this it was a mark of the dedication that made him the person he was.

Paul's impact on the learning agenda in region 12 was immense. Although active across the region, his ability to get things done was easily seen in his own FRS. Within months of taking up the post he had achieved the signing of a learning agreement and established a learning forum between management and ULR's. He brokered a partnership between the IOWFRS, a local learning provider (HTP), and the islands Prison Officers Association learning centre that provided learning and development programs covering pre entry, ADC's, retirement and much more. This work resulted in the IOWFRS becoming the first FRS to achieve the 'Go Fire Award' and in addition Paul was rightly nominated and received the "Go Fire ULR of the year award. Paul had also just won the Learndirect regional ULR award and was due to attend the Learndirect national awards ceremony.

The following article written by Paul (un-edited) is an example of the dedication and work that he put into everything he got involved in. Of course the learning agenda



Paul Fletcher, ULF Co-ordinator for region 12, receiving his Get on award in 2009

was just one part of how he made an impact with his work for the FBU and I have no doubt he will be sadly missed by all of us who had the chance to work with him and be a part of his life.

The impact of Learning at Work Day

Over the past 12 months my region has accessed nearly £10,000 worth of funding from SEEDA and the TUC Unionlearn for Learn at Work Day and follow on events, which has supported us immensely and I would like to thank them on behalf of all those who have taken part and arranged course.

This has provided hundreds of fire service personnel the choice to attend courses during the working day /shift, to raise awareness on important issues and provide future learning opportunities.

I have covered briefly below some of the events that took place over the past year, which are sometimes seen outside of our original remit, but are provided in addition to our core work surrounding skills for life and raising everyone's awareness surrounding the importance of it.

The Isle of Wight and Hampshire Fire and Rescue Services have now had over 120 Deaf Awareness sessions provided, engaging with well over 1,200 members of staff. A one hour session was provided by a qualified tutor from the Hampshire Deaf Association (HDA), raising awareness into Deaf / Deaf Blind issues, DDA and practical sessions to highlight the difficulties faced everyday by at least 1 in 7 of our population.

Following the evaluations and feedback from those that took part both brigades are looking at further course that would give their staff accredited training in British Sign Language (BSL). A one day course has been devised by HDA providing greater awareness knowledge and an introduction to BSL.

This has now been run, and the first course was funded by the follow on short course funding.

One of the benefits from this awareness initiative is on the island where the Brigades Community Fire Safety team have now forged close links with HDA and are providing Home Fire Safety checks in conjunction with them and their clients in the community. They are pre-arranged visits where a support worker, who would be visiting the client, is present and who can use BSL to communicate effectively with the occupier and the Firefighters carrying out the checks.

Also in Hampshire, community awareness events are being run where every member of staff at St. Mary's Fire Station, Southampton is having the opportunity to speak to local Eastern European support workers and be given some useful phrases, plus importantly learn about some of the cultures in their immediate area. These will be followed up with the support of the Learning Forum Partnership for future events surrounding community engagement and staff awareness.

A similar course is being run in Wantage, Oxfordshire with the involvement of the Brigade ULR Lee Swain and Local Brigade FBU official Steve Allen. A short course has been organised where local community awareness and cultures are discussed, plus a short useful phrase language session in Gujarati provided.

Bucks Brigade ULR, Kieron Hall organised an introduction to training course, the City and Guilds 7300, Train the Trainers course at 3 separate

locations across the two brigades. It is ideally suited to those who carry out work based training such as firefighters and JO's who are not based at a training centre carrying out that role all the time, but are in other workplaces such as operational watches, rope / water supervisors etc..

The course gave an introduction to the theory of teaching and learning, providing the participants with an understanding of the planning, delivery and evaluation of teaching and learning.

I would like to thank all of the organisations and members of staff in these brigades for taking part and making the events such a success. None of these events would have taken place if it was not for the ULR's who arranged them and the local managers they coordinated with to run these sessions during the working day / shift. It highlights the excellent work all the ULR's across the region and nationally are doing, and what can be achieved when they are supported by local officials and managers.

The debate over the need for ULR's / Learning Agreements / Learning Forum Partnerships and the importance of the Skills for Life agenda has been evidenced and won in the vast majority of brigades across the UK. We will always have a few in denial, we just need to help to ease their heads out of the sand and keep working together to highlight the benefits.

Paul Fletcher Region 12 Ulf Coordinator



East Sussex FRS and the FBU's Learning Partnership heralds first success!

Following the Learning information day held at SHQ in Eastbourne earlier this year, an induction day was organised to bring North East Surrey College of Technology down to ESFRS to enrol learners on to their range of Distance Learning courses. The courses include Health and Fitness, Managing Diversity, Equality and Diversity, Safe Guarding Children and Young people, Conflict Management and Nutrition and Health. Predominantly level 2 with just Managing Diversity being

level 3, all the subjects can be easily completed within three months and have proved an ideal way of gaining a qualification whilst carrying on with a busy life around working in the Fire Service.

ESFRS have been keen to develop the partnership around learning with the FBU and the induction day was the next logical step; however nobody was prepared for the number of people that wanted to be involved, so much so that a further induction day was

quickly arranged at Hastings Fire Station to cope with demand. Helen Beckenham from Nescot was delighted with the response, she said 'over the 2 days we have enrolled 73 learners which is excellent news'.

This is just the start for the learning partnership in East Sussex, as further courses have been planned including beginners French and Spanish, ILM level 2 team leaders, and Basic IT, of course not forgetting further induction days for Nescot's range of courses.

West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service tries the Skills Challenge

Adult Learning Week in West Yorkshire saw eight fire stations in Leeds, Bradford and Pontefract accept the Skills for Life Challenge organised by Local FBU Union Learning Reps.

Leeds City College provided tutors to run Initial assessments in literacy and numeracy and FBU ULRs were on hand to offer course information, advice and guidance. Unionlearn in Leeds supported the event and we were able to offer a selection of prizes to participants.

Overall winner of the prize draw was Angela Golding of Fairweather Green Fire Station who is seen here receiving her iPod Nano from John Rankin, FBU Divisional Rep.

Thanks are due for the success of this event to the hard work of FBU Brigade ULR Co-ordinator Ben Paolozzi and ULR Billy Delve.



Firefighters dive in to Learning at Work Day



Firefighters from Greenwich enjoy their diving course

London ULR Tony Purnell organised a LAW day event with a difference when he arranged a SCUBA session for firefighters at his local pool in Greenwich, here he recounts the day it all happened.

I must admit I struggled for an event to organise for adult learners' week. Being a new Union Learning Rep I thought that I'd try and organise something different for our members. There were so many things to choose from and so many organisations to choose from that I felt a little lost to begin with. I wanted to demonstrate to members that learning needn't be dull and that it doesn't have to take place in a class room. In fact it can actually be exciting. With that in mind I asked a

few firefighters at the station where I work, whether they would be interested in attending a taster session in SCUBA diving.

I got a pretty good response as SCUBA diving naturally appeals to the adventurous side of a firefighter; nothing to do with it being FREE! I'm sure. I did some research about SCUBA diving by talking to a local dive club. I was surprised with the structured approach to learning and the skills that were involved. The skills that you need are everyday skills people take for granted like reading about the safety aspects of breathing underwater and simple maths for calculating stuff like turnaround times and even a little bit of science with gas cylinder pressures etc.

We all met up at a local swimming pool and I was surprised that within six minutes I had a set on my back and was whizzing around the pool

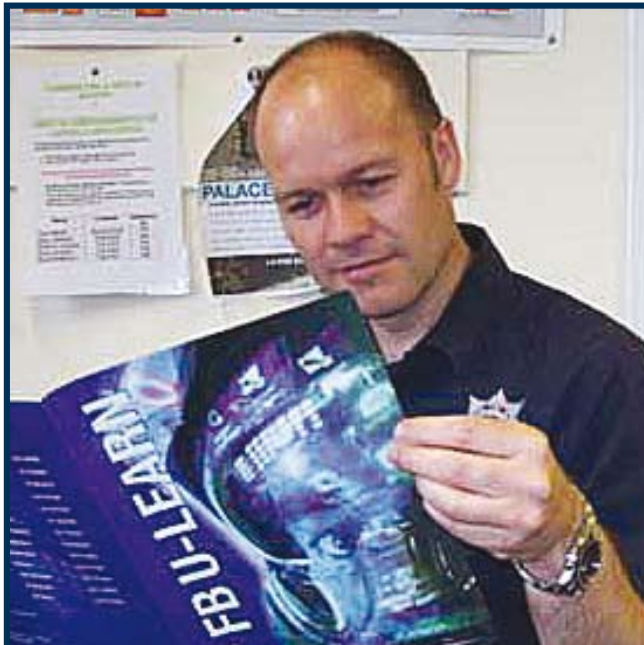
like flipper. Ok more like Orca! But at least I was doing it! We even got to use DPVs which propel divers through the water like in the James Bond Thunderball movie – yes I'm showing my age now.

Being a "yachtie" I wasn't really interested in it for myself but I was encouraged to have a go and I must admit I really had a great time. I can see why people get hooked on it. From our group two people decided to take further lessons and one decided that he'd like to find out more about being a FBU Learning Rep. We were awarded PADI certificates from the dive club which also would give us money off doing the next course anywhere in the world, like when you're on holiday for instance.

I'm glad I learnt a new skill, now I will be able to inspect the hull of my boat whilst it is in the water!



FBU Union Learning rep wins award for commitment to Lifelong Learning



Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service FBU Union Learning Rep David Robinson has received an award for his commitment to Lifelong Learning at Cumbria Fire and Rescue Services' third awards ceremony, 'Together Towards Success', held at the Castle Green Hotel in Kendal. The award was given to David because of his commitment to self development and for encouraging others within Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service to develop their learning skills.

FBU Region Learning Coordinator Garry Harney said 'David has been working very hard over the last couple of years, with a lot of people benefiting from the work he has done. I am delighted that David's work and commitment has been recognised and rewarded at this ceremony and I would also like to add that it is very well deserved.'

Firefighters at Stretford Fire Station, Greater Manchester have success with I.T.

Early this year white watch at Stretford Fire Station in Greater Manchester began a 14 week IT course as a result of the stations ULR Gary Keary, carrying out a learning needs survey.

Gary said; I'm a Firefighter at Stretford Fire Station and became a Union Learning Representative in May 2008, I quickly realised that the I.T skills amongst firefighters was not good and this at a time when the use of computers was becoming a bigger part of a Firefighters' working day. As a result of this, I contacted the Fire Brigade Union GMFRS Lifelong Learning coordinator and after some negotiations with management, we got the go ahead to run a pilot course, with Wigan College agreeing to supply tutors and I.T. equipment.

As part of the I.T. course we thought it would be a good idea to embed it with literacy. After some initial concerns from the firefighters, the end result was that we all realised our english skills had diminished since leaving school and that we were richer for the newly gained knowledge, especially when it came to helping our kids with their homework! We were recently informed that all the firefighters involved had successfully gained a Level 1 qualification in I.T. and a Level 2 qualification in english.



On the 21st September a presentation ceremony was held at Stretford Fire Station, where certificates were jointly presented to the successful candidates by Tony Holt, Trafford Borough Commander and Pete Taylor, FBU FRS Secretary.

As a result of this successful pilot course, management have given the go ahead for this training to be rolled out across Trafford Borough, with two more watches already programmed to begin next month.

Skills for Life tutor, Lorna Taylor

Learning really is for everyone as Northumberland Fire and Rescue employee Wendy Calder found out.

Disabled workers don't always enjoy the same access to promotion and training at work as other groups of workers. The evidence would suggest that they're more likely to be in low paid jobs and face more barriers than their peers.

But despite these problems Wendy Calder was determined that her hearing impairment would not stop her from gaining new skills and developing her career. Luckily the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), is committed to ensuring that all its members and Fire and Rescue Service staff have equality of access to education and Lifelong Learning opportunities.

Wendy is a Computer-Aided Design (CAD) operator in the Fire and Safety Department at the Fire and Rescue Headquarters in Northumberland. Through learning at the FBU's Morpeth Learning Centre she has been able to demonstrate that she is a highly motivated employee, and determined to succeed at work despite her disability.

Wendy's job involves computer produced design work, so she has a good level of IT skills but wanted to improve her maths and english, so she completed an initial assessment in September 2007. Following the assessment and with the support of specialist staff, she progressed through entry level and Level 1 maths, passing her National Numeracy Test Level 1 in July 2008 with flying colours.



Skills for Life tutor Lorna Taylor said 'Wendy is a very bright woman who did not achieve her full potential in the past because she did not receive the support she needed in mainstream school; she can lip-read well, but relies on listening since an operation. It's hard work and she is still practicing listening carefully, and needs clear face-to-face instructions. In the learning centre we offer a learning environment which is free from distractions and with one-to-one support. LearnDirect is ideal because it is online, text-based and there are no speaking and listening units involved.'

With the Level 2 numeracy test due, Wendy said. 'Maths today, english tomorrow, who knows what next? The learning centre support staff really encouraged me to progress with my learning. I thought maths and english was not for me but with help of the FBU learning centre I've taken it on and been successful and if I can then so can you.'

Distance Learning in

Approximately two years ago a Firefighter at Tonbridge Fire station visited my office looking to find a funded sports coaching course that he could fit in around his shifts. Following a little bit of digging and research, trying to locate something that met his needs was proving difficult. It was then that I remembered a learning at work day event that I helped out with at Ipswich Fire Station, where a company called Tribal publishing were exhibiting their range of distance learning courses and in particular a level 2 Fitness and Nutrition course.

Although not meeting my learners' needs in terms of sports coaching, I felt it was a good place to start and he readily agreed. So with that in mind I searched out a local provider who could supply what we wanted. Our local college was approached and incidentally had been in touch with Tribal regarding delivering their range of courses so it looked as if everything was going to fall in to place nicely. However despite some months of negotiations a suitable fee for the course could not be arrived at and following a phone call to Tribal Publishing we were put in contact with North East Surrey College of Technology or Nescot for short. Some brief telephone calls ensued and within the week we were inducting our first small group of learners on the Fitness and Nutrition course.

Since then our relationship with Nescot has gone from strength to strength and following some 200 enrollments in Kent we have taken Nescot in to East Sussex FRS and Surrey FRS. We are currently at 350 enrolments across the region and the interest in these courses goes from strength to strength.

So what are they and how do they work?

Essentially the courses on offer are described as distance learning and require you to attend an induction session from the college lasting around 1.5 hours. The inductions take place on pre-arranged dates at various work locations so there are no visits to the college required although you can be enrolled at the college should you wish to. During the induction you will fill out your enrolment forms and be given your particular course materials. Following an explanation of the course program there is an opportunity to ask questions and make sure you're completely happy with what you've got to do. Each course has individual modules that you work through with short written assignments to complete and submit to the college by post. These assignments are then marked and you receive them back with your feedback. Once the course is completed, usually between two and four months you will receive a certificate from the awarding body.

The courses on offer from Nescot are Exercise and Nutrition, Nutrition and Health, Conflict Management, Equality and Diversity, Managing Diversity, Safeguarding Children and Young People, Working with People with Mental Health Issues and Dementia Awareness. All the courses are level 2 except Managing Diversity which is level 3. Of course these courses will have significant impact in the work place being related to that environment and whilst FBU learn is about meeting our learners wider range of needs both in and out of the work place, the fact that there is such a big take up indicates the impact on FRS's within the South East.

Now distance learning isn't just happening in the South East, across the UK Fire and Rescue Service the FBU through Regional Learning Co-ordinators and Union Learning Reps have introduced the concept of distance learning. As well as region 11, regions 4, 5, 7, 10 and 12 are currently involved in delivery of these courses and such is the interest in them that we are currently investigating how we might deliver them through the FBU's Learning Centre in Morpeth NFRS.

As for the learner, well for those individuals that are comfortable with the process it has enabled them to experience learning that can be accessed at any time in any location and gain a recognised qualification which for people working in the Fire Service has to be of benefit both at work and at home.

Region 11 Learning Co-ordinator
Bob Fitz-Gerald

your region!

*Check out
a selection
of available
courses*



Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service and the local FBU sign their Learning Agreement

An agreement which commits Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service and the Fire Brigades Union to work together to promote lifelong learning and learning opportunities has been signed by both parties.

The Learning Agreement, which covers all full and part-time employees, aims to encourage and support staff to take part in lifelong learning, establish the best ways to enable staff to learn new skills or brush up on old ones and to promote fair access to learning for all.

It also includes the setting up of a Learning Partnership Forum. This will help consider the learning needs of all staff, identify the best ways to meet those needs, produce a realistic organisational learning plan.

Karen Palframan, Head of Organisational Development, said: 'Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service has always recognised the importance of developing its people and realised that the development of every individual is essential if we are to continue delivering an excellent service to our community. We recognise that effective development goes beyond work related training, important though that is, and branches out into personal development and lifelong learning. For this reason, we are delighted to show our commitment today by entering into a learning agreement with the Fire Brigades Union.'

Our partnership with the FBU through their local Learning Representatives will help us reach out to more people and help to encourage them to take a fresh look at developing those important life skills such as literacy, numeracy and ICT. We believe this will provide people from all parts of the service with an opportunity to reach their full potential both personally and within the Fire and Rescue Service.'

Steve Hardy, Norfolk FBU Lifelong Learning Coordinator, said: 'The Fire Brigades Union and Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service have declared their joint commitment to personal development and Lifelong Learning in signing this agreement. We will assist in



removing barriers to learning and give all staff the opportunity to develop their potential at work and in their private lives. Our trained Union Learning reps will be able to offer information, advice and guidance to all staff who wish to participate in further learning and development and ultimately Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service will reap the benefits of a better skills and improved performance.'

Working in the community with a difference as Red Watch at Strood in Kent get to try their new found sign language skills



Following successful completion of his British Sign Language level 1 course through the FBU's Lifelong Learning campaign in Kent Fire and Rescue Service, Watch Manager Alan Brown recently got his watch

involved with a local school that has a specialist provision for Children with hearing impairments. All Faiths Children's Community School in Strood works with up to 21 Children of different ages that have various ranges of hearing loss and part of that work includes introducing the children to organisations that work in the local community.

On visiting the school and with his interest in the subject, Alan quickly realised that his crew needed to increase their knowledge of sign language to help make the most of their visits. With some small financial assistance from the 'Learning at Work Day' follow on funding, Alan arranged for a tutor from the school to visit the station and teach his watch some basic sign language. As a result both the Children and the Firefighters are able to get far more out of each visit to the school with work in the classroom and the play ground. Graham Sample assistant head teacher said 'it's so important for the children to have other adults signing with them and not just parents and teachers' he went on to say 'it helps broaden their perspective and understanding of the local community especially such organisations as the Fire Service, long may it continue'

Remember, remember the 5th November!

Firefighter's son Ethan Comer certainly will never forget this date in 2009 as he was rewarded, alongside other members of the London Fire and Rescue Service, for completing the six Book Reading Challenge.

Earlier this year at the Learning at Work Day event held at Training Centre, the Fire Brigades Union, UNISON and FRS Library, launched their version of the six Book Reading Challenge. Members of staff were asked to read six of this year's Quick Read books between May and September and over 100 people registered for the 'Challenge'. Each participant had to place themselves into one of three reading categories when they registered, they were either a:

- **Reluctant Reader**
- **Holiday Reader**
- **Book Worm**

They then had to read six books and complete a reading diary supplied through the Reading Agency. When Michele McHugh, FRS Librarian, and Tim Davis, FBU Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator, began to judge the completed diaries they found that one of the diaries had been entered by Ethan Comer, 10 year old son of Stratford Firefighter Mark Comer. It was noted by both judges how well kept the diary was and that it fulfilled the criteria for the challenge.

Both judges agreed that Ethan deserved recognition for his efforts.

The prize winners were:

Book Worm - Carole Newton
(Station Manager Stanmore)

Holiday Reader - Steve Miller
(Print Services)

Reluctant Reader - Sandra Thakyer
(Quality Assurance Team - Harrow)

And Ethan Comer who won a £25 Waterstones book voucher and an FBU pen torch.

The winner of the Holiday Reader category, Steve Miller, was pleasantly surprised by the judge's decision and said 'When I took on the six book challenge I thought it was good fun and I could read some books that I wouldn't normally have read. I did not think I would win the challenge!'

The Presentation of the prizes plus certificates for all those who completed a diary took place in the brigade library

(where else!) at Brigade HQ, Union Street, Southwark on November 5th. The London Fire Brigade Commissioner, Ron Dobson, presented the prizes and he was very impressed with the Reading Challenge, he said 'It was a real pleasure presenting the prizes and certificates to staff who had taken part in the Six Book Challenge, especially to Ethan Comer. Competitions like the Challenge encourage staff to do something slightly different that is fun as well as educational. I really appreciate all the hard work that went into organising this event and would like to thank everyone who took part.'

After the presentation and clutching his well deserved prizes Ethan stated that he thoroughly enjoyed taking part in the Challenge and that 'it was made interesting as there were six short different types of books to read.'

Next year there will be four categories including one for the younger generation, thanks to Ethan!



Left to right Sandra Thakyer, Carole Newton, London Commissioner Ron Dobson, Ethan Comer, Steve Miller and FBU learning Co-ordinator Tim Davis

Kerrie joins FBU-learn team in Kent Fire and Rescue



Kerrie Moncrieff

FF Kerrie Moncrieff was recently appointed as the FBU's Learning Co-ordinator for Kent Fire and Rescue Service. Seconded to FBU Learn for 12 months she recounts her reasons for applying for the post.

When I originally joined the Fire Service, one of the key attractions was the ongoing training and development. Throughout my career, even before I started in the service I found myself on many different courses associated with what I was doing at the time, either professionally or for leisure.

When I started at Training Centre (where I felt like a duck out of water), until becoming qualified, there was always someone I could turn to for help and support, either from management or and more often than not, my fellow Firefighters on station whom I'd like to thank for their patience. You know who you are (a little less hair than before).

Having qualified as a firefighter my training hasn't diminished. Thanks to a good Watch Manager who has always encouraged me and made sure my development continued, I've come to realise how this new knowledge has made me more confident, not only in the work place but also at home. That's why I applied for the FBU Learning Co-ordinator's role to be able to promote and encourage others to access the learning available to all of us.

Lifelong Learning is a very successful agenda that has witnessed many achievements for all fire service staff, family and friends. Taking over from Sara Richards who has done a fantastic job by the way, has left me with huge shoes to fill, however as the FBU's promotion of Learning For All continues to gather momentum throughout the service, I hope to continue the excellent work that's already been undertaken. So if you work for KFRS look out for me as I will be visiting your station very soon, to discuss what's currently on offer and to get some feedback on experiences so far.

London's Learning Agreement signed

Following a lengthy consultation period a learning agreement between the three trade unions, FBU GMB and Unison, and the London Fire Brigade has now been signed.



Left to right: Tony Phillips, Unison, Charles Adje, GMB, Tim Davis, Region 10 Learning Co-ordinator, AC Gary Reason, LFRS, Ian Leahair, FBU Brigade SEC, Trevor Shanahan, ULF Manager.

The agreement will help provide personnel within LFEPA equal access to learning opportunities and with all stakeholders working together, in partnership, the promotion of Lifelong Learning will help everyone.

Key aims include building a partnership between T.U.C Accredited Union Learning Representatives and London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA). Encouraging and supporting staff to participate in Lifelong Learning and take up available opportunities. To provide and promote fair access to Lifelong Learning for all staff and to help them gain skills and qualifications that will support their career development and future employability.

The signing of this agreement which took place at Southwark Training Centre earlier this year was attended by representatives from the FBU, GMB and Unison and the Head of Training and Development, Gary Reason, signed on behalf of LFEPA. Gary had this to say following this historic event

'The signing of this agreement confirms the London Fire Brigade's commitment to the development of all its staff. Lifelong

learning is about giving individuals the opportunities to develop themselves to work in a more satisfying and rewarding way. This agreement will allow the brigade to work in partnership with the unions to identify and utilise the learning opportunities available to support all staff to realise their potential and make a real difference in shaping society and the brigade.'

Now that the agreement has been signed a 'Learning Forum' will be established whereby equal representation from all partners will meet and discuss the introduction, implementation and monitoring of any learning initiatives.

Tim Davis, the FBU Regional Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator was delighted, he stated that *'Working in partnership with the brigade will enable us to progress the work we have already commenced. This will help provide learning opportunities for both our members and all personnel which can only benefit everybody.'*

In London we are now building a pool of ULR'S who will be able to support

our members with their learning and this agreement states their rights within the ACAS Code of Practice and recognises their value within the Authority. With this in mind Ian Leahair, FBU London Executive Council Member states that "Becoming involved in the Lifelong learning agenda is another benefit to FBU members and can only enhance their lives in and out of the Fire Service.' In the wider trade union sense he adds 'Anything that can improve the quality of life for workers and increase their chances of better employment opportunities is something not to be ignored. I would encourage any member to become involved either as a Union Learning Rep or as a learner. The signing of this agreement is a huge step forward and shows a commitment towards developing a 'learning culture' within LFEPA by all partners which will benefit everybody equally.'

West Thames College gains UnionLearn Award for work with the FBU and London Fire and Rescue Service

During the Unionlearn Annual Conference, held earlier this year, West Thames College in Isleworth, West London was awarded a Quality Award in recognition for their delivery of ITQ to members of the Fire Brigades Union at Heston Fire Station. The College was extremely flexible with their delivery of the course and arranged for tutors to provide workshops for the firefighters, during weekdays/evenings and at weekends to help cover all the shifts. This was key to achieving the standard required in winning the award.

Heston FBU Learning Rep, Joe McMahon, arranged the course delivery with the college, working closely with local management his efforts have so far led to 12 firefighters achieving a level 2 and one firefighter a level 3 ITQ. London region FBU learning co-ordinator Tim Davis said 'Joe has put a lot of hard work into this and the result is clear for all to see. The firefighters at Heston now have a better understanding of IT and with their new found skills it can only help improve what they do in the workplace.'



Director of Employer Engagement from West Thames College Angela Heathcote (left) and Region 10 Learning Co-ordinator Tim Davis receive the Union Learn Quality award from Comedienne Jo Brand.

Building an FBU for the 21st Century – Union Education Supporting Officials



Trevor Cave

Just over a year ago the Firefighter reported that the union had appointed Trevor Cave as Director of Education to introduce and develop a national programme of education. Previously Trevor had been employed as head of the Department of Trade Union Studies at a college in Leeds working with most TUC affiliated Trade Unions but as a tutor primarily with the FBU.

During the next twelve months the union's education programme will focus on current priorities for Brigade, Regional and Sectional officials. It is clear that FBU officials are increasingly dealing with a wider range of issues affecting members, especially at brigade level, and many of these issues are in some way connected with challenges arising from the employers' modernisation agenda.

In some cases officials are also dealing with proposals that need to be made to management on behalf of the union or coming from management arising out of significant changes in legislation, for example the Public Sector Equality duty and the requirement to undertake Equality Impact Assessments.

During 2009 the union organised 22 successful courses for Officials, plus various Sectional Schools and the National School 2009. Over 630 places were taken up by officials from across the union.

The union's courses are run by professional Trade Union Education tutors who work as part of the TUC Education Service in local Trade Union Education Departments. All TUC tutors are experienced trade unionists who understand the role of trade union reps and the issues or problems they face. All courses are accredited with the TUC/National Open College Network and units of credit successfully claimed can be used to building a portfolio to gain specific TUC qualifications.

Trevor Cave
Director of Education
December 2009

The National Education Programme 2010

The following list of courses has been agreed for 2010, courses will be run subject to sufficient participants and changes may be made to the published dates to take account of changing circumstances. All courses will be advertised by Head Office Circular and applications should be made as advised therein.

Month	Course	Dates	Location
January	Bargaining skills for regional and brigade officials	18th – 20th	Wortley Hall
January	Qualifications and workforce development – a Trade Union approach	18th – 20th	Wortley Hall
February	Bargaining skills for regional and brigade officials	15th – 17th	Wortley Hall
February	Qualifications and workforce development – a Trade Union approach	15th – 17th	Wortley Hall
February	Understanding equality impact assessments	15th – 17th	Wortley Hall
March	Handling change and restructuring	15th – 17th	Wortley Hall
March	Bargaining skills for brigade officials	15th – 17th	Wortley Hall
March	Understanding equality impact assessments	15th – 17th	Wortley Hall
March	Health and safety update 2010	23rd – 25th	Wortley Hall
April	The Women's School 2010	9th – 11th	Wortley Hall
April	Understanding IRMP and challenging within the process	12th – 14th	Wortley Hall
April	Using national and local negotiating and consultation procedures	12th – 14th	Wortley Hall
May	Time management for union officials	24th – 26th	Wortley Hall
June	Discussion leaders and education methods	14th – 16th	Wortley Hall
June	Qualifications and workforce development	14th – 16th	Wortley Hall
July	Introduction to fairness and equality in the workplace	5th – 7th	Wortley Hall
July	Using the media	5th – 7th	Wortley Hall
July	Promoting and developing learning and organising in the UKFRS	8th – 9th	Wortley Hall
September	Pensions update 2010 and handling medical appeals	13th – 15th	Wortley Hall
September	Fairness and equality in the workplace – Follow on	13th – 15th	Wortley Hall
October	The B&EMM School 2010	8th – 10th	Wortley Hall
October	The LGBT School 2010	15th – 17th	Wortley Hall
November	The National School 2010	7th – 12th	Wortley Hall

Passionate about learning? Become a Union Learning Rep!

Union Learning Reps (ULR's) play a key role in organising, delivering and guiding members through the maze of learning opportunities. It is a new union role that many FBU members may be interested in without the hurly-burly of the everyday role of being a Union official. ULR's in the workplace can make a difference, over 18000 throughout the trade union movement and more than 300 in the FBU are already trained having completed the 5 day TUC accredited course. ULR's are now recognised officials and have similar rights to time off and access to facilities as H&S reps. During a recent T.U.C. Conference The Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, gave a clear signal that union-led learning is central to the future not just of trade unions but of our country, calling union learning '**the biggest transformation of trades unions since the growth of the shop steward movement**'.

If you are interested in becoming a ULR and being involved with;

- **promoting the value of learning and skills**
- **work with managers to plan learning opportunities within the workplace**
- **consult with members and identify their learning and skills needs**
- **find out about government policies and programmes for learning and skills**
- **build contacts with local education providers**

Please contact your regional Co-ordinator, details below.

Co-ordinator contact details:

Scotland	Jock Munro	07917 363906
Northern Ireland	Lynda Rowan-O'Neill	07764 186268
North East	Adrian Slassor	07795 592224
Yorkshire & Humberside	Mike Kirby	07917 031851
North West	Garry Harney	07917 031849
East Midlands	Andy Brickles	07779 305428
West Midlands	Graham Humphrey	07917 031847
Wales	Nigel Williamson	07968 996684
East Anglia	Steve Brinkley	07917 759483
London	Tim Davis	07917 031846
South East	Bob Fitz-Gerald	07917 031850
Southern	Kieron Hall	07827 300144
South West	Bill Hendy	07917 031852

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FBU National Learning Manager
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Adrian Slassor

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