

FBU Learn

The latest news from Fire Brigade Union Lifelong Learning

Spring 2009

The Beautiful Road to Learning

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Tim Davis
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The FBU's Union Learning Fund continues to go from strength to strength as more members become involved as Union Learning Representatives or as learners taking up a number and variety of courses offered through-out the regions.

The union's involvement with the ULF and Lifelong Learning is nearing its 4th year as a National project and over 7 years when taking account of regional ULF projects. It has, as you would expect, been a bit of a roller coaster ride in engaging officials, members and management across the regions to recognise the importance of having, and leading, a Lifelong Learning agenda. The FBU has always had a strong social conscience and improving the social and work related lives of our members, their families and other workers sits comfortably within the aims of the FBU and the Trade Union movement.

The ULF has had to grow up very fast over the last couple of years and this has been recognised by all officials and project workers actively involved in the project. We have been influenced by Government Skills Strategies, changes to FRS qualifications and workforce development and the so called 'modernisation' of the FRS. The union has challenged many of the proposed changes that some senior managers seem to introduce at the drop of a hat. The re-introduction of IFE for instance is just one of the many 'knee jerk' reactions taking place with our member's suddenly finding themselves forced to sit examinations or go through unwieldy ADC's if they wish to move their careers forward.

At the FBU 2007 Annual Conference a resolution was passed calling for the setting up of a working group to look at how the union can mainstream and embed Lifelong Learning. The

working group has met on a number of occasions and a report from the group has recently been agreed by the EC and a resulting paper will now go to this year's (2009) Annual Conference. Trade Union Education in the FBU continues to thrive and is key to ensuring our officials have the requisite skills to allow them to represent our members to the best of their ability; the working group were very much aware that proposals to embed lifelong learning should not interfere or impede the union's education delivery.

Our growing up also acknowledges the role that learning plays in the organising agenda of unions. Recruitment and retention of members is vital for the future of the FBU and providing another union benefit - lifelong learning - is very much a positive.

The FBU can be very proud of the work and influence it has with regards Lifelong Learning within the trade union movement and the FRS. The NJC agreed 'Circular 11/08 - Skills in the Workplace' is the first time that the FRS employers have given a commitment to raising the skills of all our members and helping them attain a minimum of level 2 in numeracy and literacy. We have a successful MOU in place with the POA and share resources such as access to our learning centres. Our ULRs in Suffolk were recently Highly Commended at a National Awards ceremony for their work in supporting members in workforce development and currently the FBU are short-listed for two National 'Go' Awards.

During February the FBU learning centres (as part of U-net) had to undergo their first 'OFSTED' inspection. I am pleased to say that the inspector was extremely satisfied with the operation of the centres, the enthusiasm of the centre staff and the high level of learning delivery (yes, the word outstanding was used at one point!). A lot of work went into making sure that the centres met the tough targets of 'Ofsted' - congratulation to all those involved.

With only 14 months of current ULF funding left and no commitment that any further funding will be available, there are a lot of challenges and hard work ahead if the FBU is to mainstream Lifelong Learning. It is a challenge that I am sure we are up to.

Fire Service is first in country to 'sign-up' for the Go Fire Award



Left to right: Adrian Slassor FBU Learning Fund, Kieran Brennan Northumberland FBU Vice Chair, Nigel Carruthers IDeA, Leslie Rickerby Executive Member for Community Services Northumberland County Council, Michael Brewis NFRS Head of Human Resources, Alex Bennett DCFO NFRS, Trevor Shanahan Project manager FBU Learning Fund

Northumberland is the first Fire and Rescue Service in the country to sign up to a national award strategy to help develop Skills for Life amongst employees.

On Friday 10 October 2008 Deputy Chief Fire Officer Alex Bennett took the first step to improving employee skills by signing up to the GO Fire and Rescue Service Award. He was joined by Nigel Carruthers, the Head of Skills for IDeA, Cllr Lesley Rickerby the Executive Member for Community Services, Adrian Slassor from the Northumberland Fire & Rescue FBU Union Learning Centre and Kieran Brennan from the Fire Brigades Union along with Michael Brewis, Head of Human Resources for Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service, who will be the lead officer in progressing the project.

The GO Fire and Rescue Service Award has been developed by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and aims to ensure that all fire and rescue staff are encouraged to reach their full potential in the workplace. Through enabling staff to assess their literacy, language and numeracy skills there will be the chance to create a range of opportunities to develop these skills and also have access to relevant national qualifications.

IDeA estimates that 230,000 Local Government employees nationally are below level 1 in the national qualifications framework in literacy and 780,000 are below level 1 in numeracy.

Deputy Chief Fire Officer Bennett said: "We recognise how important it is that all our employees have the opportunity to develop their literacy and numeracy skills and we are pleased to be the first Fire and Rescue Service in the country to sign up to the GO Award. Ensuring that our employees have the chance to reach their full potential will be of benefit not just to the Fire and Rescue Service but more importantly to them personally giving them a higher level of skills and self-confidence."

Adrian Slassor said: "After initial discussion with the Chief Fire Officer and with his and the Fire & Rescue support, in partnership we opened our Learning Centre over six years ago. This has gone from strength to strength and with this joint signing of the GO Fire Award, the partnership will continue to provide high quality skills for life and other learning opportunities to FBU members, the workforce and others who wish to upgrade their skills."

Avon Fire and Rescue Control Staff get Mapped for Success

Whilst the FBUs continued opposition to the Regional Control Project is well documented and the level of political engagement within the South West at local, regional and national level continues, the Regional Committee also recognised that its members working in local control rooms needed some practical measures to assist them in this very difficult and challenging time.

Bill Hendy the FBU's regional Learning Coordinator, worked with colleagues from Union learn South West, to develop a bid for funding that would allow them to carry out a full professional skills mapping exercise. This would act as a pilot in one Service to identify existing skills and map them against the skills needed, to achieve individual aims and aspirations over the coming months and years. Subsequently the FBU was successful in winning a bid from "Learning Works for All", for £10K to undertake the pilot exercise, which, if successful could then be rolled out in other Fire and Rescue Services.

A project team with previous experience in this field was appointed and a partner F&RS was sought who would be willing to work closely with us. Building on the relationship already developed with Avon F&RS, we presented the proposal to them and they agreed to be a partner. They also agreed to promote the project to other F&RS's if it proved to be successful.

Given that AF&RS had already given a commitment that they would not make any enforced redundancies, we sought to identify with AF&RS managers what



options were available to control staff and as a result, what additional skills they would need to acquire.

A partners working group was set up and agreed the content of an on line questionnaire for staff to complete and the project manager employed a company to set up a Web site to facilitate the data collection.

ULR's then encouraged and supported control staff to complete the questionnaire using a dedicated laptop and out of 35 staff 30 responses were gathered. The data was then collated and the project manager met with all partners to reveal the outcomes. As a result, a further small working group was set up to manage the outcomes which included:

- o "Next step" providing CV writing, interview and presentation skills.
- o Full independent information and guidance (IAG) for all staff.
- o IT training with qualifications.
- o Talking heads sessions.
- o Access to the brigades sponsorship scheme
- o 1:1 Staff meetings with HR department.
- o Design a news letter to promote the project.
- o Additional training, to be identified
- o Access to skills for life training for all staff

Given that this project is ongoing and the deadline for regional controls has slipped, its hoped to continue to develop the support available and develop additional learning outcomes as a result of the action plan. The first of which was being able to offer control staff a free language course through Filton College which we hope will encourage control staff to become familiar with learning in a relaxed and interesting way.

Bill commented that, *"We have had excellent backing for this project and I would like to thank all partners for their support, not least Chaz Cripps the Fire Control ULR for the encouragement and support he has provided for colleagues"*.

He went on to say *"We very much look forward to engaging with control staff through the learning agenda and will be contacting all Chief Fire Officers in the region in an attempt to promote this project throughout the South West."*

Should you have any questions or wish to discuss this further please contact

Bill Hendy on
bendy@blueyonder.co.uk

Tresham and the Fire Brigade Union Ignite Learning Opportunities for Northamptonshire Fire Service

Tresham Institute established a working partnership with the Northamptonshire County Fire and Rescue Service two years ago to enable its staff to achieve Adult Literacy qualifications at Level 1 and Level 2.

Training was arranged to take place within the Fire service premises to suit the service needs and was available during the day, evening and at weekends to ensure that all staff were given the opportunity to gain the skills. Since the partnership began a total of 205 Fire Service operatives have registered and 176 operatives have already completed the course, resulting in a 97% success rate for the service.

Since receiving the Skills for Life training from Tresham, the Fire service has seen many benefits including enhanced levels of customer care, meeting national performance standards as well as attaining a greater responsiveness to change and modernisation. Individuals have increased in self esteem and worth which is greatly enhanced amongst family, friends, work colleagues and the public they serve.

Throughout the two year partnership, Tresham Institute has worked closely with the Fire service to ensure that the provision offered continued to meet the specific needs and demands of the service by liaising regularly with Union Learn Representatives and holding steering group meeting to monitor and evaluate the provision.

Kevin Hornsey, Station Manager Training Department said: "We in the Northants Fire and Rescue Service have embarked upon phase 1 of our roll out programme to staff, which has seen a 96.6% pass rate from our full



From Lto R ULR Jack Douglas, Regional Learning co-ordinator Andy Brickles and MP Phil Hope

time programme to part time/ retained duty system staff commencing in the Autumn with completion expected by December 2008.

Andy Brickles, East Midlands Regional ULR Coordinator said:

"We welcome the partnership working with Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service and Tresham Institute. Union members have now got the bug to learn and many have approached our Union Learning Reps for advice about further learning. This was a really positive move for Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service to get involved with the

national Skills for Life agenda. We are looking forward to training with the rest of the organisation."

Northamptonshire County Fire and Rescue Service plan to continue to work with Tresham to offer Skills for Life courses and ensure that all operatives that have registered have the opportunity to complete their Level 2 literacy. Tresham is also working closely with the Fire Brigades Union and the National Fire Service to encourage learning amongst full time and retained staff.

Amber Watch – Atherton Leading the way with ICT for Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service

In a partnership between FBU-Learn and Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service, Wigan Borough command and Wigan and Leigh College set up and delivered a pilot course in Information and Communication Technology. Due to the work demands on Fire-fighters using ICT skills on the Operational Support Unit being higher than other fire-fighters in the Borough, Atherton Fire Station was selected to trial the course.

Amber Watch, have just completed the pilot course in ICT, embedded with Literacy. The course was delivered by Wigan and Leigh College at Atherton Fire station. 28 hours of teaching was delivered in 2 hour sessions over 14 tours of duty, to try to allow each student to receive 20 hours of learning.

This was to enable the watch to receive the training whilst available for fire calls, allowing for the rostering for duty system, detachments and any other time off taken by individuals.

All the Watch members successfully achieved a nationally accredited certificate in Literacy and the basic skills to use computers with confidence. They were presented with their ICT certificates by the Principle of Wigan and Leigh College; Cath Hurst.



The pilot course was reviewed and the feedback from the College and the Watch was very positive. The FBU-Learn Lifelong Learning team are hoping to roll out the course to other Watches. One comment from a watch member was that 'He now had the confidence to help his kids with their homework'.

Thanks to “SEEDA” Funding, Fire Fighters in Kent get to learn new languages

Simon Warner recounts the beginners Spanish Course he recently attended as part of LAW day follow on funding in KFRS:

Hola todos! “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks”. RUBBISH! I was one of the lucky few who attended the ‘Lifelong Learning’ Spanish beginners classes held over the last few weeks at Canterbury Fire Station. One thing that struck me straight away was the diverse range of people attending and the obvious attitude that we were going to have a laugh and make the whole learning process an enjoyable one.

And, with the help and persistence of our delightful tutor Claudia, we managed to do just that! From absolute beginners to... well if not exactly fluent speakers at least we have the confidence to sally forth and make a stab at ordering a decent meal and passing the time of day. ‘Lo siento, el vengo de Barcelona’... perhaps if Basil had learnt a bit of Spanish his relationship with Manuel would have been completely different? Many thanks to Claudia and many thanks to the Union Fund for subsidising our fees!



Richard Burden MP sees that learning is uniform for the Fire Service.

Birmingham Northfield MP Richard Burden visited Northfield Fire Station on Friday 10th October to see how his constituents are benefiting from union-led learning during a visit to the learning centre at West Midlands Fire Service at Northfield.

He met union learning reps (ULRs) from the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and UNISON as well as learners and heard from his constituents about how they had improved their skills. During the day courses were run for community learners and staff, who wished to take courses, and were able to undertake assessments. Unionlearn Regional Manager Mary Alys as well as ULRs from the FBU and Unison accompanied the MP on the visit and highlighted the achievements of union-led learning in workplaces in the Midlands. Unionlearn, the TUC's learning and skills organisation, has supported the project with funding from the Union Learning Fund (ULF). Richard Burden MP said: 'I am delighted to visit the Fire Station and it's great to hear how my constituents are benefiting from improving their skills. As a member of a trade union, I am pleased to see how union-led learning is helping Fire Service staff to gain new skills and with that goes increased confidence. Fire Service staff contributes to one of the most essential services in our community and I am pleased to see them, their families and their communities benefit from learning.' Mary Alys, Unionlearn Regional Manager, said: 'As a trade union member Richard Burden is familiar with all the benefits membership can bring. Unionlearn is able to support the learning and skills agenda through trade unions to make a real difference to individuals' lives. I am delighted that he has been able to see at first-hand the excellent work done by union learning reps, here in Birmingham. They are part of the network of over 20,000 union learning reps across the country. The Union Learning Fund (ULF), administered by Unionlearn, is making hundreds of projects like this possible across the country, the sterling work being done by the Fire Brigades Union must be applauded.'



The Beautiful Road to Learning by Jock Munro FBU SULF Project Worker

'An ràthad bhoidheach

The art of learning new skills is a beautiful path to embark on. The feel good factor and inner happiness one feels from a good learning experience is not to be missed. The article heading is in Gaelic and through my learning experience in Orkney it would translate into Orkney dialect as "Geung Alang the Bonnie Road Tae Learning Buey".

The learning road can be short or long depending on the learning route decided upon.

The road to learning can be equally short and long depending on one's location and proximity to a learning provider.

I recently participated in a learning event held in the Learning Centre in Orkney College, Kirkwall. The event "Trade Unions, working, learning, organising, together in the Highlands & Islands" was organised and supported by the Highlands and Islands "Scottish Union Learning" Team from the Scottish Trade Union Congress, led and supported by Pam Urquhart.



Commenting on union learning, **Pam Urquhart, Development Officer - Highlands & Islands said** 'For Trade Unions trying to support, organise and arrange the delivery of lifelong learning in the Highlands & Islands there can be a number of challenges to overcome!, The area covers 15,000 square miles - larger than the country of Belgium! To overcome these challenges we have adopted a cross

union model of working. We target particular areas to ensure the trade union message on lifelong learning reaches workers regardless of their postcode! The FBU have always been an enthusiastic key partner in that cross union work and are

always willing to take to the road (and sea and air!) to deliver the learning message to their members across the Highlands & Islands. Thanks are due to Jock Munro, FBU Project Worker and Merv Walker (Orkney FBU Union Learning Rep) for getting the union learning message to trade union members in Orkney.

The road for me on this occasion started in Perth with a beautiful drive through the countryside of stunning Scotland. The winter scene, extraordinary and fascinating landscape, birds of prey hovering above looking for their next meal, deer down from the wild mountain tops to search and forage for food in the less harsh lower slopes all adding to this marvellous 5 hour journey to the Scrabster Ferry.



The weather was not too kind with snow, ice and freezing fog to contend with along the way. Whilst the drive had poor visibility at times, the learning vision is very clear for our members in the Highlands and Islands.



gu foghlam'

Scrabster can be found in the Caithness and Sutherland region of Scotland and its name derives from a Norse background meaning "the Steading on the Sea Mews" or "Standing on the Edge". Scrabster is the most northerly harbour in the UK. Due to its sheltered and welcoming location Scrabster was appreciated by seafarers.

In 1841 the Scrabster Harbour Trust was founded. Due to an ever increasing trade it became essential to have a lighthouse. In 1862 the Holburn head Lighthouse was constructed. Scrabster still today has a bright future.

production, Orcadian stone work and tourism.

The Trade Union learning event took place in the local learning centre which can be found in Orkney College, Kirkwall. There is a large variety of learning that can be tapped into from Archaeology to Basic IT. Learners can avail themselves with short courses of two hours to degree courses. There is also a Learning Centre in Westray with outreach centres in Sandy, Stronsay, Eday and Hoy.

From the college I had meetings in the fire station in Stromness and Kirkwall to speak with the Fire and Rescue Services personnel. The learning needs' of individuals at each



On the ferry to Stromness the beauty continues with snow clad mountains rolling down to the coastline and onwards past St. John's Head, the highest vertical cliff in Britain. Then of course, the Old Man of Hoy famous 450 feet sea stack. Orkney is made up of 13 islands. Each island has its own unique features and all have an amazing history. Many woodlands and rocks date back to 3000BC and 5000BC. The islands can be arrived at by air and sea via ferries and small boats. A direct flight Kirkwall to Stronsay takes 8 minutes.

An abundance of wildlife, crafts, heritage and Archaeology with castles, standing stones, lost villages dating back to Neolithic times, will mean more than 1 visit being required to see all that is on offer.

This journey is paramount to delivering learning to our members on the islands, where access to learning provision can be more difficult than that found in the mainland cities. Our members predominately work the Retained Duty System (RDS) so learning needs to be facilitated round their normal working environment. That can be sheep and cattle farming, whisky

workplace was analysed and the available courses at the college circulated covering ICT, lifelong learning in general and everyday skills, there was also interest in members becoming Union Learning Representatives.

The members informed us that they were pleased that the Trade Union movement was delivering learning opportunities for its members over and above the normal industrial relations and negotiating work. Others were pleased that there was cross union initiatives and support for each other which will enhance the communities the live in.

The meeting at Kirkwall was attended by Jock Munro FBU Project, Lorna Hirst Orkney Learning Centre and Pam Urquhart STUC SUL Team.

The crews took part in a mini skills challenge and discussion took place round the FBU Skills Strategy Document and the FBU challenge the Fire Service Initiative.

I am pleased we had an excellent learning event over two days engaging members from all the participating Unions.

London Fire Brigade Library and Information Resource Centre could be just the place to start your learning Journey!

London Fire Brigade have for some years offered the services of a Library for its personnel. In recent times this facility has been improved and gives extensive services and opportunity for all staff to access resources linked directly with fire service e.g. fire safety, building construction, general health and safety, fire engineering.....etc. It also covers additional material covering management, training and personal development plus it provides a resource centre where personal study can take place.

The Library is based at Brigade HQ and currently has in excess of 2,600 registered users and is used by various groups of people including Uniformed and non uniformed staff and managers, staff from CLG and members of the public.

There can be many reasons for personnel to visit this vital resource but the main use of the Library is for staff to be able to:

- undertake work related research
- carry out personal study to help with Brigade sponsored courses
- provide online learning.

Library Centre Manager, Michele McHugh, commented "The Library's core collection is made up of current and historical material relating to fire and rescue, additional material supports staff in their daily employment and personal development. We have a large collection of DVDs and videos, which are very popular at the fire stations, and of course we provide online access to those documents that are available electronically. Michele went on to say "We like to think of the library as the Brigade's "first point of contact" where anyone can pop in, telephone or email us

with their enquiry. We may not always know the answer but we pride ourselves on being able to point them in the right direction. "

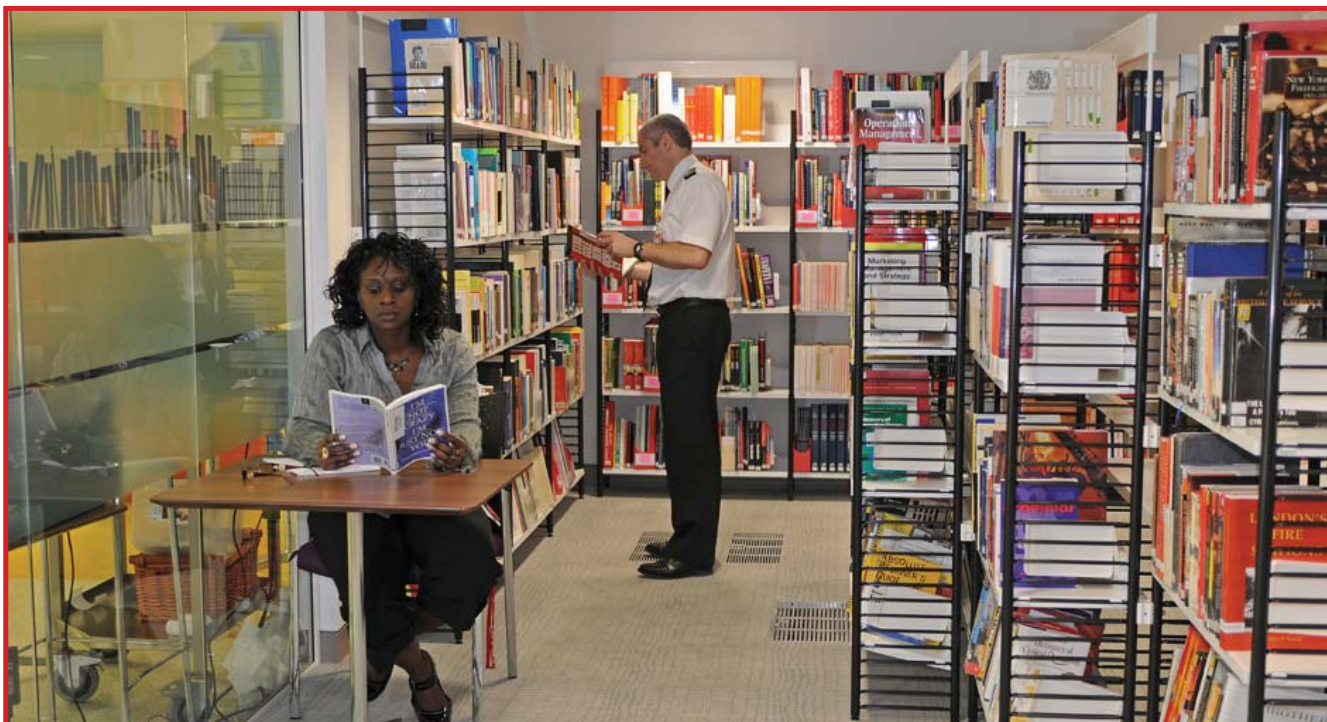
Each month the library receives 250 visitors and nearly 150 people utilise the computer terminals in the attached resource centre. It provides all the usual services of a local library i.e. book, DVD and video loans, research support, online catalogue, journals, plus it also offers the following facilities:

- quiet study/working areas
- 9 computer terminals for online training such as ECDL, hot-desking for visiting staff and collective online work
- Television, DVD/Video player
- relaxed seating.

The library stocks approximately 12,000 items which includes 700 DVD's and Videos covering all aspects of fire safety and fire & rescue incident management which help support training and development requirements.

The policy of the library is "to maintain and develop a collection of resources and information to support the LFB in their goal of making London a safer city".





The core collection focuses on:

- Fire and rescue related material for reference and research e.g. fire fighting and prevention, and fire service history
- Health and safety and fire safety
- Construction, fire engineering and fire safety regulatory information
- Essential reading material for appropriate courses
- Training and study resources for staff development and community awareness programmes
- Emergency planning

This facility, which is only provided by 2 other F&R services throughout the UK and on a much smaller scale, is clearly a huge benefit for those who work within the London Fire and Rescue Service. The recent launch of the new Qualifications Framework by the LFB plus the utilisation of the National Training and Development Strategy will place even more pressure on the library to help support staff with their career/personal development as our employer strives to ensure that opportunity to learn is available for all and embedding a culture of learning throughout the organisation becomes the norm.

During last year's Learning at Work Day event held at the Brigade Training Centre the FBU donated a Quick Reads display stand plus 60 books to the Library so that staff could begin borrowing the books and begin a 'book swap' facility. This has been very successful and a regular supply of further copies of these books have been provided via the BBC RAW (Reading and Writing) campaign which has enabled this facility to continue. Michele McHugh has been very pleased with this extra service she can offer to staff and states "The 'Quick Read Books' donated by Tim Davis, The FBU Lifelong Learning rep, have proved

hugely popular in the library, we couldn't get enough of them. One user told me of how she hadn't read a book for years but had managed to complete one of the 'Quick Reads' whilst on a long train journey - she was obviously feeling really pleased with herself!"

Encouraging adults back in to reading books is the main reason for the development of the 'Quick Reads' and it is great to see staff being able to have loan of these books in the library. Earlier this year every fire station in London was issued with a pack of 6 'Quick Reads' so that all staff had equality of access.



Isle of White Fire and Rescue Service become the 2nd FRS to Sign up for the Go Fire Award

Chief Fire Officer Paul Street showed the brigades commitment to fully implementing the National Strategy for Skills for life by signing up to the Go Fire Award along with Barry Abraham, (lead council cabinet member for Fire), Paul Fletcher, (Fire Brigades Union Regional Learning Coordinator) and Michelle Johnson from the IDeA. The Fire service is the first in the South to sign up to the award and only second in the country.

A learning agreement was signed last year between the FBU and the Fire Service with a commitment by both to work in partnership to support staff and engage with the skills for life agenda, to develop all members of staff skills so they can succeed to level 2 and beyond.

A learning forum was established and some outside providers were brought into the partnership to develop programs that can be rolled out across the whole service. The process has been lengthy but now with the help of the FBU learning project coordinator, HTP the Island based training provider, Train to Gain and the Prison Officers Association Learning Centre at Albany House a program is now ready to offer development programs from pre – entry all the way through to retirement. This will hopefully be open eventually to our wider community as the project grows and community fire stations evolve.

Obviously these specific programs are for development in relation to management and not operational and competency based training as this will always be dealt with

internally by the Islands Fire Service Learning and Development team at Ryde.

Essentially all staff will be assessed for their skills for life, Maths and English at every level of development as these will be embedded into the programs, including recruitment.

Staff will also be able to undertake these courses as a standalone option if they wish, as many have so far during the pilot phase.

At all stages information, advice and guidance is available from trained FBU learning reps, HTP consultants and Prison Officers Association Skills tutor to support learners at all stages. In addition to this the FBU through Paul Fletcher, the Fire service and Isle of Wight Council are in the process of developing a dyslexia support policy offering the opportunity to screen staff to assist them and offer further support and guidance.



From Lto R Barry Abraham/ Paul Fletcher/
Paul Street / Michelle Johnson

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service enter into Learning Partnership with FBU

SFRS recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the FBU and then went on to sign the Governments "Skills Pledge" to send a clear message to its workforce that it is serious about learning and Skills. The MOU, a precursor to a learning agreement clearly sets out the partnership approach to the Learning agenda and gives guidance to the whole workforce on how they can access learning. Working with East Surrey College and North East Surrey College and following a successful Learning Information day at SHQ it is hoped to begin with some learning at both Leatherhead Fire station and SHQ. Brigade Learning Co-ordinator Stuart De Fraine Ford said "signing the MOU is a first step on a long journey but with the range of learning opportunities available to our workforce its excellent that SFRS management are now onboard".



SFRS CFO Russell Pearson signs the MOU with Brigade Sec Richard Jones, Back row Surrey FAW rep Steven Butwell, Brigade Learning Co-ordinator Stuart De Fraine Ford, T2G Broker Sue McGeown, Regional Learning Co-ordinator Bob Fitz-Gerald

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service Sign the "Skills pledge"

SFRS CFO Russell Pearson signed the Skills Pledge with 5 other organisations when he attended the "MAKE the Skills Pledge - MAKE the UK a world leader in skills by 2020" networking breakfast event organised by Surrey Chambers of Commerce and held on Tuesday 25th November 2008 at the Refectory, Guildford Cathedral.

The event, which was sponsored by the Surrey Learning and Skills Council, attracted some 104 businesses to hear key note speeches from Lord Tony Young, Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills and Lords in Waiting, HM Household and Jonathan Shaw, MP, Minister for the South East, Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Disabled People), Department for Work and Pensions, Dan May, director of ramsac ltd, and Chaired by Nigel Biggs, Managing Director of Passionate Innovation.

Lord Tony Young spoke about the Skills Pledge with a particular focus on the take up of training and development, Skills Polices concentrating on employers, new and emerging Government skills policies and how Train to Gain can help businesses. As well as hearing firsthand about the new and emerging national skills policies, Jonathan Shaw spoke from a more local perspective about how these fit with the economic priorities of the South East region.

Lord Young, CFO Russell Pearson and MP Jonathan Shaw

Cambridge Fire Station gets the IT bug

Record numbers of people have been joining the Computer Courses provided by FBU Learning at Cambridge Fire Station. The courses have been provided fully funded to any member of staff who would like to gain more IT skills.

Cambridgeshire Union Learning Coordinator Martin Harding said "I thought these courses would be popular but I'm stunned by the numbers of people interested, 70% of the station have signed-up already so we've had to introduce a waiting list for others to join".

Cambridge Regional College provided tutors and equipment at the Fire Station twice a week. The courses begin with a student choosing numerous subjects like PowerPoint, Internet, Outlook, Excel, Word etc. The tutors then guide the student through these subjects producing evidence as they advance to complete their course at NVQ Level 2.

Martin added "I am very grateful to everybody who has got involved to make this course an 'astonishing success' for Union Learning in Cambridgeshire."



Staff from Green Watch Cambridge signing up to their IT Courses

“The biggest and perhaps the best”



Almost 200 delegates attended the Wales TUC ULR conference in Newport making it the largest such conference of this kind in the UK to date.

The conference was spread over two days and was opened on Thursday 13th November 2008 by Wales TUC president Vaughan Gething. There were then a number of presentations from the rostrum including John Griffiths AM the deputy minister for skills and Martin Mansfield the recently appointed Wales TUC General Secretary. Martin graciously admitted sole responsibility for the economic uncertainty, as his appointment coincided with the recent banking collapses and uncertainty.

There were a number of other speakers including Scott Quinnell, a man who had had a glittering rugby career playing for Wales, the British Lions and pursuing a professional rugby league career. Scott captivated the audience as he related how despite his sporting prowess in school he was called thick, stupid and tup, (a good old Welsh word meaning thick and stupid). How that has always undermined his confidence and self-esteem and only when his playing career came to an end

did he have to face the reality of his lack of basic skills. How the sternest test he had ever faced was undertaking the test for dyslexia, as if the outcome was to be that he was not dyslexic then he really was tup! Scott helped contribute to the Quick Reads series of books by Accent Press and hoped that his story could help other recognise and overcome the difficulties that confronted them and paid tribute to the work of union learning reps who are there to provide the confidential advice and guidance that can assist individuals to deal with and overcome their personal issues.

Friday 14th October day two of the conference presented a variety of workshops, allowing delegates the opportunity to select two that they could take part in. Conference then concluded with a plenary session with reports back from all the workshop activities that were conducted and an open debate.

This was the second year that FBU ULR@ had attended the conference and it is pleasing to report that our numbers continue to grow. The responses from those who attended were very positive as all felt that they gained not only information and contacts but also experience and confidence about their role.

The hope is that FBU participation will continue to increase and we look forward to next year's conference.

East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service Sign Learning Agreement with FBU

Following a period of negotiation ESFRS Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive Des Pritchard recently signed the Lifelong Learning agreement with the Fire Brigades Union. Des said "East Sussex Fire and Rescue is committed to working in partnership to promote and support lifelong learning and ensure equal access to learning opportunities for all employees of the Service". This was confirmed at the recent Learning information Day held at ESFRS HQ in Eastbourne. Despite the weather where for 3 days the South East resembled the North Pole, Hastings College, Sussex Downs College, Inspired Training, and Train to gain were on hand to offer information

advice and guidance on a range of learning opportunities to Staff across the organisation. The day proved extremely successful with many enquiries and lots of enthusiastic learners looking to enrol. The key now is to build on the enthusiasm and it's hoped to start a number of pilot projects with providers at locations across the service.

ACO Cheryl Rolph said "Today was a real success, thank you. I know we still have a journey to make but if your commitment and enthusiasm are indicators of success, then I am positive we will really turn a corner".



Left: ESFRS Staff talk Learning opportunities
Middle: Rose Stewart lead skills advisor at Sussex Downs College talks to Theresa Elvin from Hove Fire Station
Right: ESFRS FBU Brigade learning Co-ordinator Jason Brice

National Learning at Work Day



National Learning at Work Day, the biggest annual celebration of workplace learning, will take place on Thursday 14 May 2009. It is run by the "Campaign for learning" as part of Adult Learners Week. So what will you be doing on May the 14th? Why not get involved and take part? You could try something new or unusual just ask your Union Learning Rep what events are planned for your workplace or if you haven't got a workplace rep get in touch with your Regional Learning Co-ordinator (Contact details below) and find out what's happening in your Fire and Rescue Service.

Get Involved!

Get Active!

Get Learning!

For more information go to
www.campaignforlearning.org.uk or
www.learningatworkday.com

Book your place on The 4th National Union Learning Reps School

6th & 7th July 2009



Stoke Rochford Hall, Grantham

For an application form contact your regional Learning Co-ordinator (details below) or see the FBU website.

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	Paul Fletcher	07917 065859
South West	Bill Hendy	07917 031852

FBU North East Learning Centre
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Adrian Slassor

FBU Train to gain Development Worker
Ingrid Ludolph
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