
BFAWU ULR Network meeting January 2024

New Learner Reps

How do we engage them with the network, the role and ensure that they have the support they need to fulfil their role.

We need to link all the information that is available up and ensure that branches and learner reps have access to everything they need that is relevant to them, historically there was a reliance on project workers, which meant in England when the project was ended the structures fell apart.

Branches want information about learning, but employers generally won't pay so it needs to be free or extremely cheap.

Learning Culture in branches

How do we build up a culture of learning in branches, there is still so much stigma around not being able to do math or English, we live in a progressively digital world and not everyone is tech savvy. These are all nothing to be ashamed of, how do we make sure there isn't a stigma around learning and development, but build a culture where people are empowered to learn new skills and want to develop themselves?

How do we ensure that the changing and developing roles in our industry from purely physical to ones that are more technology or digitally based do not leave our members behind? We need to build a learning culture to help prevent this from happening, which will also support members outside of work in their day to day lives as well as in work.

Local Colleges

Project workers used to go on sites, they would contact local colleges and see what they had available, some of the stuff was free, others were funded depending on postcodes or salary amounts – this is more common now after the national project funded ended and more and more organisations have local or regional funds now.

ESOL funding has been slashed which causes issues in our diverse industry, there are organisations that will run ESOL courses that aren't accredited for free and others that will run courses at a relatively cheap cost, but it is finding what is available and what area the funding covers.

Some colleges are running what is known as Multiply courses which is a program designed to help with math's skills to help with everyday life and provide more opportunities.

We have links with Nottingham college too, some courses are postcode dependent like other organisations, they have a whole range of courses available though.

Trades Councils

How do we utilise trades councils to ensure there are enough people to make courses viable, for example if 20 people are needed for a ESOL or Gambling awareness course, but only 6-7 people sign up from a BFAWU branch, could we work with a local trades council to push the information out to other unions branches in the area and fill the course up together rather than all missing out due to lack of numbers?

TUC funding

There is still funding available in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, in England there are pockets of funding available in certain Mayoral areas for example West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, part of Newcastle and part of Birmingham, how do we make sure that branches are utilising these areas of funding to support members?