



Scottish Union Learning

Annual Report

2024 - 2025

Learner Quotes

I thought it was a great course delivered expertly and professionally by all involved. Not only did it give me confidence by reinforcing elements I already practice, but it also answered a lot of things I was unsure about.

I am so glad to have been presented with the opportunity to expand my skill set and knowledge through this course but with no charge to me, something that would have been a barrier to my participation.

The course was informative, practically useful, well-structured and made a big difference to my career.

The course has been tremendously helpful. Interesting, engaging and pitched at the right level.

Great interaction between the teacher and the participants. I wish I had done this course a lot earlier in my career.

The tutor was knowledgeable and informative and kept it light/friendly and other people taking part seemed relaxed and friendly. I usually hate these courses on Teams but enjoyed it.

Really excellent tutor - extremely knowledgeable and very well-prepared course.

I thought the course was excellent - really well prepared and well taught. The learning atmosphere was friendly and inclusive. I felt really happy with the whole experience.

Course was excellent and very useful for my role in the industry. The course leader was amazing. I would recommend this to anyone in Film/TV, not just managers, as it promoted and encouraged excellent practice.

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Mission Statement: Scottish Union Learning supports trade unions in developing, organising, and delivering work-related learning and skills programmes for their members that contribute to collective prosperity and wellbeing, Fair Work, and equality for workers across Scotland.

Introduction

Susan Quinn, Chair, Scottish Union Learning Board



It has been a busy, although challenging, year for Scottish Union Learning. The financial year, April 2024-March 2025, was the second year of the two-year SUL Programme. Through funding from the Scottish Government, SUL has administered the Development Fund, Learning Fund, Cyber Resilience Fund, and a TUC Education Grant which supports Rep Training and Development.

This funding has enabled workers to undertake learning opportunities that can improve their employability and vocational skills, and it has also encouraged employer engagement around workforce planning and development.

Throughout the year, SUL supported 27 union learning projects in sectors including construction, engineering, education, health and social care, creative industries, football, retail, transport and telecoms. SUL also facilitated opportunities to generate externally funded learning provision from unions, employers, and other partners. Overall, SUL created over 11,000 learning opportunities for workers across Scotland.

You'll see from this report the extensive range of union learning opportunities that has taken place, activity undertaken around Everyday Skills, Cyber Resilience, Apprenticeships, and specific initiatives developed in the Highlands and Islands. All SUL activity continues to promote Fair Work and equality, helping workers overcome barriers to learning such as caring responsibilities, disability, geographical barriers and shift patterns. We must always remember that SUL offers access to learning that would otherwise not be achieved, and it is essential that we continue to recognise, value, and support this work.

While demand for union-led learning and skills continues to rise, our funding has been unable to meet these needs. The year ahead faces further challenges around funding, however, the SUL Board continues to pursue an increased level of funding and a longer-term funding period. We also have to consider how we can support the changing nature of work, with the growth of 'green' skills required for a Just Transition, increased use of AI, an ageing workforce, and in addition, we are continuing to experience the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in health and social care.

As Chair of the SUL Board, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our funders, the Scottish Government. I would also like to congratulate our award recipients; you can read about their incredible achievements in this report. I wish to express thanks from the Board to all SUL staff for the extraordinary efforts this year. In addition, I would like to thank all our partners and learning providers for their continued support. We forward to working with you all again throughout the next year.

SUL Structure

The Scottish Union Learning Board

The STUC General Council established Scottish Union Learning to deliver, in partnership with unions, workplace learning opportunities in all sectors across Scotland, in line with STUC policy on learning and skills. Appointed by the STUC General Council, the Scottish Union Learning Board oversees and directs the work of Scottish Union Learning.

The SUL Board meets quarterly and has responsibility for agreeing the strategic objectives of SUL and setting and monitoring its business and operational plans and budgets, in line with Scottish Government and STUC learning and skills policies. The SUL Board consists of members of the STUC General Council, representatives of affiliated trade unions, the STUC General Secretary and a TUC nominated member.

Board Membership 2024-25

Chair: Susan Quinn (EIS); Vice Chair: Peter Hunter (UNISON)

Members: Craig Anderson (CWU); Jim Baxter (ASLEF); Angela Johnston (Unite the Union); Brian Linn (Aegis the Union); Steven McGurk (Community); Esther O'Hara (Unite the Union); Raza Sadiq (STUC Black Workers' Committee).

Rozanne Foyer, STUC General Secretary, is an ex-officio member of the Board. Carl Roper, TUC National Education and Organising Manager, is the TUC nominated member. A representative of the Scottish Government attends meetings of the Board as an observer.

Staff in Attendance: Wendy Burton, SUL Director; Tommy Breslin, SUL Senior Development Officer, Catherine Garvie, SUL Senior Development Officer; Jill Little Woodhouse, TUC Education Officer (Scotland)



Union Advisory Group

The Union Advisory Group comprises of nominated representatives of trade unions. It provides advice and information on strategic and operational matters, at the request of the Board, and advises on any changes in the strategic direction on learning and skills made by individual unions.

The Union Advisory Group supports the Board by:

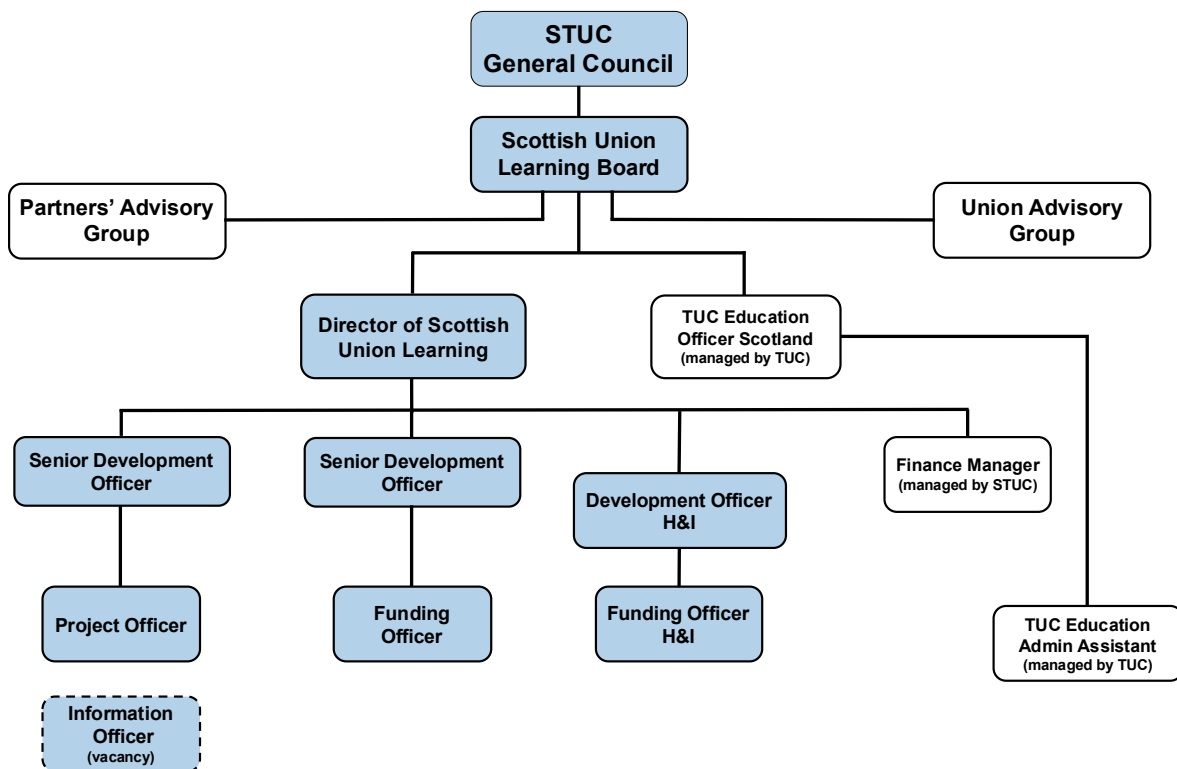
- Providing information to inform the Board in making strategic decisions;
- Identifying strategic or operational issues for the Board to consider;
- Advising the Board of changes in the strategic direction of individual unions;
- Providing the Board with examples of good practice in trade union learning.

Membership is by nomination from all STUC affiliated organisations.

Scottish Union Learning Staff

Scottish Union Learning has staff located in the STUC offices in Glasgow and in the UNISON office in Inverness. The Finance Manager is managed by the STUC and the TUC Education Officer and Admin Assistant are managed by the TUC. Staff deliver the work of Scottish Union Learning in line with the annual Business Plan, Workplan and Budget approved by the SUL Board and Scottish Government.

Scottish Union Learning Organisation Chart 2024-25



SUL Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of Scottish Union Learning are to:

- Work with the Scottish Government's Directorate for Jobs and Wellbeing Economy and unions to agree an approach that ensures that union-led learning fulfils its full potential in addressing workforce development challenges
- develop and promote trade union-led learning and skills development in line with Scottish Government policy
- encourage and support employer engagement in skills, particularly in relation to workforce development
- manage and promote the Development Fund and the Learning Fund and publicise the benefits of these funds
- provide assistance to unions in accessing Everyday Skills, Digital Skills, and Cyber Resilience skills in line with Scottish Government strategies
- support unions in identifying and meeting the learning and skills needs of their members and in organising workplace learning opportunities across Scotland
- assist unions in accessing relevant learning provision to support advances in technology and AI, and green skills
- support unions in accessing externally funded learning provision that complements SUL-funded learning
- continue to deliver a series of webinars on a range of relevant topics
- develop relationships with partners in the provision of learning and skills
- ensure that robust processes and procedures are in place to manage the funding requirements of the Scottish Government and any additional funding
- comply with the reporting and monitoring requirements of the Scottish Government
- record data detailing the numbers of courses delivered through the Learning Fund and the number of participants on each course
- facilitate an external audit of at least six union projects funded through the Development Fund
- assist unions in identifying the needs of Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) and provide appropriate support
- work with TUC Education to ensure the provision of a comprehensive trade union education service suitable to the needs of unions in Scotland
- develop resources for ULRs and learners, including the SUL website
- work with Scottish Government, SDS, and unions to support the development and governance of Scottish Apprenticeships
- work with the Scottish Government and unions to promote PACE services
- support the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Fair Work Framework in delivering fair work
- ensure that the Scottish Government's Fair Work principles are adhered to as an employer and funder
- continue the strategic and operational development of SUL.

Working with Partners

Scottish Union Learning has developed strong partnerships with organisations throughout Scotland. These partners provide support to SUL by contributing to the strategic direction of SUL, sharing information and good practice, and championing union learning in the wider learning and skills environment.

Partner organisations include: Scottish Government, Skills Development Scotland, Dyslexia Scotland, The Open University in Scotland, Learning Link Scotland, Newbattle Abbey College, and Zero Waste Scotland. The following are some of the partners SUL worked closely with during the last year:

Skills Development Scotland (SDS)

SUL works with SDS across the Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE), Careers Service, and Scottish Apprenticeships, to enable unions to effectively engage with these areas to the benefit of their members across Scotland.

The Open University in Scotland (OUiS)

SUL works closely with OUiS to develop strategic interventions to ensure union members are able to access effective accredited and non-accredited online learning opportunities and to develop broader skills to engage with online learning.

Scottish Book Trust

SUL has continued to work with Scottish Book Trust to promote the Book Week Scotland Campaign. Through access to additional funding, unions develop and deliver book-related events and activities for workers each year.

Digital Skills Education Ltd

SUL has continued to work with Digital Skills Education (DSE) to deliver training on cyber security skills to build the cyber resilience capacity of unions and workers. Through access to additional funding, DSE has developed a new cyber 'Safe for Work' online playlist.

Show Racism the Red Card

SUL worked with Show Racism the Red Card to organise an event as part of Speak Out: Dundee's Festival of Trade Unionism. Show Racism the Red Card is also a SUL learning provider, delivering courses in unionised workplaces.

Highland Third Sector Interface Employability Forum

SUL works with the Highland Third Sector Employability Forum (TSEF). The Forum was established as a platform to influence public services across the Highland region, in how they are funded and commissioned.

Highlife Highland Adult Learning

SUL works with Highlife Highland Adult Learning on a number of initiatives including a learning programme for workers with basic IT learning needs in rural areas. SUL also contributes to the Highland Adult Learning Group which is co-ordinated by Highlife Highland Adult Learning.

The Development Fund

The Development Fund complements existing strategies and supports workforce development by increasing the capacity of unions to offer learning and skills opportunities to workers across Scotland.

A total of thirteen Development Fund projects in the Lowlands and Uplands area of Scotland and five in the Highlands and Islands area were allocated funding for 2024-25 to support work-based learning opportunities. This funding helped unions to develop capacity through building networks of Union Learning Reps (ULRs), create and develop strong working relationships with new and existing employers, and identify and address skills needs of their members in a range of sectors and industries.

Lowlands and Uplands Projects:

- **Aegis the Union (Aegis):** Developing Skills in Financial Services
- **Bakers, Food and Allied Workers' Union (BFAWU):** Overcoming Work Precarity Through Learning
- **Community:** Increasing your Skills with Community Learn
- **Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS):** EIS Professional Learning Programme
- **Fire Brigades Union (FBU):** FBU Scottish Union Learning
- **National Union of Journalists (NUJ):** Partnership Pathways for the Media Industry
- **National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT):** Creating and Developing Skills in Rail Passenger, Rail Infrastructure, Ferry Passenger and Offshore
- **Prospect:** BECTU Vision
- **Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS):** Union Learning & Skills Building, Growing, Winning
- **Scottish Artists Union (SAU):** Fair Work for Artists
- **Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (Usdaw):** Build, Benefit and Budget
- **UNISON:** Learning & Development Pathways for Workers in Social Care, Schools and more
- **Unite the Union:** Increased Innovation, Improved Inclusion for a Fair Work Focus

Highlands and Islands Projects:

- **National Union of Journalists (NUJ):** Mentoring and Mastery: A strategy for Media Training in the Highlands and Islands
- **National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT):** All Aboard for Learning
- **Scottish Artists Union (SAU):** Fair Work for Artists
- **UNISON:** Progression through Learning for Fairer Workplaces in H&I
- **Unite the Union:** The Green Economy and Inclusion

Development Fund Case Study

Union: Unite the Union (Lowlands and Uplands)



Developing Skills Across Workplaces and Sectors



Unite the Union in the Lowlands and Uplands region supports workers across many sectors to take a proactive and innovative approach to organising workforce development programmes. Working with ULRs, Unite organised a cross-sector strategy to ensure engagement across industries including construction, manufacturing and engineering, hospitality, and social care. Unite utilised a learner-centred methodology to support workers to undertake upskilling and reskilling opportunities which help workers realise Fair Work practices in their working lives.

As a member of the SUL Everyday Skills Group, Unite is committed to supporting neurodivergent workers. Throughout the year, Unite increased engagement with Dyslexia Scotland, hosting face-to-face Adult Network Meetings bi-monthly at John Smith House in Glasgow, organising on-line events to ensure inclusion of members in the most remote areas of Scotland.

A Unite ULR in Aberdeen has taken the lead locally, to organise similar activity to support members with a dyslexic learning profile across the Grampian area. Through this work, Unite is playing a crucial role in promoting and ensuring inclusivity within workforce development programmes and learning environments.

During the year, through utilising the Learning Fund, Unite has organised learning programmes at Sustrans, Diligenta, Ineos and Adelaide's Nursery, to support workers collectively facing redundancy. Unite has worked as part of the Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE) to ensure that workers within organised workplaces or individual members are being supported through these difficult times. Unite has also faced demand from workers to develop new skills which they can utilise to secure emerging jobs and opportunities across the 'green skills' sector as well as new technological advances in others. Demand from workers for union-led programmes remains exceptionally high, specifically for courses such as BPEC Solar PV Installation, Energy Storage, Electric Vehicle Charging and 'gateway' courses to green such as 18th Edition and Initial Verification and Periodic Inspection and

Testing. Without these initial courses and the knowledge and skills obtained, electricians cannot advance into the electronics side of the new green skills courses. Michael Conroy, Unite Regional Learning Organiser, said 'Through our Development Fund project, Unite the Union is committed to prioritising new learning opportunities that are aligned with emerging technologies and sectors impacted by the need for a Just Transition and Green Skills. These high-level and high-quality industry accredited qualifications are vital for our members to develop new competencies that often lead to better wages, increased job security, improved working conditions with improved health and safety. The union-led skills programmes help future proof their employment.

Unite members have been playing a leading role in Scotland's EV charging infrastructure roll out since 2019 and are now actively bridging the gap between electrical and electronic technologies, for example, with Energy Storage installations. Scottish Union Learning's Learning Fund has been vital in making these workforce development opportunities accessible, our members realise the importance of continued support for themselves, their families and their colleagues.

Lead Union Learning Representative, Brian Crainie speaking about the CMI Level 4 Certificate in Management and Leadership programme which was delivered online by Edinburgh College, added 'The CMI course was undertaken by a group of engineer surveyors who were all on progression plans to break into management roles. The course directly improved their skill sets, their chances of job retention and future employment prospects'.

The process was guided by Unite's Regional Learning Organiser who secured funding, organised the delivery of the course and liaised directly with the learning provider. Unite were able to bring their experience and expertise to ensure value for money, and develop an impactful model of delivery with learners at the heart of the programme.



Development Fund Case Study

Union: UNISON (Lowlands and Uplands)



Developing Skills for Social Care Workers

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have acute pressure on services and workers. UNISON has developed, organised, and delivered learning programmes that help workers within social care and the NHS to improve their capacity to deal with the ongoing impact of the pandemic. This is particularly important in local communities and in the private sector where precarious work arrangements are common and amplified by a lack of training opportunities which results in a lack of job security, career fulfilment, and effective voice.

There remains a need for social care staff to achieve required vocational qualifications and meet the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) registration requirements, as well as engage with and have an effective voice in the transformation of social care. UNISON has developed effective learning programmes to ensure those non-traditional learners and workers with learning needs and low confidence are given the opportunity to increase their confidence, refresh their skills, and successfully complete their vocational qualification.

UNISON works with employers to put in place a range of learning opportunities that encourage staff recruitment and retention and identify career pathways, thereby tackling exclusion and supporting learner needs while improving job fulfilment. Given the challenges faced by workers across the sector, UNISON works to improve the effective voice of the workforce. Through member learning opportunities, UNISON supports members to increase their confidence in becoming more active in UNISON with a mentored pathway to develop Fair Work practices within their workplaces.



Union: Community

Using Union-led Learning to Organise Dental Nurses

Community Reps have been actively involved in recruiting dental nurses for the past 18 months and the numbers have been increasing regularly. These reps are dental nurses themselves and understand the nature of the job. The recruitment campaign has been developed across UK regions, and Scotland has been making good progress.

Dental nurses are predominantly young women working in private practice are not traditionally unionised unless they work in an NHS hospital. As a result, they tend to be underpaid, employed on short-term contracts with limited access to professional development training. In addition to highlighting the obvious benefits of union representation, Community has been using learning as an organising tool to promote the online training and resources available to members.

Recently, the Community Learning Organiser attended the Scottish Dental Show in Glasgow with regional staff. This was a great opportunity to increase awareness of the organising campaign, Community Learn, and available professional development opportunities, and increase awareness of trade unions generally to this under-represented group of workers. This was a well-attended event where the Learning Organiser was able to disseminate information on Community Learn to over 100 delegates.

Community has since been invited to take part in Skills Development Scotland's Technical Expert Group that has been designing the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) in Dental Nursing. This was a great opportunity for Community to work alongside employers, training providers, regulators, and other partners to make the MA fit the needs of the profession, and Community members.



Development Fund Case Study

Union: BECTU sector of Prospect



Sharing Strategies for Sustainable Screen Production

Film and television producers and production teams joined together with screen sustainability practitioners in Glasgow for a three-day Green Film Lab training course designed to create awareness and promote environmentally sustainable practices in film production.

Through a practical, project-based and hands-on approach, participants worked in teams to develop a sustainability plan which applies best green practices to a variety of projects currently in development and to discuss case studies. The Green Film Lab team consisted of screen sustainability experts from Italy, Portugal, France and the UK who shared their experience and current best practice in terms of energy-saving, transport, accommodation, catering, set decoration, waste management, recycling, and communication and social aspects such as the impact on communities.



Sustainability Co-ordinator, Sara Hamilton delivers a local case study

Inspirational local insights were provided by highlighting a case study of sustainability successes on a recent Scotland-based production by Sustainability Co-ordinator, Sara Hamilton, and a presentation on a Policy and Action Plan for Green Filming in Scotland from Creative Scotland's Emergency and Sustainability Lead, Karen Ridgewell.

[Green Film Lab](#) is a programme delivered by [TorinoFilmLab](#) and Green Film, organised by the National Museum of Cinema and [Trentino Film Commission](#), in collaboration with [EAVE](#). This programme is supported by [Creative Europe](#) - MEDIA sub-programme of the European Union and was delivered in Scotland in collaboration with [Screen Scotland](#) and BECTU Vision

To find out more about screen sustainability in Scotland, visit BECTU Vision's website for signposts and resources: <https://bectuvision.org/support/sustainability/>

The Learning Fund

The Learning Fund supports unions in engaging with workers, employers, and learning providers to identify and address skills needs across a wide range of industries and sectors. The Learning Fund covers the course costs for Development Fund projects, and it enables unions to support thousands of workplace learners each year to upskill and reskill, to protect and enhance their employment prospects, and to improve the skills base within workplaces.

In addition to the 18 Development Fund projects across Scotland, a further nine Learning Fund Only projects were allocated funding for 2024-25 to support and increase workplace learning opportunities.

Lowlands and Uplands Learning Fund Only Projects:

Communication Workers' Unions (CWU), Equity, First Division Association (FDA), Musicians' Union (MU), Prison Officers' Association Scotland (POA Scotland), Professional Footballers' Association Scotland (PFA Scotland).

Highlands and Islands Learning Fund Only Projects:

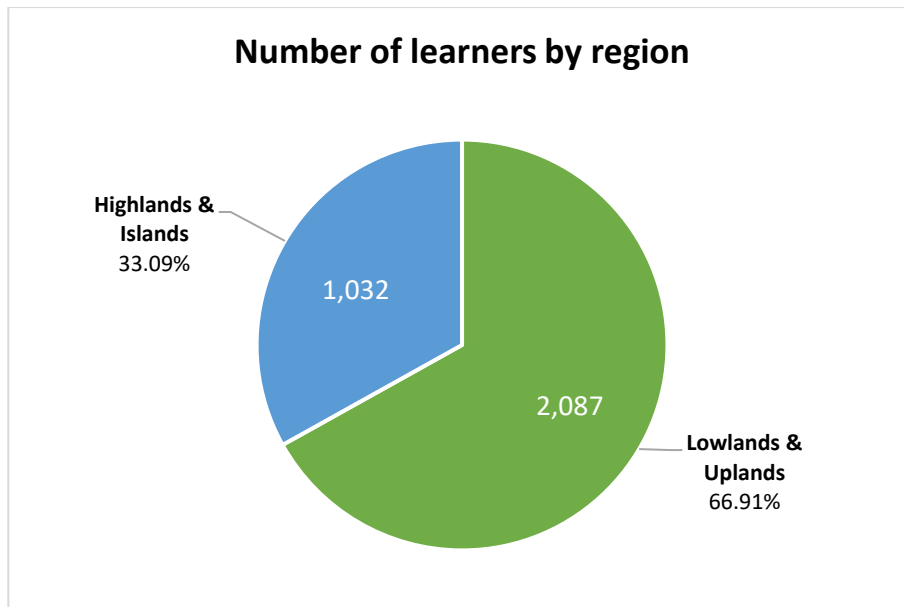
Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), Fire Brigades' Union (FBU), Musicians' Union (MU).

Throughout 2024-25, the Learning Fund supported 3119 learners through 402 courses delivered through the 18 Development Fund projects and nine Learning Fund Only projects. Delivery methods include online, blended and in-person. Online learning has enabled unions to engage with learners who faced barriers around face-to-face delivery, including disabled workers, those with caring responsibilities, and those in rural and remote areas. Learning Fund activity continues to reflect the different learner, workplace, and industry needs, and includes a range of employability and vocational skills such as: Literacy and Numeracy, Business Skills for Creative Industries Freelancers, Data Detox, Artificial Intelligence, Diversity & Inclusion for Modern Apprentices. Microsoft Excel, 18th Edition Wiring Regulations, Wood and Timber Conservation and Maintenance, and courses specific to the Offshore Wind Industry.

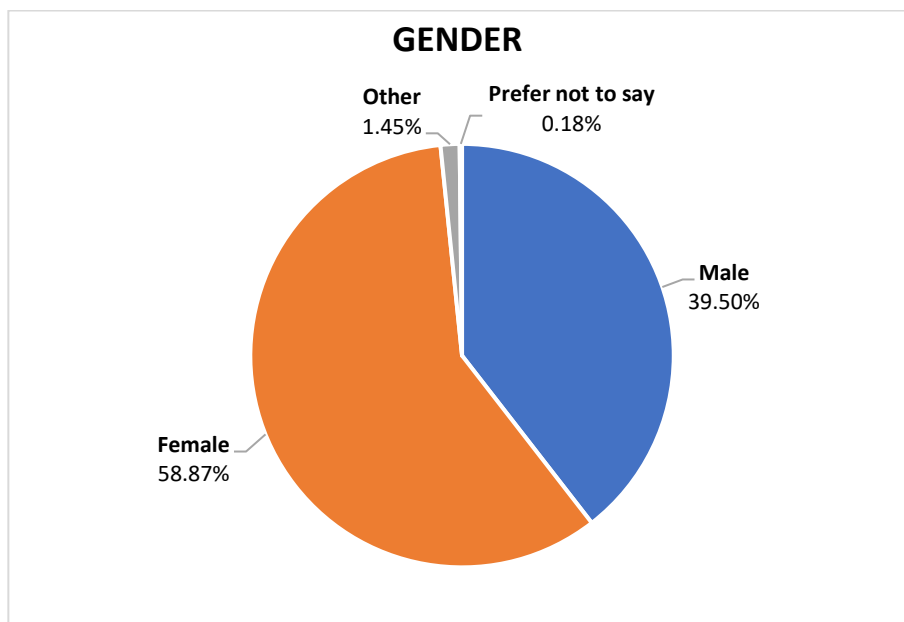
Union-led learning enables workers to improve exiting skills and gain new skills, increase confidence and job satisfaction, and it can assist them in moving into higher grade posts. It can also support those at risk of redundancy to retain roles or seek alternative employment. Almost 60% of workers participating in Learning Fund courses throughout the year were women, over 48% of workers were aged between 46-64, and over 11% declared a disability. A total of 18 ethnic origins were reported. The largest ethnic group supported through the Learning Fund was White Scottish, equating to 70.79%. Learners of white UK ethnic origin accounted for 81.7%.

Learning Fund: Who are our learners?

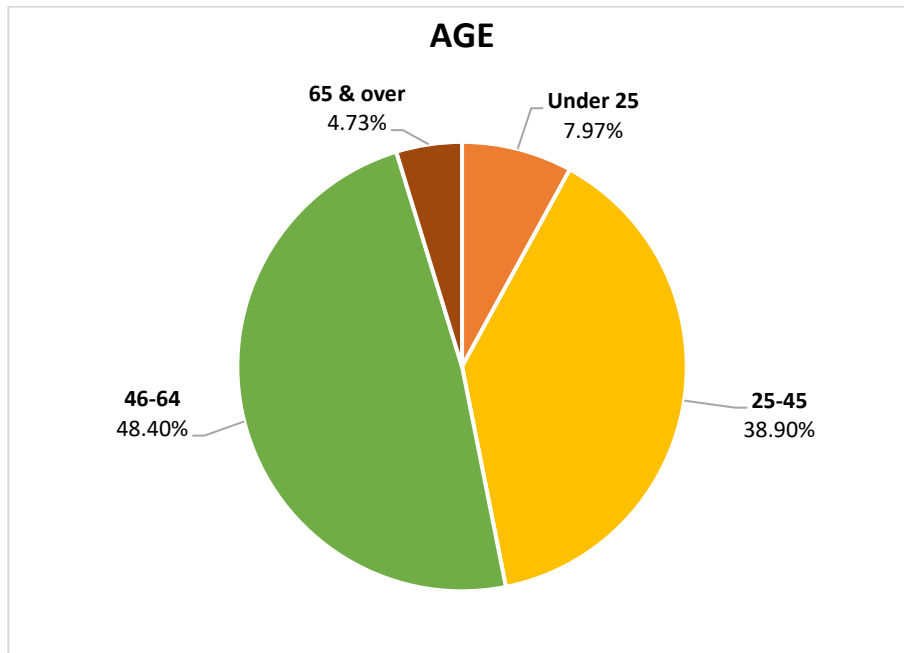
Number of learners during 2024-25 by region.



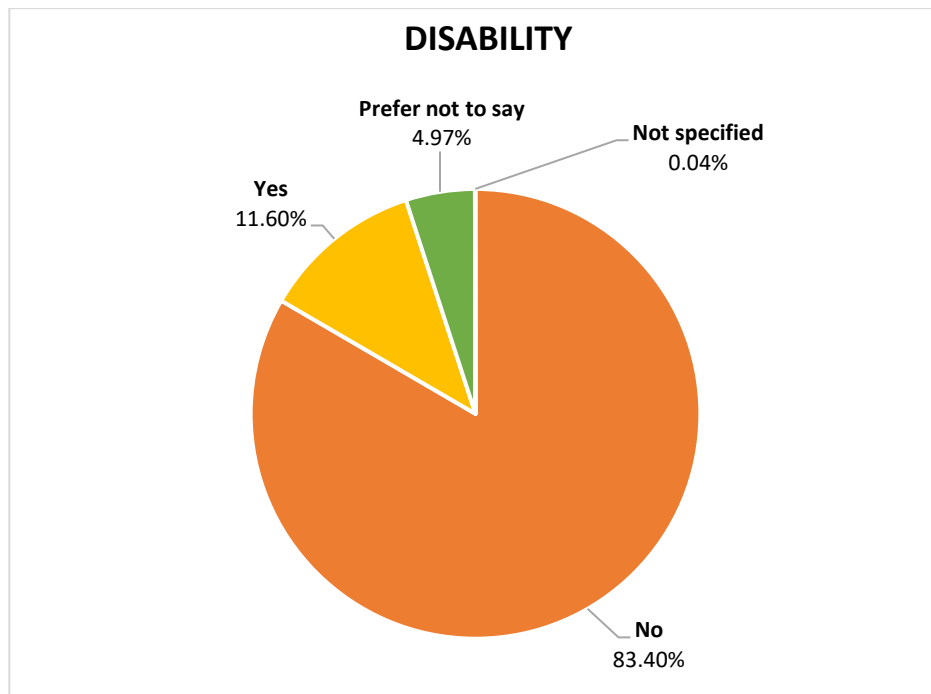
Gender identity



Age Range



Disability



All based on data from completed Participant Equalities forms returned to SUL during 2024-25.

Learning Fund Case Study

**Union: National Union of Journalists (NUJ)
(Lowlands and Uplands)**



Artificial Intelligence Essentials for journalists: Protecting and enhancing our future

NUJ piloted a new course which tackled the sensitive subject of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Journalism.

The advent of AI is an example of a technical development that can both destroy and enhance creative and media jobs and careers. AI has posed worldwide challenges to the creative industry, and a wide variety of artists and writers are justifiably concerned about its implications. Nonetheless, NUJ recognised that the advancement and integration of AI is inevitable and cannot be stopped. The NUJ, therefore, wanted to protect members from the dangers of AI and alert them to the potential of AI to enhance their working lives. As the industry moves forward, a balanced approach that emphasises human oversight, ethical standards, and responsible use of technology will be essential in safeguarding the principles of journalism. The course was very well received and the feedback was positive.



Image: Mike MacKenzie | Flickr

Feedback from the course includes the following:

'Fantastic insight into AI and how it can be used to enhance our work. Kevin was very knowledgeable, and it would be good to get some further training on more specialised areas.'

'I enjoyed the course. I would recommend to other people thinking a lot about AI, its positives and negatives, and how it can be used as a tool for writers and journalists.'

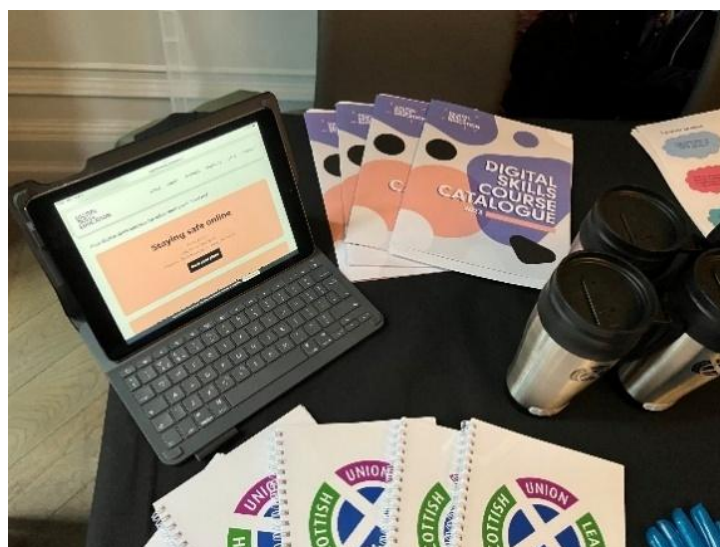
'A hugely informative and instructive course. I learned a great deal.'

'Really excellent tutor - extremely knowledgeable and very well-prepared course.'

'A lot of material was covered in a short time and was interesting and useful. It would be good to have further courses on this topic relating to practical skills of prompt writing for different purposes and (separately) wider coverage on the legal implications of AI use in journalism.'

'I could definitely recommend this course to others: Kevin explained everything very well and he had lots of interesting examples to impart. As a complete novice (and a resistant one at that) to the subject of AI, I came away feeling a lot better informed about it, and keen to try out some of the applications Kevin mentioned in the course!'

'It's a great 'all round overview' course, which is what I needed. I feel however that I could benefit even more from an additional, more practical course where we get more opportunity to see and learn exactly how to use the various AI applications, and to have our questions answered while we struggle away at getting our heads round it! (This is in no way a criticism of Kevin's current course - he had a heck of a lot to get through as it was! I am only suggesting that a second, practical course giving more time to help us actually USE AI as well as learning what it is and how it relates to journalism, would be an excellent addition to the NUJ training repertoire). Thank you.'



Learning Fund Case Study



Union: RMT (Lowlands and Uplands)

Employer: Caledonian Sleeper

RMT developed a programme of learning for the Caledonian Sleeper workforce to develop customer service skills. As part of this, RMT worked closely with Show Racism the Red Card to organise a bespoke training programme which would help workers recognise racism within their public-facing workplaces. Dennis Fallen, RMT Learning Co-ordinator, said, 'We renewed and updated a learning agreement with Caledonian Sleeper. This work created better opportunities for RMT members to access workforce development programmes through the RMT Lowlands and Uplands Project. We negotiated paid release for workers to attend, ensuring equality of access to learning opportunities.'

RMT organised and ran eight iterations of the full-day course. The Show Racism the Red Card series was delivered in Perth to a diverse group of Caledonian Sleeper workers. The course developed the skills of workers to better understand the negative impact that racism can have on our workplaces, our communities and the travelling public. The workshops developed the skills of workers to better identify the damaging and misleading impact of stereotyping, how to identify micro-aggressions, and unconscious bias. Delivered by experienced facilitators, the interactive workshops encouraged workers to recognise racist behaviours within their settings. Learners left with a better understanding of how extreme and abusive social media content can lead to real-life offensive and unacceptable behaviours and actions.

Billy Singh, Campaign Manager, Show Racism the Red Card added, 'The partnership we have developed with RMT Scotland over the last 12 months is the gold standard that we are encouraging other trade unions to adopt. Early discussions with RMT focused on course content for workers at Caledonian Sleeper and the new cohort of CalMac Apprentices. Once this was signed off by the union, we delivered a very impactful programme that empowered members to challenge discrimination, promote inclusion, and build solidarity. It enhanced awareness, fostered respectful workplaces, and strengthened union unity by encouraging dialogue, confronting bias, and upholding equality across diverse communities within the transport and rail sector. We strongly believe that other trade unions should adopt similar anti-racism training to foster inclusive, respectful workplaces and ensure all members feel valued. It strengthens collective power, challenges systemic discrimination, and builds solidarity. Training also equips reps and members with the tools to identify and confront racism, reinforcing the union's commitment to equality and justice. Together we can change hearts, minds and lives.'

Learning Fund Case Study

**Union: Professional Footballers Association
Scotland**



Employers: Football industry

Applied Management Course an eye-opener for former team-mates

Professional football players in Scotland are becoming better equipped for a future in management, thanks to PFA Scotland's Applied Management in Football course. The course, now in its sixth year, is funded jointly through the Learning Fund and PFA Scotland, and is delivered by Edinburgh Napier University. Players such as Christophe Berra, Marvin Bartley, Joelle Murray, Dougie Imrie and Gary Irvine completed their studies and moved into management careers. The course supports senior players in developing skills for the next step in their career, developing new skills for life beyond playing football.

Completed over 10 months, the Applied Management in Football course is a blend of online and in-person learning, during which students are challenged on situations and circumstances that they may face in football management roles, whether that be as a first team manager, sporting director or academy director. The transferable skills can be utilised both within the football industry and beyond.

Falkirk Captain, Coll Donaldson, a previous learner on the programme, believes the course has been a massive eye-opener. Reflecting on the course, he said, 'It's been really good. The in-depth look into what's involved in management has been really eye-opening. We've looked at everything that's involved and I don't think you realise half of the responsibilities you might have in management. I found it really informative.'

The structure has been something that students have found beneficial with members of the group coming from all levels of football.

We've got representation from right across the board here – and that's great. There's a number of different personalities in the group and that's a big networking opportunity too.' Donaldson added, 'I've really enjoyed the sessions, specifically the in-person ones.'

Livingston defender, Ryan McGowan, has been enjoying his studies and has highlighted some of the areas which have allowed him to consider the role of a football manager. He said, 'It's been thoroughly enjoyable. The fact we have players from so many different clubs is a real asset. Those who have played at League 2 level will have unique challenges, as will Premiership players. Scotland has a real mix of full-time and part-time clubs which is important to consider.'

The Australia international provided some detail on some of the situations which will aid both him and the group moving forward. He said, 'I've taken a lot from the course. There's some interesting bits on time management and how to implement culture into a squad – that's something that's spoken loads about, generally without much credit behind it – I've really enjoyed discussing these aspects.'

Both players also highlighted the structure of the assignments which involved creating presentations to deliver to the rest of the group, which has been a daunting yet valuable task.

'We have been tasked with a number of different presentations with the idea that after this course, our next will be as part of a job interview', McGowan said. 'It's important we have that experience and we are used to those sorts of surroundings.'

Donaldson added that he's had to overcome nerves to implement his own ideas as part of the tasks. 'I've been nervous before every single one! However, we all appreciate how important stuff like PowerPoint presentations are in modern day football.'

Having recently completed the course and knowing the impact on previous cohorts of learners, the players involved hope that this course can open doors for their future in football. McGowan, who has completed multiple PFA Scotland courses, believes that players should aim to look at personal development opportunities before they hang up their boots. 'The stuff you can get from PFA Scotland is excellent. I'm always encouraging younger players to get involved as much as they can. Sometimes you need to try your hand, and I believe there's a course out there for everyone, both within and out with football.'

Former Applied Football Management students David Gray and Liam Craig have gone on to kick off their managerial careers as Manager and Assistant Manager at Hibs.

Chris Higgins, Player Services Manager, PFA Scotland added, 'This joint programme really demonstrates the power of union-led learning which places the learner at the heart of the delivery model. We have had significant success in supporting our members into sustained employment beyond their primary jobs. All Football players are required to develop skills to ensure they have a career when they hang up their boots, the intervention of the union to support our members is essential. As a graduate of this course, I know from personal experience, the power of union-led learning.'

The Learning Fund in the Highlands and Islands

During 2024–25, SUL-funded projects across the Highlands and Islands continued to thrive, delivering impactful learning opportunities in vital sectors such as:

- Health and Social Care
- Transport
- Culture and the arts
- Education
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- Journalism

These projects have not only maintained strong individual momentum but have also deepened collaboration. Highlights from the year include:

- Learning programmes to support freelance and insecure workers
- Strong focus on public sector and social care
- Broad programmes for equality, diversity and inclusion

By working together, these initiatives have extended their reach, optimised resources, and reinforced the collective strength of trade union learning across the region.

Responding to Regional Needs

Highlands and Islands projects have remained responsive to the evolving concerns of workers, delivering learning in areas that matter most:

- Challenging racism
- Climate awareness
- Understanding neurodiversity

The transition to a greener economy remains a strategic priority. Significant strides have been made in 2024–25 by:

- Establishing strong partnerships with learning providers in Inverness
- Laying the groundwork for future training in renewable energy sectors

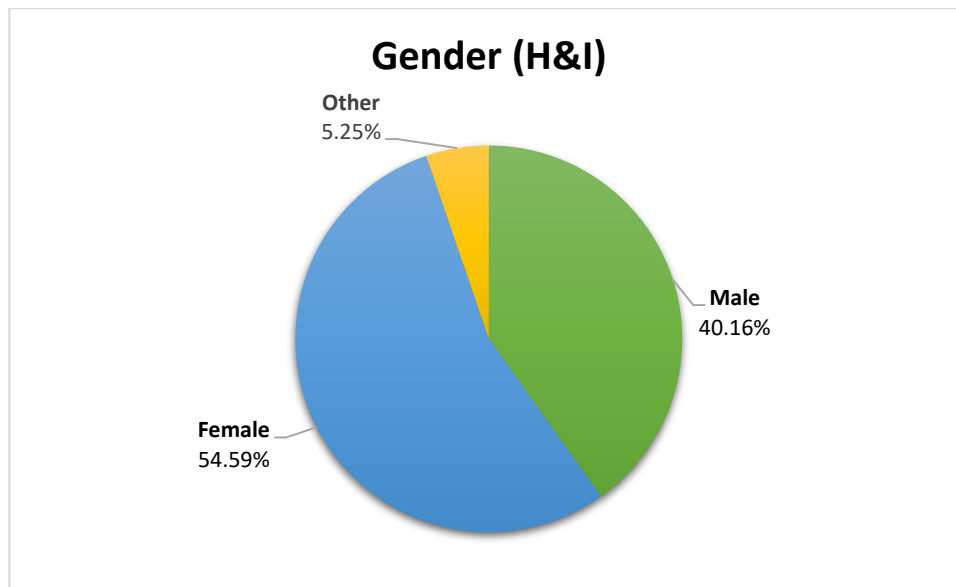
SUL's development footprint has also grown, with active contributions to:

- Highlands Adult Learning Group
- Highlands Third Sector Interface Employability Forum
- Highlands and Islands Climate Hub

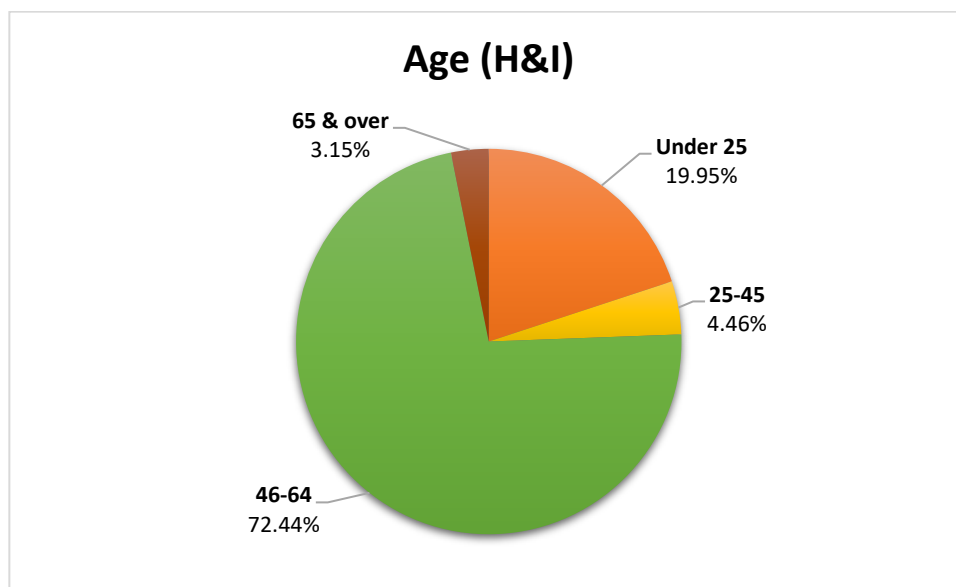
These connections are helping to shape a more resilient, inclusive, and forward-thinking learning ecosystem across the region.

Learning Fund in Highlands and Islands: Who are our learners?

Gender Identity in Highlands and Islands



Age Range in Highlands and Islands



Highlands and Islands Case Study



Union: UNISON (Highland and Islands)

Course: Dealing with Difficult Situations

Dealing with difficult people and conflict in the public sector can significantly impact on staff wellbeing, efficiency, and job security. Staff in Health and Social Care often face challenging interactions with the public, colleagues, or management, leading to stress, burnout, and anxiety. Constant exposure to conflict can lower workplace morale, reduce job satisfaction, and cause inefficiency as employees become distracted or disengaged. Unresolved conflict may also threaten job security.

In September 2024, the UNISON Highlands and Islands project provided training to 16 workers from various Health and Social Care workplaces across the region on how to deal with difficult people and conflict. These workers have gained valuable skills in mediation and conflict resolution, which they can now apply in their workplaces to handle difficult situations more effectively. By using these skills, they will help improve communication and resolve conflicts before they develop into larger issues. This is expected to lead to better wellbeing for staff, reduced stress, and increased workplace efficiency.

The project works in partnership with UNISON Healthcare Branch, prioritising support to staff during conflicts and playing a critical role in advocating for fair treatment while providing workers with a safe space to voice their concerns. Union involvement ensures that staff feel supported and protected when facing difficult situations at work. Combined with mediation training, it strengthens employees' ability to handle conflict effectively and resolve issues before they escalate. These efforts contribute to creating a more positive and secure workplace environment, leading to improved wellbeing, higher productivity, and greater job satisfaction across the public sector.



Highlands and Islands Case Study

**Union: Scottish Artists Union
(Highlands and Islands)**



What Artists Need to Know About AI

Advancements in AI are making the replication of the work of artists much easier and some artists are arguing that AI art generators have been breaking the law to do this (by scraping and copying their work). The course, What Artists Need to Know About AI, aimed to address members' concerns and explored how the SAU can help artists become skilled, critical, and ethical users of emerging creative technologies. The course consisted of two workshops aimed at AI beginners in January 2025, delivered online via Zoom, with Digital Skills Education Ltd (DSE).

Part one focussed on 'generative AI' tools like DALL·E, and Co-Pilot Designer. These are creative apps that can be used to create text, songs, poems, short stories, images, sounds, and music. Participants learned how to develop aspects of their practice using AI tools while also developing an understanding of ethical issues surrounding how these tools work, and how they could be misused. The course also covered how Glaze worked for anyone wanting to protect their own artwork online. Part two used Chat GPT to explore how AI could help with tasks like research and funding applications, and participants learned about the ethical, safety, and transparency issues surrounding AI tools as well as its carbon footprint.

Overall, this course was well received. There was a lot of information to absorb and recordings of the sessions were shared with learners afterwards. Feedback comments include:

'Another positive and helpful course from SAU Learning - many thanks.'

'Fantastic!! Really great course and tutors! Thank you!'

'An interesting subject that I now have an overview about and will possibly use a little more. Subject was taught well.'

'Great, informative course. Amazing tutors. More courses and shared skills!!! Thank you so much.'

'Excellent - it has opened up new ways to make writing official texts.'

'This was a really great course and, it addressed a good balance of positions on the subject.'

'Great to have the recordings to catch up. Thanks again.'

Highlands and Islands Case Study



Union: RMT (Highlands and Islands)

Time to Talk 2025

Time to Talk Day is an annual awareness event held on the first Thursday of February each year. Although it is a UK-wide initiative, in Scotland it is organised and promoted by See Me Scotland, based in Glasgow.

The RMT project has maintained a longstanding involvement with See Me Scotland. The organisation's programme of events and resources has played a significant role in promoting positive mental health across the maritime industry and among RMT members, as well as workers from other sectors represented by the union.

A strong and collaborative relationship has developed with See Me Scotland, with RMT being represented on their peer support group for employers and trade unions. Representatives have also spoken at numerous events. In partnership with CalMac, a session was hosted at one of See Me's events, focusing on how trade unions and employers can work together to improve worker wellbeing across all industries and workplaces.

Time to Talk Day 2025 marked the most successful engagement with the event to date. A main event held at CalMac's Head Office was replicated across the network, promoting a positive message of wellbeing. Drop-in sessions, themed 'Cake, cuppa and chat,' were organised by members of the wellbeing committee to encourage participation.

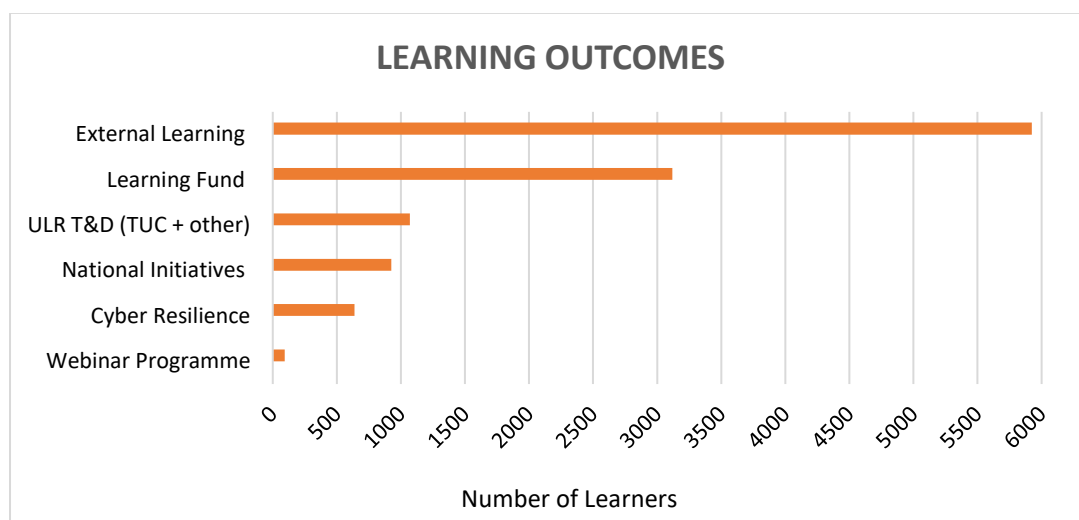
The theme for the 2025 event was 'get comfortable and start talking about mental health'. These events aimed to encourage workers to engage in conversations about their feelings, helping to combat the stigma that still surrounds mental health.

Feedback from the event has been overwhelmingly positive. The wellbeing committee plans to continue raising awareness throughout the year, encouraging open and honest conversations. This approach is seen as a vital first step toward better mental health for all, reducing stigma and helping individuals feel comfortable enough to seek help when needed.



Learning Outcomes

Scottish Union Learning records information on outcomes from a range of SUL activity throughout the year. This includes outcomes generated through SUL-funded union learning projects and externally funded sources. From 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025, SUL recorded 11,770 learning outcomes.



Externally-funded Learning (5923)

This learning activity is generated through SUL projects and funded by unions and employers, and also through partnerships with learning providers.

SUL Learning Fund (3119)

The Learning Fund supports skills needs across a wide range of industries. Further information can be found in the Learning Fund section of this Report.

Union Learning Rep Training and Development (1071)

ULR Training and Development delivered by TUC Education through SUL funding (790) and through unions' own rep training programmes (281).

National Initiatives (926)

Additional learning outcomes achieved during 2024-25 include our work with Scottish Book Trust, to promote the Book Week Scotland Campaign, as well as engagement during Dyslexia Awareness Week, Maths Week Scotland, National Numeracy Day, and Cyber Week Scotland.

SUL Cyber Resilience Project (638)

In partnership with Digital Skills Education Limited, this project enabled workers to improve cyber security and data protection skills. During 2024-25, the main focus was evaluation of previous years' activity, but some learning also took place.

SUL Webinars (93)

Webinars organised by SUL and STUC, in partnership with external organisations.

Improving Everyday Skills

SUL defines Everyday Skills as the language, literacy, numeracy and basic IT, digital skills, and increasingly cyber security skills, required both in the workplace and at home. Everyday Skills activity also includes English language learning for those who do not have English as their first language, and support for learners who may be neurodivergent, or have other learning differences and disabilities. Everyday Skills promotes diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

SUL promotes Everyday Skills activity through Development Fund and Learning Fund Projects, Everyday Skills Events, Learning Conferences, STUC Equalities Committees, Health & Safety networks and ULR Development Days. Scottish Union Learning works with the Scottish Government, and other external partners to raise awareness of Everyday Skills needs and suitable means of support.

Everyday Skills Group

Through the Everyday Skills Group, unions are encouraged to engage with relevant Scottish Government strategies and are supported in participating in national initiatives such as Adult Learners' Week, Book Week Scotland, Dyslexia Awareness Week and Maths Week Scotland. The Group is comprised of members from affiliated unions, TUC Education, Scottish Book Trust, Dyslexia Scotland, Dyslexia Scotwest, The Open University in Scotland, Playlist for Life, and the Workers' Educational Association. The Group meets quarterly to discuss all aspects relating to workplace literacies, digital participation, cyber resilience, and additional learning and support needs. More recent developments include providing information and opportunities around Environmental and Green Skills, and understanding Artificial Intelligence. The Group also contributes to the planning of the annual Everyday Skills Event.



Philippa Cochrane speaking at the 2025 Everyday Skills Event

Everyday Skills Spotlight

Book Week Scotland

Scottish Union Learning and Scottish Book Trust worked in partnership with unions to celebrate Book Week Scotland, which took place in November 2024. Unions organised a series of book-related events including music and storytelling sessions, and a virtual book club, with over 500 free books distributed throughout workplaces. Activities were linked to the 2024 theme of 'Hope' and encouraged members and workers to develop their passion for reading.

The **BECTU Section of Prospect** celebrated stories and shared some 'Hope' at the River City film set.



BECTU held a Script and Story Event at River City in November 2024 to support the work of a pool of Script Editors in Scotland and took the opportunity to mark Book Week Scotland. The River City script and story teams provided insight on the role of the script and story departments at Scotland's flagship drama and participants were treated to a tour of the sets. In the photo, participants are seen outside the iconic River City pub, The Tall Ship, with their Book Week Scotland books. Thirty of the free 'Hope' books were distributed at events across the month.



BFAWU learning organisers and Union Learning Reps promoted Book Week Scotland and distributed books at workplace engagement events. The union found that making Book Week resources available to workers on the shop floor had a positive result for engagement, especially in multicultural workplaces like Johnstone's.

Feedback included the following comments:

'Books are my passion; I always support any initiative that promotes reading books.'

'Have always loved reading and thanks to the reader's corner on our site.... can rest and relax during the break. This is thanks to the Learning Project and the promotion of campaigns such as Book Week.'

CWU distributed over 100 books to members and visitors at Royal Mail in Glasgow and BT in Edinburgh, Dundee and Borders branches.

The union also organised a competition to win a Kindle Fire 7. Storytelling activities were delivered online.



EIS worked with musician and songwriter, Lulu Manning, to offer a workshop exploring music, songwriting, and wellbeing, as a celebration of Book Weekend. The workshop developed the 'Hope' theme and introduced ideas of deep listening and using words and doodling to explore surroundings. These techniques were offered as ways of navigating the busy work environments of teachers and lecturers and as tools to support children and young people within these environments.



Lulu Manning field recording in Epping Forest, 2024

Participants came from across the country, from the central belt to the Highlands and Islands, and feedback was overwhelmingly positive:

'Just wanted to thank you for this fantastic session. I am so happy to have been involved. Lulu is very inspiring, and it was a lovely end to a very hectic day.'

'Thank you, that was really inspiring. I think I've got the start of a song from doing that!'



NUJ ran a virtual book club with Scottish author, Jenny Colgan, to celebrate Book Week Scotland. With the theme of book week being 'Hope', Jenny Colgan's light and optimistic tales made for a perfect seasonal, feel-good, read.

An interview about her life and work was followed by an audience Q&A. Feedback from participants includes the following:

'Brilliant event with Jenny Colgan!'

'Thank you so much for organising and hosting. I really enjoyed it all.'



RMT Union Learning Reps distributed over 160 copies of 'Hope' throughout the Scottish rail network at depots in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Helensburgh and Perth. Recipients of the book were entered into a prize draw to win book tokens funded by Scottish Book Trust.

The aim of the activities was to inspire people to pick up a book and re-ignite a love of reading, with the additional benefits of improving employability, and promoting mindfulness, and good mental health and wellbeing.

The Union Learning Reps reported:

'The uptake was excellent, and no books remained.'

'The engagement was very good, and the books went down very well.'



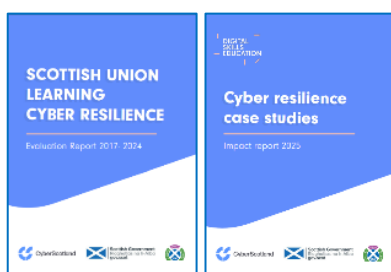
Book Week Scotland is supported by
Scottish Book Trust and Scottish Union Learning

Digital Unions: Cyber Resilience

Scottish Union Learning received additional funding from the Scottish Government during 2024-2025 to deliver a Cyber Resilience project. The project was funded to carry out an in-depth evaluation report and impact report on Cyber Resilience projects from 2017 to 2024, and to develop a Safe for Work online playlist for workers.

Evaluation and Impact Reports

During 2017 to 2024, over an abridged period of 48 months, 7993 reps and workers attended cyber security workshops. The current project carried out an evaluation of 5,915 learners who responded to an initial questionnaire and a more in-depth evaluation of 1,345 learners. In addition, an Impact Report targeting 500 learners was conducted by Digital Skills Education Ltd. over a more recent 18-month period, with 110 respondents.



The results of both reports highlighted how the training had impacted the learners' own knowledge and if and/or how they had cascaded these skills to their colleagues in their respective workplaces. On average, 93% of learners stated that they had improved their cyber security knowledge on topics such as installing more secure passwords; spotting phishing emails more easily; becoming more aware of scams and keeping their software updated. Over 65% stated that they had cascaded their knowledge to colleagues and their families. Training was supported by 37 unions and 35 external partners in 30 local authority areas covering over 30 cyber topics based on best practice from the National Cyber Security Centre, over the 48-month period.

Safe for Work Playlist

A further need for training was identified in this area based on previous demand and feedback from both evaluations. This was followed up by the production and delivery of a 'Train the Trainer' cascading skills 'Safe for Work' playlist, which was designed to empower workers with key cyber resilience skills, and consisted of 25 interactive video lessons.

Once trained, reps and workers started to use the interactive learning resource to cascade their knowledge to colleagues, with 189 creating a widespread culture of cyber awareness and resilience for over 529 learners across Scotland to the end of April 2025. In addition, the videos in the 'Safe for Work' playlist have been watched 100,500 times.



Apprenticeships

Scottish Union Learning takes forward the STUC's work on apprenticeships, ensuring representation on the relevant governance groups, committees, and working groups, and the direct involvement of trade unions where appropriate. The STUC is represented on the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board and Apprenticeship Approval Group through SUL, ensuring that unions have an effective voice in the governance of Apprenticeships in Scotland. SUL also supports unions to deliver additional skills training for apprentices.

Meeting quarterly, the Trade Union Apprenticeship Group (TUAG), organised by SUL, supports unions in collectively engaging in discussions about apprenticeships with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to ensure that unions have influence across apprenticeship standards and frameworks, and to engage in work undertaken through the Technical Expert Groups.



Throughout the year, SUL worked with STUC affiliates to ensure union representation on Technical Expert Groups to influence the development and design of Apprenticeship Standards and Frameworks, including Archaeology, Construction (Carpentry and Joinery), Construction (Design and Contracting), Construction (Fitting Building Interiors), Customer Service, Dental Nursing, Electrical Installation, Fashion and Textiles, Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning, Hospitality, Land Use, Plumbing, Social Work (Graduate Apprenticeship), and Transport (Road). Unions working across these areas have included ASLEF, Community, GMB, Prospect, RMT, UNISON, Unite and Usdaw.

RMT, working across the rail and maritime industries, has an ongoing programme to support apprentices in developing their skills to better understand financial wellbeing, anti-racism, and cyber security. Following positive feedback from the Apprenticeship Event held in March 2023, the TUAG organised a second event, 'Skills Generation: Building skills to move forward', which took place at the STUC on 30th May 2024. As part of Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2025, a further event was organised, 'Skills for now and the future', which brought together new groups of apprentices and their reps.

Additional information on apprenticeships in Scotland can be found at the following link: <https://www.apprenticeships.scot/>

Apprenticeship Event 2025

As part of Scottish Apprenticeship Week, the 3rd Annual STUC Apprenticeship Event was held on 7th March in the Margaret Irwin Centre, Glasgow, with support from TUC Education in Scotland.

The theme of the event was, 'Skills for Now and The Future', with a focus on equipping apprentices with skills for progressing in the workplace.



Chaired by STUC Youth Committee member Stewart Duncan of the RMT, the event brought apprentices and reps together from a cross-section of workplaces, with a particularly high level of participation from the construction and engineering sector.

STUC colleagues delivered an opening keynote speech highlighting the importance of developing structures to ensure the voice of young workers is heard, not only in workplaces, but across the trade union movement. Interactive workshops facilitated by Sean Baillie, STUC Fair Work Officer, focused on developing the understanding and workplace implementation of Fair Work practices. These workshops were enhanced by the inclusion of a real-life scenario outlined by Unite ULR Brian Deazeley. Brian gave examples of where Unite has used the SUL Learning Fund to develop the skills of apprentices beyond the scope of their apprenticeships. The apprentices used the workshops to highlight areas where they could work closer together as union members to ensure their apprenticeship is of a high standard and leads to sustained employment.

The impact of Fair Work was further outlined by RMT Union Learning Organiser Dan Henderson in his presentation, alongside Stephen Horne, who manages CalMac's Modern Apprenticeship programme. The use of the SUL Development Fund and Learning Fund to increase opportunities for apprentices was highlighted. The session was a powerful reminder of how unions and employers can work collaboratively to support and develop apprentices.

Craig Beattie, Player Relations Officer at PFA Scotland, gave an engaging speech on his experience of starting professional football as a trainee and then moving into playing at the highest levels of the game. He spoke about how he became a union rep before taking up a position as a union officer when he hung up his football boots. TUC Education Tutor Sonya Cassidy spoke about the opportunities for training and development available to new reps through TUC Education and the ongoing support and learning programmes for existing reps.

The event provided a platform to bring together new apprentices with experienced reps and union officers to share good practice and ensure unions continue to provide young members with opportunities for workplace development and support. On returning to their workplace, a group of apprentices started working with their reps to develop a Workplace Apprentices Committee and to further engage with the local union structures.

Apprenticeship Case Study

Union: Unite the Union



Employer: City Building, Glasgow

Unite ULRs at City Building in Glasgow work hard to support the development of apprentices. As part of this work, Unite organises training programmes to expand the skillset of apprentices beyond that of their apprenticeship.



A Repair Care programme was organised to run in the autumn of 2024, for Carpentry and Joinery Apprentices to learn how to repair wet and dry rot in timber doors and windows. When a fix is successfully carried out, the original door or window is kept, resulting in a more environmentally sustainable practice than removing the old door or window and replacing it with a newer one.

This course proved popular, with demand from a second cohort of apprentices, encouraging Unite to run this course again during the following spring. One apprentice noted. 'The Repair Care course was a great day of practical learning. I learned a lot from the course and can't wait to put what I learned in to practice'.

Bryan Deazeley, Unite ULR at City Building said, 'The Repair Care course is a fantastic example of where Union Learning can make a real difference to our young members. Through the support of Unite Scotland and Scottish Union Learning we have arranged several courses for young members such as Autism Awareness and Mental Health Awareness. Upskilling apprentices with hands-on learning helps future-proof their skillset and will help them thrive as a tradesperson'.

Through union-led negotiations, City Building agreed paid release for all learners and provided facilities for the course to run in their training centre.

STUC Union Rep Awards

The SUL Learner of the Year Award, STUC Equality Award, and Helen Dowie Award were presented by then First Minister, Humza Yousaf, at STUC Congress 2024 at the Caird Hall in Dundee.

Scottish Union Learning Learner of the Year Award 2024



This annual award celebrates the achievements of Scotland's trade unionist workplace learners. The recipient for the STUC Scottish Union Learning Learner of the Year Award 2024 was RMT member Ross Henderson.

The award was sponsored by TUC Education in Scotland.

After joining Scotrail as a Customer Service apprentice, just after lockdown had ended in 2020, Ross undertook a range of new union-provided courses including one on deaf awareness. This is particularly important given the noisy environment often found in major train stations. Ross has since successfully completed his apprenticeship and gained permanent employment with Scotrail, following the creation of new courses by the RMT union supported by Scottish Union Learning. He is continuing his learning journey by going on to study the Chartered Institute of Rail Operators (CIRO) Certificate course at Glasgow Caledonian University supported by the employer. Ross is now encouraging his colleagues to participate in the workforce development opportunities organised by RMT.

Commenting, Roz Foyer, STUC General Secretary said, 'We are delighted to present this award to Ross. With the support of his union, he has overcome adversity and helped plot a route to successful employment for those who might follow. As if this were not enough, he continues his professional development and is encouraging his fellow union members to do the same. We are very proud of Ross and his union for this invaluable work.'

Commenting, Mick Lynch, RMT General Secretary, added, 'Ross is a very worthy recipient of this award. As a young member of the RMT, Ross has shown true determination and has not let any obstacle get in his way of learning. Not only is Ross learning, but he has also gained confidence, he shares with pride his story with his peers at his workplace which are all great steps in union learning and organising in Scotland.'

STUC Equality Award 2024



The recipients of the 2024 STUC Equality Award were three women who, with the full backing of the Fire Brigade Union (FBU), are breaking new ground in the battle to rid the Fire and Rescue Service of discrimination and creating a work culture which is open to all, irrespective of gender or race.

The award was sponsored by [TUC Education in Scotland](#).

Working in partnership with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), FBU reps Rachel Rogers, Kerry McCrone and Seona Hart are campaigning for lasting change.

The Fire and Rescue Service in Scotland (and the rest of the UK) remains woefully under representative of our communities. Statistics from the SFRS evidence that women make up only 14% of the workforce, of which only 6% are employed in wholtime firefighting roles. Statistics for ethnicity are even worse with only 1.4% of SFRS staff identifying as being from an ethnic minority background. From the need to provide safe fitting PPE for women firefighters to the 'Fight for 52' campaign to deliver 52 weeks fully paid maternity leave for expectant mothers employed in firefighting roles, the group are determined to bring about real change.

Throughout 2020 there were a number of high-profile sexual harassment cases across the FBU. In response, Seona, Rachel and Kerry, working with FBU National Officials, Officials from across the UK, FBU staff and the FBU National Women's committee established the FBU ASH group (Anti Sexual Harassment group). It is the work of this group that led the FBU to commission an anonymous climate survey that has subsequently led into the FBU Sexual Harassment Research Project, published in February 2024. The FBU was also successful in accessing funding from the STUC Fair Work, Leadership and Equalities Project to continue their work to eradicate discrimination within the fire and rescue service and union.

Commenting, Roz Foyer, STUC General Secretary said, 'Addressing workplace inequalities is a challenge in all workplaces and particularly in male dominated environments. It is truly inspiring to see Seona, Rachel and Kerry lead such an open process with the full support of the union leadership.'

Commenting, Colin Brown, FBU Scotland Executive Council Member, said, 'The Fire Brigades Union are incredibly proud of our Sisters and their work to deliver genuine equality policies within Fire and Rescue Services, but also in making sure that as a union we are willing to hold the mirror to ourselves and act to eradicate discrimination and harassment within our own union. As a movement we must continue to ensure that as workers we are equipped to and unapologetic in speaking out against those both within and those outside our movement that seek to divide us with their behaviours. Receiving this award and the recognition it brings is testament to the incredible work Seona, Kerry and Rachel do within our movement. We are privileged to have them in the FBU.'

Helen Dowie Award for Lifelong Learning 2024



The recipient of the 2024 Helen Dowie Award for Lifelong Learning was John McAlinden of the Communication Workers Union (CWU).

The award celebrates the achievements of Scotland's trade union representatives, promoting lifelong learning and skills development within workplaces and across the trade union movement.

Sponsored by The Open University in Scotland, the award encapsulates an approach which believes that shopfloor, worker-led learning, delivered collectively, is a vital tool in delivering the secure highly skilled workplaces of the future. In a rapidly changing technological environment, workforce development and ultimately job security relies on regular upskilling, particularly for communication workers. John worked hard to ensure delivery of the programme continued throughout the COVID19 pandemic and further develops new models of delivery as workers and learning providers continue to adapt to new ways of learning and studying. John is well equipped to respond to the changing needs and demands of CWU members in developing their workplace and career skills.

Commenting, Roz Foyer, STUC General Secretary, said, 'I congratulate John and his union the CWU for showing leadership in the face of a fast-changing technological landscape. Whether through the promotion of industry recognised qualifications or through broader education and training initiatives, he has made a fantastic contribution to supporting the aspirations and development for those wishing to achieve new goals. We are very proud of him.'

Commenting, John McAlinden said, 'It's a privilege to work beside other ULRs to deliver union-led learning in workplaces. I didn't get here on my own, I have a great team of reps around me with colleagues that are really determined to develop their workplace skills. Learning is at the heart of everything we do.'

Commenting, Susan Stewart, Director of The Open University in Scotland, said, 'In a changing world of work, access to learning and skills development has never been more important. The Open University in Scotland greatly values our partnership with unions and employers across Scotland, as around three quarters of our students are working while they study. We are pleased to sponsor the award and absolutely delighted for John who has previously studied one of our Microcredential courses, to receive it!'

First Minister's meeting with Award Recipients: Support for workplace learning and promoting fair work

The First Minister met with the 2023 and 2024 STUC Union Rep Award Recipients at St Andrew's House in Edinburgh in July 2024. The reps were recognised for their work in areas such as learning, organising and equalities.

First Minister, John Swinney said, 'Trade Unions play a vital role across Scotland's economy in the workplace and communities, and I am pleased to continue this support.'

'I was thrilled to meet with the STUC's Award recipients who represent the very best of what our trade unions have to offer – they have excelled in the promotion of workplace learning, equalities, health and safety or organising for a stronger collective voice.'

STUC General Secretary Roz Foyer said, 'The STUC Union Rep award recipients are the lifeblood of our movement. We congratulate them for leading the way in educating, empowering, and organising workers throughout the country. We further thank the First Minister for recognising their achievements and for recommitting his government's support for workers and Scotland's wider trade union movement.'



Conferences and Events

Scottish Union Learning organises regular conferences, webinars, and other events throughout the year to support Union Learning Reps and trade unions in promoting and accessing learning opportunities, and to promote development opportunities in workplace learning and skills.

Highlands and Islands Union Learning Week 2024

In June 2024, Scottish Union Learning staged a week of online learning to replace the one-day Highlands and Islands conferences held in previous years.

Sessions were delivered on:

- Dementia Friends, led by Alzheimer Scotland
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) A Practical Introduction, led by Digital Skills Education
- Samaritans Scotland West Highlands and Skye Project, led by Samaritans.

Each session was very well attended by Union Learning Reps and SUL-funded project workers and feedback from participants and stakeholders indicated enthusiasm for this new approach. The sessions brought reps, workers and partners together from across the Highlands and Islands to explore and discuss important issues within the context of expanding the reach of trade unions through learning. This approach enabled SUL to raise awareness of its work in Highlands and Islands, reaching more people than an in-person event would have allowed.



Everyday Skills Event

The 17th Annual Everyday Skills Event 'Supporting Learners in the Workplace' was held online on 27th February 2025. The Event enabled trade unions to raise awareness of Everyday Skills issues in the workplace and share best practice in supporting those with Everyday Skills needs. It was attended by Union Learning Representatives, Learning Organisers, Equality Reps, and Tutors, who cascade information and skills in workplaces.

The event was chaired by Catherine Garvie, Senior Development Officer, Scottish Union Learning, and addressed by Roz Foyer, General Secretary, STUC, and Wendy Burton, Director of Scottish Union Learning. Guest speaker, Philippa Cochrane, Head of Reading Communities at the Scottish Book Trust, delivered a presentation on, 'Reading for Pleasure: supporting learners to build a lifelong reading habit to unlock lifelong benefits'.

Delegates also attended one-hour breakout sessions on the following topics:

- The Cost of Living, Energy and The Scottish Budget, led by Lisa Cope, Money Advice Scotland
- Boosting Inclusion through Communication, led by Vickki Rowlands, Ellie Glasgow and Jaclynn Smith, ESOL Scotland
- How to Rig an Election with AI, led by Craig Steel, Digital Skills Education

Feedback from the Event was very positive and included the following:

'Excellent speakers and presentations, very informative.'

'Absolutely loved the sessions, really interactive and thought provoking. Thank you!'

'Thanks to all the team for putting this on! Great to connect with other union initiatives, projects and cross-sector skills.'



STUC Congress 2024

The STUC Annual Congress was held in Dundee in April 2024. SUL and TUC Education organised a joint 'Developing ULR Infrastructure' Fringe event. The fringe heard from a range of speakers on the impact of effective ULR networks within workplaces and unions, the panel of speakers highlighted good practice and challenges faced.

The panel was comprised of:

- Wilma Wheatley (PCS)
- John McAlinden (CWU)
- Jill Little-Woodhouse (TUC Education)
- Wendy Burton (Scottish Union Learning)
- Tommy Breslin (Scottish Union Learning)

SUL organised an exhibition stand to engage with union delegates from a wide and diverse array of sectors. SUL also organised and supported the presentations of the STUC Union Rep Awards, with the Scottish Union Learning 'Learner of the Year' award and Helen Dowie Award being presented at Congress as part of this session.



TUC Education Scotland

TUC Education focuses on supporting unions and their reps to continue to make a difference in their workplace. Training has been delivered, with both classroom and online learning supported by a wide range of digital learning interventions developed by the TUC Education Team.

TUC Education in Scotland continues to work in partnership with Scottish Union Learning and the STUC to develop and deliver effective training opportunities for reps across the country. From April 2024 to March 2025, courses were delivered to 790 reps in Scotland, covering every stage in the Union Rep journey from introductory courses to diploma level courses for experienced reps. Joint work with the STUC and SUL has continued, with a new course developed with SUL, the Award in Organising and Learning. This was aimed at union learning Project Workers and Organisers and started in Spring 2025. Early indications are demonstrating the impact of training of ongoing professional development for Project Workers and Learning Organisers.

Work is continuing on the development of an Adult Achievement Award for Unions into Schools Reps, with delivery due to start in Autumn 2025. TUC Education lecturers undertook mandatory Adult Achievement Award training with Newbattle Abbey College, alongside STUC and SUL colleagues. TUC Education in Scotland continues to work STUC to develop rep courses on Fair Work and Just Transition.

TUC Education and SUL held a joint Fringe Event at STUC Congress 2024, focusing on Developing ULR Infrastructures. TUC Education worked with SUL to sponsor the Apprenticeships Event in May 2024 and again in March 2025 as part of Scottish Apprenticeship Week. These events brought apprentices, reps, and organisers together to look at developing structures for apprentice voice in workplaces. The STUC Union Rep Awards were sponsored by TUC Education in Scotland.

The Trade Union Education Strategy Group continues to meet to facilitate wider discussions on rep training and development with affiliates, and to ensure appropriate models of training can be developed and delivered.

TUC Education, nationally, continues to develop and deliver online learning opportunities for union reps across the country. Webinars remain incredibly popular, with hundreds of reps watching live online, or watching the recordings. TUC Digital Education experts also develop and publish short self-study units on emerging themes in the workplace.

For more information on the work of TUC Education in Scotland please courses, events, webinars and eNotes, please visit the TUC training page at: www.tuc.org.uk/training



Resources and Communications

Information on the work of Scottish Union Learning can be found on the SUL website, social media platforms, and through trade union and partner websites.

Scottish Union Learning Website

The Scottish Union Learning website provides access to resources, publications, events and information and is a valuable resource for unions, ULRs, learners, and partner organisations.

Website: www.scottishunionlearning.com

Social Media

Scottish Union Learning can be found on Facebook and LinkedIn.

Facebook: [@scottishunionlearning](https://www.facebook.com/scottishunionlearning)

LinkedIn: [@Scottish Union Learning](https://www.linkedin.com/company/scottish-union-learning)

STUC Newsletter

The STUC mailing list lets you stay up to date with the latest news and events from STUC and Scottish Union Learning.

Subscribe to the mailing list: www.scottishunionlearning.com/STUC-newsletter

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Learner Quotes

This was the best course I've ever been on through my union (NUJ). I was immediately able to take knowledge from it and apply it to my work. I thoroughly enjoyed the learning experience. Though in the end I didn't need them, I was also grateful to the tutor for offering to make accommodations for my disability.

Really interesting course loved taking part.

Thank you for offering the training sessions! They have really helped since lockdown to feel part of the union and to gain skills and new training.

Thank you so much for consistently providing some of the best training I've had. It's so well focused and so well-presented.

I came across this course as it was offered to Social Care Workers at my workplace. I am so glad I saw the email on the noticeboard. It was a brilliant course and will definitely help my practice.

I very much enjoyed the course, and it improved my knowledge and has given me confidence in using 365 now - barely touched it before unless I had to.

Very informative and presented in a way that made all points perfectly clear.

As a freelancer I depend on this to keep me up-to-date with the industry and current skills. It's the main reason I renew my membership.

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