

UNION REP AWARDS 2026 INFORMATION PACK



Our reps are the lifeblood of our movement.

Across the country and in every union and sector, they make a difference for the workers they represent. Whether they work within time agreements or in their own time, they go above and beyond.

Every year at our Congress, we celebrate the tireless contribution of reps who have excelled in the areas of Equality, Learning, Organising, and Health and Safety.



1. Application Guidance

This section provides guidance for completing the nomination forms for each of the awards.

SUL Learner of the Year

To make a nomination, you should describe the learning journey undertaken by an individual. If you wish to nominate a group of learners, you must demonstrate why the collective participation was the key aspect of, and a notable contribution to, the learning journey.

Points to consider:

- Has the learner overcome any barriers or challenges?
- What course(s) has the learner undertaken?
- Why did the learner start learning? For example, was it due to the work of a Union Learning Rep, or being encouraged by the experiences of fellow workers?
- Has there been a progression of learning?
- Has the individual benefited from Everyday Skills support?
- What has the learner achieved as a result of their learning experience?
- What are the next steps for the learner?
- How has the learner's life been improved because of union-led learning?
- Is anything about the learner's journey particularly exemplary or unique?

STUC Organising Award

STUC Equality Award

Frank Maguire Award for Health & Safety

Helen Dowie Award for Union Learning Rep of the Year

Q1. Please provide an overview of the nominee(s) work and achievements and why you are nominating them for an award.

This question provides you with the opportunity to explain why, in your opinion, the nominee(s) should be the recipient of this year's Award. You should include how they demonstrate their commitment to the trade union movement. You may want to give a short history of their involvement with trade unions, campaigns, activism etc.

Please try to be as specific as possible and, if possible, include supporting evidence such as union magazine articles, web links, flyers, workplace posters etc with the application.

Q2. What motivated the nominee(s) to focus on this/these issue(s)? For example, a personal interest or a response to a specific need or situation.

Here we are interested in the background and motivation for the nominee(s) to focus on these issues/campaigns. Tell us the story of what inspired the nominee(s) to undertake the work you are nominating them for. What spurred them into action?



Q3. What was the impact of the work and what difference did it make?

For example, membership increases, new workplace reps/activists, tackling under representation of particular groups, recognition agreements, improvements in terms and conditions, service improvements, safer workplaces.

This question aims to determine the impact of the nominee's work. Please try to be as specific as possible and follow up with supporting evidence. You may wish to consider:

- What were the key outcomes of the work, and what impact did these have?
- How does the nominee(s) help and influence others within their own organisation, workplace, or sector?
- Have other people been positively impacted by the nominee's work? Eg. members of the public, customers, service users etc.
- You may also wish to describe specific anecdotes or situations where the nominee has 'gone the extra mile' to help others, either individually or as a group.
- Please try to provide evidence that demonstrates that the work of the nominee(s) could be seen as particularly innovative or complex, highlighting any aspects that distinguishes this work from the normal expectation affiliates may have of their representatives.

Q4. If difficulties and/or barriers have been faced by the nominee(s) in undertaking this work (e.g. management/union agreement, time off, etc.) what were these, and to what extent have these been resolved?

The panel will be interested in nominations where specific examples of innovative approaches have been taken to surmounting any barriers or difficulties encountered by the nominee(s).

Q5. How does the nominee(s) promote Union-Led Learning / Organising / Health and Safety / Equalities within their own organisation, workplace or community in Scotland? Please include specific examples.

Describe the nominee's specific dedication to promoting their area of interest within their workplace/ trade union and/or within the wider trade union movement. What methods and techniques did they use, and how successful is this work in encouraging others to get involved and participate in trade union activities?

If possible, please include examples of this promotional work for the panel to review.

Q6. Additional Information: Please include any other important information that should be considered regarding the nominee(s) work in the trade union movement.

Is there anything else you feel should be considered regarding the nominee(s) work in the trade union movement? You can use this space to highlight how the nominee's work is exemplary or unique, and to describe anything 'extra' that has not been covered by any of the previous questions.

2. Application Process

There are two application forms - one for the SUL Learner of the Year and one for Health & Safety, Organising, ULR of the Year, and Equality Awards. You can submit additional files with the application form if required.

One form should be completed per nominee. Joint nominations for a group of reps for one award are accepted.

The application forms must be countersigned by your Scottish Secretary or equivalent regional officer and we ask that you ensure that the person or group being nominated is aware of the nomination before the submission is made.

Applications must be submitted to info@stuc.org.uk by **6th February 2026**

3. STUC Rep Award Film

The Award Recipients are required to be part of a short film which is shown at STUC Annual Congress as part of the presentation ceremony.

The Awards are usually presented to Recipients at Congress by the First Minister of Scotland and the STUC General Secretary.

STUC Annual Congress takes place in Dundee in April 2026.

More information on when filming will take place can be found in the application forms.

4. 2025 Winners

FRANK MAGUIRE AWARD FOR HEALTH & SAFETY

The STUC Frank Maguire Award for Health & Safety Award 2025 was jointly awarded to Jean Pickering and Fiona MacDonald of UNISON.

Jean and Fiona have worked together at St Andrews University in Fife for over 25 years, representing UNISON members on health and safety.

Jean and Fiona are also active on UNISON Scotland's Health & Safety Committee. Additionally, Fiona served as UNISON's Higher Education Sector Rep, where she advised and supported UNISON Health & Safety Reps in universities across Scotland.

Jean and Fiona carry out a programme of inspections across the University's extensive estate jointly with the employer and, where appropriate, independently.

Jean and Fiona have ensured their inclusion in Health and Safety Executive (HSE) site visits and

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that HSE Inspectors consult with the union as their legislative duty demands.

In recent years, Jean and Fiona have worked with UNISON lawyers to support members with personal injury claims, securing compensation.

Identifying hazards is an ongoing process, to ensure staff, students and visitors are safe across the estate.

Jean and Fiona were influential members of the University's Gender Based Violence Working Group which influenced workplace policies, procedures and practices.

As affiliates to Fife Trades Union Council, the UNISON St Andrews University branch commemorates International Workers Memorial Day.

A key priority of UNISON's 'Be on the Safe Side' Health & Safety campaign is to organise young and/or female members to become Health & Safety Reps, and for experienced Health & Safety reps to support and guide those new reps as they complete their training and move into their new roles, this is an area of work that has seen Jean and Fiona play a crucial part.

The STUC Frank Maguire Award for Health & Safety Award 2025 was presented to Jean and Fiona at a particularly appropriate time as Jean retired at the end of April 2025.

Fiona continues to work across UNISON to support and develop a new generation of Health & Safety Reps.



EQUALITY AWARD



The recipient of the STUC Equality Award 2025 was Gina Gwenffrewi, a member of University and College Union Scotland (UCU Scotland).

Gina first got active with UCU Scotland as a PhD student in 2019, speaking at an event organised by the University of Edinburgh on Transgender Day of Visibility.

In 2022, Gina was elected as the first UCU LGBT+ Officer in her branch.

As a trans woman, Gina has herself experienced an increase in anti-trans rhetoric and discrimination in recent years. Gina participated in the development of her workplace's Trans Equality

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Policy and served on the Staff Pride Network (the staff LGBTQ+ network). Gina continues to build community through organising events and representing members. Gina provides expert advice and support for reps and members of her branch.

Gina plays a leading role in organising, alongside UCU colleagues, public solidarity to promote trans inclusion and challenge hostility and discrimination in the workplace.

Gina's work within her branch has seen her subsequently nominated as a delegate to the annual STUC LGBT+ conferences and UCU Equality conferences. Gina has also held a seat on the UCU UK LGBT+ Standing Committee since 2023.

SUL LEARNER OF THE YEAR



The recipient of the Scottish Union Learning Learner of the Year Award 2025 was Sean Paul Gracie, a member of Community.

Sean Paul started working at RSBi in Glasgow on completing the RSBi schools programme. The programme provides pupils from ASN schools the opportunity to complete a placement in a supported workplace, while completing an SVQ in Performing Manufacturing Operations.

Sean Paul has global developmental delay and autism. Sean Paul struggles with the standard learning environment and was initially reluctant to get involved in on-site learning. Through encouragement and support from Community ULRs, Sean completed literacy and numeracy courses.

Sean Paul worked well with his peers, contributing to his own and group learning. As Sean Paul's confidence grew, he increasingly interacted with the facilitator and the group.

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Sean Paul also completed a further two courses in Numeracy for Manufacturing and Literacy Support for Learners in Supported Workplaces.

During the Numeracy for Manufacturing course Sean Paul excelled. Sean Paul used Lego to design a simple building then draw instructive diagrams for peers to follow the design. This was done in a logical manner using colours to make the instructions easier to follow and understand. For the final part of the course, Sean Paul produced a design brief for a piece of furniture that could be built by RSBi. Again, Sean Paul completed this work to a high standard. Sean Paul is currently studying an Introduction to the Digital Office and continues to grow in ability and confidence.

The bespoke nature of these courses and the small group numbers has enabled Sean Paul to thrive in this union-led learning environment. This would not have been possible without the work of the ULRs.

HELEN DOWIE AWARD FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

The recipient of the Helen Dowie Award for Lifelong Learning 2025 was Steven Black, Union Learning Rep (ULR) with Unite the Union.

Steven joined Unite in 2012 and was elected as a ULR in 2018. In 2022, Steven was also elected as a Workplace Rep at Stagecoach Bluebird in Aberdeen.

Steven mentored newly licensed drivers within Stagecoach Bluebird for six years between 2016 and 2022. Recognising his own visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning style as a dyslexic thinker, Steven quickly adopted alternative mentoring methods to suit individual learning needs. His transparency about his dyslexic identification encouraged others to be open about their learning challenges, and Steven used this opportunity to adapt his mentoring style.

Experiencing negative attitudes towards neurodivergent workers further fuelled Steven's passion for fighting for inclusive learning. Steven worked with the Stagecoach Bluebird training team to develop a good working solution to modify mentoring techniques for other neurodivergent colleagues.

The employer realised the effectiveness of the new approach and subsequently chose to match Steven with new drivers experiencing learning differences.

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Steven also negotiated an extension to the mentoring programme from two weeks to four weeks to give neurodivergent learners additional support and the confidence to drive on their own in public.



Steven has also worked with the employer to ensure adaptations for dyslexic workers. He has taken on the role of Chair of the Aberdeen Branch of Dyslexia Scotland and has been recognised as a Dyslexia Scotland Official Changemaker, supporting dyslexic adults, children, parents, and carers. Steven has used his understanding of dyslexia to ensure accessible materials on Unite Education training programmes. Steven is currently working towards achieving his HNC in Trade Union Organising and Representation.

ORGANISING AWARD

The recipient of the STUC Organising Award 2025 was Mark Vincent, a GMB Scotland rep, convenor, and Branch Secretary.

Working with local Harbourmasters, Mark fought for antisocial hours payments, securing a backdated 2.7% pay increase in addition to their annual pay award; ensuring drying room facilities and additional PPE for wet weather conditions; and, enhancing the workplace welfare facilities with a new kitchen. The wins that Mark has fought hard to secure has led to a 50% increase in GMB density amongst the Harbourmasters. As a result, the membership is more engaged and ready to take on workplace issues as a collective.

Mark's unwavering dedication to advocating for staff welfare has consistently been evident. When waste management issues at Orkney Islands Council escalated to the point of potential strike action, Mark supported the workers to stand firm, successfully challenging the use of dash cams and vehicle trackers, ensuring the protection of members from the misuse of this technology.

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Mark plays an instrumental role in defending members facing disciplinary action, while also ensuring effective support for workers returning to work following stress related absences. Mark's pro-active approach led to the implementation of new safety measures in a residential care facility, further cementing his reputation as a champion of workers' rights and well-being.

Mark led a successful and impactful campaign advocating for the introduction of a comprehensive menopause policy within Orkney Islands Council. The campaign led to a significant increase in women joining the union and fostered a more inclusive and supportive environment for women in the workplace.

Based in Orkney, Mark is presented with the challenge of managing a geographically expansive branch which stretches across the Highlands and Islands. Mark has addressed this challenge by organising a combination of in-person and remote meetings, alongside comprehensive communication strategies to maintain effective running of the Branch.

