

Highest Award for Boosting Skills for the UK

Adult learning has been high on the agenda for Trade Unions across the UK over the last few years. One such Union, "The General Municipal Boilermakers Union" (GMBU) has been highly successful in recruiting high numbers of hard to reach learners as part of a National Union Learning Fund Project (ULF).

Covering all types of industries and workplace over the last two years nearly 1500 learners have been recruited on to courses through the union, many with skills for life needs.

Nearly 500 members have received accredited qualifications ranging from NVQ's in various subjects, with some diverse course subjects like, Angling level 2 in coaching, football, DIY, reflexology. Other traditional subjects offered were around Computer qualifications, languages, Literacy and Numeracy and lots more.

Lots of the activity came about from the Union Learning Reps (ULR's) support. These are union members that encouraged, championed and promoted courses at all of the GMB workplaces. At Anglian Windows in Norwich over 100 learners have so far come forward and most have achieved fantastic qualifications to level 2, which is equal to a GCSE of A to C.

In the UK research from the Government has shown that approximately 15 million adults struggle with basic maths and 6 million with basic literacy.

Union workplace projects are making a real difference to people's lives by taking away barriers and making learning more accessible and fun too.

Across the UK unions have helped 250,000 people back into learning over the last few years, a truly magnificent example of how they are making a real difference.

Steve Walker the GMB Union Regional Project Co-ordinator has headed the project that has covered both Norfolk and Suffolk. Companies like Remploy, Anglian Windows, NCC, NCS, ASDA, Jeyes and a long list of 20 other companies have seen the real benefits of the Union driving the agenda for learning at work. Employers have noticed greater confidence and motivation to learn that has improved individual's skills with results in a better skilled workforce that is evident across both counties.

The GMB has been working effectively in partnership with Trade Union Learning Link, (TULL) an organisation that supports Trade Unions in developing workplace learning projects. Richard Crook and Heather De Lyon the Project managers have supported the GMB in areas around funding for courses, setting up learning centres at the workplaces and mediating with employers.

Steve Walker said, "what we wanted was to offer adults and members new opportunities to develop their skills where they may have missed out previously. It's so satisfying to see success and achievement for individuals. Everyone can reach their full potential if they are supported and guided in the right way and union learning projects do exactly what is said on the Tin".

Recognition for both organisations work has been recognised and they are celebrating their joint success at the recent 20th Anniversary of the National Training Awards (NTA) for the Eastern Region in Cambridge, as National winners, which is highest award in the UK. It is presented to those that demonstrate exceptional achievements through training and development in adult learning. TV presenter Suzi Perry from channel 5's the gadget show and Motor Cycle commentator for Sky Sports presented the awards. The awards are managed by the DFES and UK Skills and are seen as premiership of awards for adult learning.

The GMB and Trade Union Learning Link (TULL) were nominated against some tough competition for the "Working in Partnership Award" from May and Gurney, CITB, First Bus and many more high profile organisations.

Both GMB and TULL are now looking forward to travelling to London in December, where they will receive their awards.

The GMB has also had other recent success with Steve Walker winning the BBC Regional Tutor award and also winning the Regional STAR Awards with Anglian Windows. They are also finalists for the National awards in London at the end of Oct. Dame Kelly Holmes will present this award.

Contact Steve Walker 07905635023 about workplace learning in the East of England.

Pictured are

Richard Crook, Heather De Lyon, Steve Walker and Suzi Perry