

## EDUCATION CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT TO AGM MARCH 2005

2005 has been a busy and challenging year for me and the Branch. I have been involved not only in the development of Branch Education but also the Branch Development group, women's issues, as a Learning Representative and my role as a new Steward. I have sought to support the development of Self Organised groups (SOG) and I would like to extend congratulations to Yacob Cajee, Branch Equality Officer, for his work on Diversity in Diction - Equality in Action. A Guide to the Appropriate Use of Language. The Guide has been adopted by the TUC, other Local Authorities and Universities and the learning & development team look forward to Devon County Council also adopting this Guide.

This year at National Conference recognition was given to the increased role of UNISON support for lifelong learning and a new Branch officer post was created. After 3 years I am standing down as Education Co-ordinator in order to stand for the Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator as I feel we could further develop UNISON learning activity for members.

### **Achievements.**

#### **Partnership Learning Agreement with the employer.**

I am delighted to let you know that after over two years of negotiating with Devon County this Branch has secured a major achievement with the signing of a Partnership Learning Agreement last autumn. This Agreement has the full support of the Joint Trades Unions Liaison Committee and was signed at a Personnel Partnership meeting by myself, Roberto Franceschini, Heather Barnes and Councillor Chris Gale. It is an important negotiated agreement which recognises the value of lifelong learning in the workplace and the commitment of the employer to promoting workforce development. Ongoing work is required to ensure that all Directorates are committed to this policy.

Work will need to be ongoing to ensure that this policy is not just a paper exercise and that the message is accepted by all directorates to encourage and support members to become trained UNISON learning reps and that employees have the right to paid time off for consultation with our reps.

#### **Further members trained as UNISON Learning Reps and Advisors**

This time last year the branch had only one UNISON learning rep (myself) and one learning advisor (Ed Naylor-Williams). We now have 5 more: Julie Vaughen-Atkins, Valerie Passmore, Karen Silcox, Denise Cooper and Jackie Roberts. We have met as a small group interested in promoting adult learning both inside and outside the workplace.

**If you would like to become a trained UNISON Learning Rep then there is a 5 day course for you this year in Torquay on 20, 27 April and 4, 11, & 18 May.** Further courses will be arranged in other venues.

#### **Support for Branch Equality Forum**

Self-organisation is a key element of UNISON's strategy for achieving equality. It has a vital role to play in enabling members who face discrimination to participate in the Branch. There are too many courses to list here but be assured that this Branch is fully committed to offer training, advice and guidance, in confidence, to enable lesbian and gay members, black members, women and disabled members to participate at all levels in the Branch.

### **Sept. Branch Induction Day**

Following the success of the 4<sup>th</sup> Induction day in Feb last year we had 18 new stewards attend in September this year. Another day was held on 25 Feb this year. New reps and people interested in becoming more active are welcome to attend in future.

### **Sept. N Devon Women's Event.**

This event was held in Barnstaple and offered women members a chance to find out more about what UNISON can do for them including information about learning opportunities and women's health. Although very few members attended, significant contacts were made with those who did come.

### **Pathways into UNISON (Course for women members)**

8 members attended a really enjoyable weekend course in Croyde Bay last October. They did not know each other and had little or no involvement with the Branch. They came away having made new friends, gained knowledge about the Branch and how UNISON can promote opportunities for women within the workplace and outside. They had a successful follow up weekend in Barnstaple in Feb 05. One member went on to attend the National Women's conference in Plymouth this year, another hopes to set up a UNISON women's self organised group in N Devon and a few will explore becoming new stewards.

### **Dec. Member's Event in Tiverton**

This event was held to offer members the chance to meet branch officers and reps, to find out more about learning and development and about what your local negotiators are currently working on.

### **Job Evaluation Training**

45 Branch reps. undertook JE initial training at 3 venues across the County. A further 12 stewards attended training in February to enable them to sit on the JE Panels and a **further 2 day course is planned for April 19 & 21**. This is a vital piece of work which you can do for your colleagues. You do not have to be a Steward and training is open to anyone who would like to be a panel member. The larger the number of trained people we have the less onerous will the individual time commitment be.

### **Other Training**

Part of my role has been to co-ordinate and encourage new stewards to take the full 10 days training available to them in order to become officially accredited. The training is modular and can be undertaken at times to suit yourself and the workplace. **New training begins again in March** and I

would be happy to discuss this further with anyone interested in becoming a steward. Health & Safety Rep training is organised by the TUC and there are several levels of accreditation. **Branch officer training is ongoing and commences on 6, 7 & 8 May 05.** There is a detailed and varied programme of Regional training which is available free to all members. For example a much recommended course which I have great feedback on is the **Women's Assertiveness Training planned for 15, 16 & 17 April at Croyde Bay.** Please see your steward or have a look at our branch website which contains all the details. Courses are free to members and expenses are paid by the Branch.

#### **For the Future**

- Ongoing commitment to and development of Partnership Learning Agreement
- Further development of partnership with Devon WEA to promote work based learning programme.
- Continue to promote UNISON learning and recruitment of UNISON Learning Reps.
- Ongoing recruitment of members willing to be involved at all levels in the Branch.
- Continuation of Branch Induction programme and training for activists.

**Rose Gander.**

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EDUCATION AND COURSES ON THE BRANCH WEBSITE.  
[www.devoncountyunison.org.uk](http://www.devoncountyunison.org.uk)**

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