

New course receives seal of approval

“The course was fantastic! It really highlighted new options and possibilities and showed us how we can build on the work we have already done in the North East region.” Susan Coates, South Tyneside ULR.

Union learning reps (ULRs) from across the country made the trip to the University of Birmingham back in June to complete the new **ULR Stage 2 course: Being a branch ULR**. The three-day course, developed by ATL’s training officer, Becky Wright, focuses on the key themes of organising, negotiating skills, recruiting and supporting workplace ULRs with the emphasis placed very much on increasing the influence of ULRs across their branches.

Branch ULRs are central in

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ensuring the sustainability of union learning within their branch and can take a lead role in supporting efforts enabling members to have access to high quality continuing professional development (CPD) along with promoting other opportunities for lifelong learning. In addition, they can play a key role in mentoring other ULRs, and developing local networks and partnerships.

Becky was delighted that the course attracted a full turn out and was keen to pay tribute to those who attended: “the ATL union learning project has come on leaps and bounds in recent

years and one of the main developments we’ve seen is the increase in ULRs working at branch level and with that has come a demand to look at the skills of the role in more detail. Members on reps’ courses learn a lot by not only what they do in the classroom but also via the interaction and exchange of ideas that occurs in group work and at breaks and lunch. This group was no exception and it was fantastic to see the diversity of events, ideas and activities that ULRs have already been a part of and want to continue with in the future.”

Update on the ATL/Edge Hill University partnership



ATL’s landmark partnership with Edge Hill University continues to go from strength to strength.

The summer term saw over 1,000 members enrol for an online module on **Managing Challenging Behaviour** enabling them to gain 20 Masters degree credits upon completion.

ATL’s network of ULRs have

recently been brought up to speed with new developments in the partnership so if you would like to know how the partnership can help you take advantage of the CPD and accreditation opportunities, please contact your ULR. Alternatively, please visit ATL’s website at: **www.atl.org.uk** where you will find comprehensive information on the partnership.

Professional development programme already a big hit

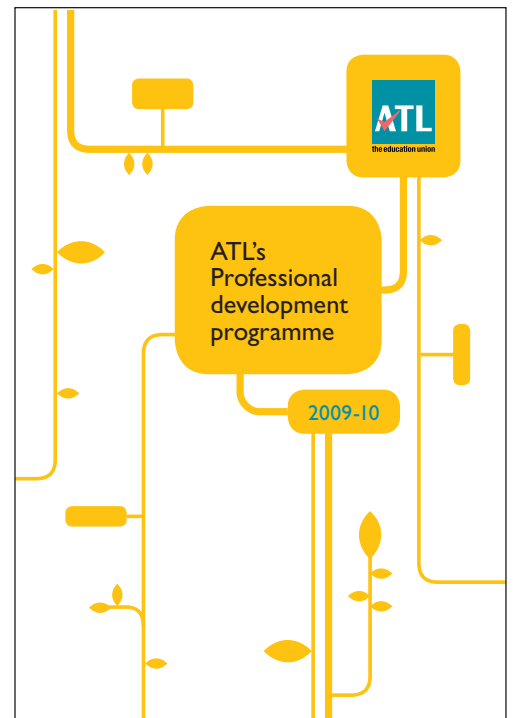
ATL's new *Professional development programme* for 2009-10 has already attracted a huge response from members with over 200 bookings for CPD courses taken in the first two weeks since its launch in July. The programme builds on the success of last year, which saw nearly 500 members attend a course.

This year, members can look forward to several new courses including: **Behaviour Management for Support Staff** and there's a similar course designed especially for those working with the 14-19 cohort, **Coaching and Mentoring,**

Leadership Skills (online) and Using your Voice for Leaders.

Popular courses from last year, including: Assertiveness Skills and Effective Learning still remain a key part of the programme, which also provides information on how members can take advantage of ATL's partnership with Edge Hill University.

Those teaching in FE can, of course, record ATL CPD courses with the Institute for Learning as part of the annual requirement to complete 30-hours CPD. If you are interested in attending any of ATL's courses, please contact the Training department by email at: training@atl.org.uk.



Tackling underachieving boys

- “Super, thoroughly enjoyable, entertaining and informative.”
- “Absolutely great, inspirational, the best course I've attended in a long time.”
- “A fantastic course, very hands on and empowering.”

ATL members have turned out in force during the summer term to attend a series of workshops on **Raising Boys' Achievement.**

Recent years have seen mounting concern that too many boys are locked in a spiral of underachievement throughout their school career. It has been well documented that girls outperform

boys at all levels of education but there is also growing evidence that boys are increasingly becoming disengaged and alienated from the education system with damaging consequences both for themselves and their communities.

The workshops were a big hit with over 100 members packing into three workshops in Cheshire, South Yorkshire and Lancashire, to hear from keynote speaker Gary Wilson, who is widely recognised as one of the country's leading authorities on boys' achievement.

In 30 years of teaching, Gary has trained all sections of the school workforce across all phases and

advised many local authorities.

He is a highly engaging and motivating speaker and frequently contributes to *the TES* along with regular appearances on BBC Radio 4 and Teachers' TV.

Speaking after the event in Lancashire, ULR Carvel Lonsdale was delighted with the workshop: “We had a great response from members and Gary's workshop was extremely thought provoking and stimulating, offering practical advice members can use in the classroom.”

No half measures for union learning in the North East

A group of ULRs in the North East are taking union learning to another level of member activity and engagement.

The North East Learning Network (NELN), established just over a year ago, is dedicated to expanding the range of learning opportunities for ATL members in the region and has made great strides in a relatively short period.

With her infectious enthusiasm, Special Educational Needs Assistant, Debbie Polwarth, is one of the driving forces behind NELN and *You Learn* managed to catch up with her to get the lowdown on how union learning is making a real difference for ATL members.

“Marjorie Stewart, my ATL rep at Kenton High School, initially approached me about attending the ULR training and from the beginning it was a role which interested me, explained Debbie.

“I have to say the prospect of attending the first day was a little bit daunting but I was lucky to meet a fantastic bunch of people from a range of professional backgrounds, which included other support staff teachers, lecturers and a deputy headteacher”.

When Debbie completed her training, she was determined to hit the ground running and quickly



Serious business: child protection workshop keeps North East ATL members busy.

made contact with the other ULRs from the North East region who attended the course.

“Once the ULR training was completed, we decided to keep in touch and support each other,” said Debbie. “I don’t think that any of us realised what was going to develop. Because of distance, sadly, we could not work with everyone, but regionally we kept in touch. We had a few meetings and wanted to work together to provide training events because, as a team, we recognised that we had the opportunity to reach the whole North East as each of us were from different branches.”

This commitment to developing a learning team quickly led to the creation of NELN, which has, according to Debbie, enabled the team to effectively: “conceive, plan, develop and deliver learning on a regional basis.”

NELN was to make its presence felt in the region when the group invited Jason Bangbala to deliver a workshop on **Managing Challenging Behaviour** at Northumbria University. “This was one of our first events and it did such a lot to raise ATL’s profile and also had a very positive impact in terms of recruiting new members.” explained Debbie.

NELN have focused much of their efforts on trying to identify

members’ learning needs with issues around online child protection, a recurring theme for many in the region. “We have worked hard to offer specific training on this issue, which not only covers the important issues, but enables those attending to offer advice and

guidance on best practice in their workplaces,” said Debbie. “We have organised three workshops so far and have had a great response with over 70 members attending.”

In and amongst the workshops on child protection, members in the region were also quick to snap up places on Personal e-Safety, led by Simon Finch from the Northern Grid for Learning. “As a group we knew from our own experience that staff were increasingly concerned about using ICT appropriately and getting some clear guidance on good practice, and this was supported by the learning needs surveys we conduct regularly,” explained Debbie.

Reflecting on her early experiences of trade union activism, Debbie explains the ULR training and her involvement in NELN has: “really triggered a passion around learning and all the possibilities it has to empower members. It is something which has enabled me to recruit over 30 new ATL members from my school and has given me the confidence to get more involved in my branch (Newcastle). I have recently been elected assistant branch secretary and President!”

Despite having achieved so much, Debbie believes there is much more to come from NELN. “We recently attended the branch ULR training in Birmingham and came away buzzing after spending three days sharing ideas with other ULRs from other branches on the training course,” said Debbie. “Following the course we quickly arranged a meeting to plan next year’s activities, hoping to build on our early success and ensure more members can tap into all ATL has to offer.”

If you would like to get in touch with Debbie, you can email her at: **dpolwarth@atl.org.uk**.

Network news

Learning at Work Day was once again a huge success in **London** with ATL members taking advantage of a packed programme of events in May organised by ATL's network of ULRs in the capital. The annual festival of learning, which attracts 30,000 adult learners every year, saw ATL members packing into taster events on **French, autism awareness, child safety** and various **CPD** workshops. If you are interested in finding out more about any of these opportunities, please contact ULR, Diana Manville, by email at: **dmanville@bromley.atl.org.uk**.

Elsewhere, it's been a busy time for ULRs in the **North West** where ATL members have been getting active by attending various workshops and events. The efforts of Liz Lawson (email: **elawson@atl.org.uk**) and Frances Ambrose have enabled members to get to grips with digital photography, along with opportunities to chill out by going along to a **Clarins' health and beauty evening** and an **Alexander Technique** class.

At **Lancashire** branch, members were given the opportunity to turn their unwanted items into hard cash by learning how to effectively use **e-Bay**.

ULR, Judith Brucciani, (email: **atljudith@yahoo.co.uk**) led the course which provided members with some top tips to ensure they learned some of the tricks of the trade. Meanwhile, Wigan ULR, Gordon Core, (email: **gcore@sky.com**) ensured ATL members could finally get some respite after another busy term by attending a Voice Care workshop.

In the **North East**, the **child protection** workshops continue to be very popular with members and a new course on **Personal e-Safety** organised by South Tyneside ULR, Susan Coates, (email: **scoates@s-tyneside.atl.org.uk**) attracted a large turnout. Both these workshops are set to continue next term and members can also look forward to a seminar on **Managing Challenging Behaviour**.



Voice care: ATL members keeping their vocal chords in shape.

ATL members in **Hampshire and Dorset** came together in June for a taste of union learning at Avon Tyrrell, Youth Club UK's outdoor activity centre in the New Forest. The event, organised by ATL Learning Organisers, Sandra Berry and Tim Brooks, aimed to raise the profile of union learning to members without workplace ULRs. The programme included **teacher wellbeing** with education writer Elizabeth Holmes, **voice care** with vocal coach Beth Ford, **outdoor environmental education** with Avon Tyrrell and problem-solving team-based activities.



the education union

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