THE RCN LEARNING REPRESENTATIVES HANDBOOK
Supporting RCN reps to make a difference

Wear the badge on the outside.
Feel the pride on the inside.
Dear colleagues,

Thank you for your continued excellent work as an RCN representative, your work is greatly valued by us. And to those of you just starting in the role, welcome and thank you; you have joined a community of representatives proud to make a difference to their workplaces and the RCN.

This is the fourth edition of the handbook that the RCN has produced specifically to help you carry out your role as a learning representative.

We recognise the enormous contribution that members make to the learning and development of colleagues in the workplace. Employment legislation in 2002 provided us with the regulations to support this, and since then you have helped thousands of nurses and health care assistants access development they would otherwise have missed out on.

The RCN learning representative role is wide, varied and hugely valuable. This applies whether you are involved in negotiating to improve lifelong learning opportunities for staff, helping members improve their study skills, or encouraging other members to become more active in the RCN.

You are a vital part of the work we do, and I look forward to continuing working with you in the future.

Dr Peter Carter OBE
RCN Chief Executive & General Secretary
INTRODUCTION

As an RCN learning representative you are at the heart of a growing team of reps committed to supporting the learning and career development of RCN members. This handbook is a useful reference tool, designed to help you carry out your work as a learning rep, whether you are new to the role or not.

The handbook suggests ways of getting started, and provides you with the latest information about key RCN services and resources. Use it alongside The RCN representatives joint handbook.

How your role develops will depend very much on you and the needs of your members locally.

Use the handbook to find out how to:
• get started in your role
• work in partnership
• work effectively with RCN officers
• tackle discrimination at work and promote diversity
• promote continuing professional development (CPD) initiatives and lifelong learning
• get local events accredited
• access RCN information sources.

CONTACTS

Use this page to make a record of information that will be useful to you locally.

Useful contacts:

- RCN branch:
- RCN office:
- RCN officer:
- RCN Direct:
- Regional or country representative on RCN UK Safety Representatives’ Committee:

Name and contact for:

- RCN steward/s:
- RCN safety representatives:
- Other learning representatives:
- Human resources:
- Other:
The role of a learning representative and practice standards

As an RCN learning representative, your role will be to:
• help nursing staff become more proactive about their learning needs in the workplace
• negotiate with employers to improve lifelong learning opportunities for members
• support members in planning and managing their learning
• enable members to access learning opportunities and resources
• contribute to the organisation of study days and events to meet members’ learning needs in collaboration with management, RCN staff and branches
• contribute to member recruitment and retention.

You will be supported in your role by other RCN representatives such as stewards and safety reps, your regional RCN office, regional officers and the representatives’ education team. There is also guidance from the RCN on the activists section of the website and in The RCN representatives’ statement of expectations.

www.rcn.org.uk/a/413970

Your role descriptor

Role descriptors are periodically reviewed and the current versions are available on the RCN website.

www.rcn.org.uk/activist
Establishing contacts

Once your election as a learning representative is ratified by your branch, and after completing module one of the learning pathway, you will want to get on and begin to make contacts and set things up. You may begin to worry, as the role can be time-consuming and you may feel that you are doing a lot of talking without making much progress. Don’t worry – people often feel like this when they are starting out on any new venture.

You will play an important role in the RCN branch. Initially you will need to develop a regular network of communication between yourself and key RCN branch members. This will include the branch chair, secretary, treasurer; other RCN representatives that regularly attend branch meetings; colleague learning representatives; and RCN professional forums.

Your network may also include other key contacts such as: RCN staff (regional director, officers and regional office staff); local human resources (HR) advisers; managers; professional development nurses; training departments; matrons and owners in the local independent sector; and nursing agencies. Over time it will help to build up a network and regularly communicate with them.

Your line manager’s support is very important as it will help with you being released from work for your duties and activities. They are likely to be influential in your workplace and will have some degree of control over resources.

You will also work with other learning representatives as well as safety representatives and stewards. There can be mutual benefit from working with other unions too, particularly in the case of learning and training. Working as a multi-union team is generally more likely to raise awareness with your employer.

Most importantly, you will need to consider how you are going to find out about RCN members’ views on what services and events you should organise. This can happen at branch meetings but it may also be possible by asking other nursing staff in the workplace what they would like, either informally or through attending meetings.

Ideas to help

• Talk to RCN staff.
• Plan your time carefully.
• Decide how much time you can afford to give and stick to it.
• Prioritise what you are going to do.
• Decide whose help you will need to succeed.
• Talk to RCN members about their ideas for events.
• Make contact with people in charge of room bookings.
• Attend branch meetings.
• Make contact with local RCN professional forums and other learning representatives.
• Contact your chief nurse/executive nurse.
• Decide on what facilities you need.
• Use the checklist below to help you find out what’s going on at your workplace.
• Keep activity sheets to help you keep records and to focus on members’ needs.

Remember, you do not actually have to organise meetings or events yourself – just encourage and help others to see the opportunities and then facilitate the process. The key to success in your role depends on making your presence known. Get out and about, find out what members really want, and then facilitate action.

Learning representatives and the RCN

The role of an RCN learning representative crosses both the RCN’s trade union and professional functions. So, it is important to be able to identify the right expertise and resources to support members and understand how decisions are made that relate to learning.

In terms of learning in a trade union context, you may be working with employers to protect and promote learning, ensure equal access and identifying any risk to learning provision. To support you with these kinds of issues, you have the UK Learning Representatives’ Committee. The committee brings together all of the activity, intelligence and concerns relating to learning from across all four countries. You also have your local branch and regional or country office and board if you feel the issue needs a local approach.
RCN UK Learning Representatives’ Committee

The RCN’s UK Learning Representatives’ Committee is made up of an elected learning representative from each of the 12 RCN regions/countries. It represents the views of RCN learning representatives on lifelong learning to the RCN’s Trade Union Governance Group and the Membership and Representation Committee, and advises and recommends RCN responses on those issues. It also contributes to the development of RCN policy on lifelong learning and promotes the role and value of the learning representative in the RCN and workplaces.

Make contact with the UK Learning Representative committee member in your region/country. They are keen to establish contact with their local learning representatives and your regional/country office should be able to put you in touch.

Learning in a nursing practice context supports your employers and our members to access the vast expertise and resources that the RCN offers. You will also be identifying individual and collective learning needs that support the RCN to continue to develop high quality resources. To help you with this, the RCN has a number of professional forums, specialist advisers and learning and development professionals that shape our learning agenda. You will be able to find the experts and activity that relate to your area of practice easily through the RCN website, and there may be local professional networks in your area. Each forum has a steering committee that reports to the Forums Governance Group, which ultimately reports to the Nursing Policy and Practice Committee.

Learning representatives will also be able to signpost members at the workplace to the RCN’s Principles of Nursing Practice, which you can find at:

www.rcn.org.uk/principles

The principles of nursing practice tell us what patients, colleagues, families and carers can expect from nursing. Resources can be downloaded at:

www.rcn.org.uk/principles

As a learning representative, you will be working across both these areas of the RCN. A great start to your new role is to get online and find your local learning representative from the UK committee and the forums that seem relevant to your area of practice.

www.rcn.org.uk/forums

You can find more information on the governance and the trade union role of the RCN and how it works in practice in The RCN representatives joint handbook and on the RCN website.

www.rcn.org.uk/activist
SECTION 3: FOCUSING ON YOUR ROLE

To help you focus on your role when you start out we have put together a number of questions in the form of a checklist. These are just a few of the issues and activities that you might have to deal with as a learning representative. You can use them to help you focus on your job as a learning representative, and adapt them to your needs and ideas for your workplace.

The basics

- Where do you discuss workplace learning opportunities?
- Does the RCN have a learning agreement with your employer?
- Does your employer consult you on learning issues?
- What learning is provided in your workplace?
- Do any groups of the nursing team miss out on learning opportunities?
- How do people decide on what learning opportunities to take up or ask for, and what do they get?
- Is there information, advice and guidance provided on learning opportunities such as personal development plans, appraisal systems and so on?
- Are the outcomes of learning recorded?
- How is learning funded in your workplace?
- Have you participated in learning at work?

If you have, was it:
- related to your job?
- linked to a qualification?
- helpful to you?
- run by the Learning and Skills Councils?
- an employee development scheme?
- run by Unionlearn?
- Investors in People (IiP)?

Your role

Do you:
- work with other RCN representatives?
- represent members’ learning needs with employers?
- identify members’ learning needs?
- develop awareness and knowledge of learning opportunities?
- gather, record and organise information?

Developing an understanding of RCN members’ learning needs

Do you:
- establish methods for identifying learning needs and evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of different methods?
- identify individual learning needs?
- produce a plan to identify learning needs in your workplace?
- identify learning options available, funding and so on?

A questionnaire is one way of identifying learning needs in the workplace. This can be used to gather information from members on their hours of work and work patterns, learning needs, their barriers to learning (eg childcare commitments, personal motivations to learn, shift patterns, lack of confidence, time), the subjects and activities they would like available as learning opportunities, and preferred modes for the delivery of learning.

Working with employers on learning

Do you:
- have an understanding of current workplace learning initiatives?
- identify options for working with your employer to meet the learning and skill needs of the nursing team at your workplace?
- prepare plans for taking up learning opportunities you identify?
- prepare plans to develop a learning agreement with your workplace?

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) provided some of the information for this checklist. It set up Unionlearn (www.unionlearn.org.uk) specifically to provide support for learning representatives. The website includes information on a range of learning and skills initiatives, negotiating learning agreements, learning and organising, and skills for life.
Publicise your successes

Promote your successes with learning projects or activities for members and non-members. You can do this using posters, notice boards, the RCN website and employer newsletters.

Case study – Karen

“Becoming an RCN learning representative has been challenging and rewarding at the same time. At first, I was unsure where to start. I began by identifying key people who might have influence over the learning and development agenda, and who may be able to help me.

“The big turning point came when the RCN Unionlearn team started the project to help ULRs (union learning representatives) develop a learning agreement in their organisations. The resources and support they provided helped me to get the agreement signed within six months, and all agreed it would be reviewed within six months. The learning agreement was signed over a year ago and very little happened. I was becoming disheartened, although we had managed to recruit three more ULRs (1 x RCN, 1 x Unison and a Chartered Society of Physiotherapy Learning Champion). This enabled us to provide support and representation for a wider range of staff. Collaborative working was the key.

“When the Learning for Life campaign was launched, this provided another opportunity to raise the profile of the union learning rep. We again used the resources from this to highlight the ULR role. In the last three months we have become involved in the learning section of the new Organisational Development Strategy, which is aiming to change the culture in the trust. We are working with the vocational trainers to facilitate RCN First Steps workshops with a view to perhaps using this as part of the trust induction. A new Learning and Development Group is being set up to look at all aspects of staff learning and development, and how to use work-based learning to its full potential. It has taken nearly two years for the learning agreement to start to make a difference, but it is the small things that we did that sowed the seeds, and we are now beginning to see the difference.”
SECTION 4: TIME OFF FOR UNION DUTIES

Your rights

The Employment Act 2002 introduced new statutory rights for union learning representatives that came into effect on 6 April 2003. The act gives rights to paid time off for learning representatives, provided they are in an independent union and in a workplace where their union is recognised by the employer for collective bargaining purposes.

The legislation states that a learning representative is entitled to reasonable time off if they are doing any of the following:

• promoting the value of learning and training
• arranging learning and training
• providing information and advice on learning and training
• analysing learning and training needs
• consulting on any of the above
• preparing any of the above
• training.

In Northern Ireland, the Employment (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 specifies the time off entitlement for union learning representatives which are much the same in the other three countries.

You will find a detailed list of examples of relevant trade union duties in the 2010 ACAS Code of Practice Time off for union duties and activities. You can find this on the ACAS website: www.acas.org.uk

This is similar to the Labour Relations Agency (LRA) publication Time off for union duties and activities for members in Northern Ireland. You can find this on the LRA website: www.lra.org.uk

To qualify for paid time off as a learning representative your RCN office has to give your employer notice that you have been appointed a learning representative. This is on the basis that you are already trained to carry out your duties either at the time of notification, or in normal situations within six months.

If you need to undergo training, then your RCN office has to notify your employer in writing that you will undertake appropriate training. Once the training is complete the RCN will again notify your employer in writing. The six-month qualifying period may be extended by the employer if there are unforeseen circumstances such as ill health or pregnancy.

Once your employer has been notified of your training or intention to train, they are obliged to recognise you as a learning representative and give you paid time off to carry out your duties and to undergo any further training.

The amount and frequency of the time off has to be reasonable in all circumstances. When you request time off you must give your employer: as much notice as possible; the purpose of the time off; the location, timing and duration; and the contents of any training course. This is because under the Employment Act 2002 employers consider each request for time off on its merits.

Union members that need to access their learning representative have the right to do this in work time, but the employer does not have to pay them during this time.

You may be able to negotiate and agree better arrangements at your workplace because the law and code of practice only gives minimum requirements for time off, not a maximum. Your RCN officer may also be able to assist you with letters and strategy to help with negotiating.

Learning representatives in the NHS: Agenda for Change and time off for union duties

In the 2014 NHS terms and conditions of service handbook (Agenda for Change) section 25 specifically addresses the issue of time off and facilities for staff representatives. These go beyond what is offered in ACAS or the LRA codes of practice to encourage participation in the process of partnership.


Specifically the handbook states:

NHS employers should allow reasonable paid facility time for recognised staff officials to carry out negotiations with the employer about matters for which the union is recognised and to undergo training relevant to these duties.

The duties and relevant training referred to in the handbook are much the same as those referred to in the ACAS/LRA materials. The full text can be accessed on the NHS Employers website: www.nhsemployers.org

Payment for time off

Trade union duties

Employers do permit paid time off for union duties, but there is no requirement that reps are paid for union activities such as branch meetings. You will find information about payment for time off for trade union duties and activities in The RCN representatives joint handbook.

Who can help you?

Your RCN regional officer will be able to offer you support and act on your behalf in getting time off to do your duties and to release members for activities. Your line manager will most likely have a big say in you getting time off. They will be able to make a judgement as to whether safe and productive levels of work can be managed in your absence. They are an important ally in getting time off.

Your human resources (HR) department should be aware of the law and support your position. If you are having difficulties with HR, it might be useful to arrange a meeting with the RCN regional officer and HR staff to sort out difficulties before they escalate further.

Employers must grant reasonable time off to representatives of recognised trade unions to carry out their duties. Clearly there is an element of discretion over what may be regarded as reasonable. If you are refused time off that you consider to be reasonable, put the case for time off in writing to the manager concerned. Refer to the law, ACAS or LRA codes of practice and local agreements, and set out why you believe time off should be granted. If time off is still refused, you should:

- ask the manager concerned to put the reasons in writing
- contact your RCN officer.

When a union feels that an employer is being unreasonable and refuses to grant paid time off for learning representative duties or training, or prevents union members to access union learning representative services, then the union can make a complaint to an employment tribunal.

A formal agreement between a union and employer on time off can avoid misunderstanding and ensure fair and reasonable treatment.

Partnerships and learning agreements: using collective bargaining

Collective bargaining is the arrangement that enables negotiation between employees (usually via their unions) and employers on particular employment issues. In the UK these issues include: pay; holidays; and sickness benefits. They do not include training and learning. Therefore, the provision of learning and training opportunities remains at the discretion of each individual employer. There is evidence that union negotiation over training brings benefits to employees and even greater returns to employers in terms of increased productivity. Further information on this can be found on the TUC Unionlearn website: www.unionlearn.org.uk

By engaging with employers at the negotiating table, unions can help establish learning partnerships that benefit employers and employees alike. The concept of partnership is based on working collaboratively and the development of trust. A learning agreement can provide a visible sign of management commitment to working in partnership with union learning representatives.

Negotiating a learning agreement helps embed learning in the workplace and secures employer commitment to supporting lifelong learning and skills. It formalises arrangements for union learning representatives and sets up joint employer/union learning committees to support their activities. A model learning agreement can be found in Appendix 3 of this handbook. Your RCN regional officer and/or learning and development facilitator should be able to help you negotiate a learning agreement.

If union recognition is in place, a learning agreement might include:

- setting up of a joint learning committee or steering group involving employees, union learning representatives, training and HR staff and departmental representatives where relevant
- undertaking learning needs surveys
- regular promotional activities regarding learning
- dissemination of information and learning opportunities
- how to get time off work for learning.

You may also use a learning agreement to formalise arrangements for:

- paid time off for union learning representative duties
- paid time off to attend union learning representative training
- facilities for union learning representatives to use.
Taking forward CPD and lifelong learning

Your role as a learning representative is to raise awareness and to help nursing staff take forward continuing professional development (CPD) and lifelong learning in their workplaces.

CPD and Prep (post-registration education and practice) are legal requirements that ensure nurses improve their practice and keep up-to-date. By doing this, they can raise standards of care for patients and clients, wherever they work. In your role as a learning representative you are ideally placed to help nursing staff with CPD. You can do this by promoting a range of initiatives, setting up CPD activity in the workplace and linking in with local RCN branches and offices.

NMC’s Prep requirements

Registered nurses have a legal duty to keep their professional practice updated to remain on the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) register.

The NMC sets the Prep practice and CPD requirements that nurses have to sign when they renew their registration. It demonstrates that they have fulfilled the Prep and CPD standard requirements. They also have to keep a personal professional profile (PPP) of their professional development.

To stay on the register nurses have to renew their registration every three years: periodic renewal. An annual fee must be paid to the NMC to remain on the register.

There are two separate Prep requirements that affect registration.

Prep (practice) standard

A registrant must have worked in some capacity as a qualified nurse, midwife or specialist community public health nurse during the previous three years for a minimum of 450 hours. Or, they must have undertaken a return-to-practice course successfully in the previous three years.

Prep (continuing professional development) standard

Registrants must have undertaken at least 35 hours of learning activity relevant to their practice during the three years prior to their registration renewal. They also have to maintain a personal professional profile of their learning activity, and comply with any request from the NMC to audit how they have met these requirements.

All registrants have been required to comply with this standard since April 1995, and since April 2000 they also have to declare on their Notification of Practice (NOP) form that they have met this requirement when they renew their registration.

The Prep (CDP) standard can be met in many different ways. It is important to remember that:

- there is no such thing as approved Prep (CDP) learning activity
- you do not need to collect points or certificates of attendance
- there is no approved format for the personal professional portfolio
- it must be relevant to the work you are doing and/or plan to do in the near future
- it must help you provide the highest possible standards of care for your patients and clients.

Prep has caused nurses considerable concern. Many think that it is their employers’ responsibility to provide resources for their Prep. Some have misunderstood ‘five days of study’ and think they have to attend five study days. However, neither attending an event nor gaining a certificate confirms that learning has taken place.

This is why your role is vital. You can help nurses with their Prep concerns. For example:

- act as a guide to local CPD resources
- act as a liaison between the RCN and the health care setting
- promote the use of RCN CPD initiatives for individuals and groups
- liaise with nursing managers to promote RCN CPD initiatives
- provide information about learning opportunities, signpost to external agencies such as career guidance, college courses and so on, and be aware of rights and entitlements to learning.

What is CPD?

CPD is not just about Prep. Nursing is a continuing cycle of learning and achievement, and CPD is about providing the best possible care for patients and clients. The RCN is committed to supporting CPD by providing opportunities for professional development wherever nursing staff live and work, and by expanding its range of services.

CPD is about supporting nurses to maintain and enhance their knowledge, expertise and competence throughout their career. It is an ongoing process and nursing staff must keep a record of their development. But, CPD is also the responsibility of each individual staff member. Registered nurses are personally accountable for their practice under the NMC 2008 Code of Professional Conduct. Although employers have a statutory duty to ensure the provision of training for employees, it is not their responsibility to maintain nurses’ professional competence.

Lifelong learning is key. It provides a range of learning and practice development opportunities for the nursing team working in both the NHS and the independent sector. For example, the RCN country and regional offices hold regular study days, events and conferences as part of the lifelong learning programmes.

All NMC publications are free, including The Prep handbook. To obtain copies you can ring the NMC on 020 7637 7181 or download them from the NMC website:

www.nmc-uk.org
Why is CPD necessary?

The NMC introduced Prep as part of its quality assurance system, to improve the standard of patient and client care. Growing knowledge and advances in science mean that nursing staff must keep pace with change. CPD is essential if their practice is to remain dynamic and responsive. Nursing staff need to increase their professional competence by embracing a new approach to learning and professional self-development. To maintain and enhance knowledge, skills and understanding, nursing staff need a plan formulated to their individual needs, and the needs of their employer, the nursing profession, patients and clients. Nursing staff themselves must identify any learning that has taken place, either by private or organised study, by self-reflection or reflection with a colleague. This does not include collecting certificates or letters of attendance. Keeping a PPP requires nursing staff to assess their competence by drawing up an action plan with information on development needed and how this will be achieved. To do this they will need to consider where they are today and what knowledge, skills and understanding they have. They then need to consider how they will maintain their competence, remain up-to-date with changes and continue to develop professionally.

Auditing Prep compliance

Since April 2001, the NMC has audited compliance with the Prep (CPD) standard. Each month up to 10 per cent of the registrants who are due to renew their registrations are selected for audit. The completed forms show how the learning activity that nurses have undertaken has helped to improve patient and client care. In 2014 the NMC announced it will conduct a formal consultation on re-validation.

Reflective practice

Reflective practice is a new concept for many nurses, even though they may have been doing it without realising it. It is the active process where a nurse reviews their own experience to take a closer look at it and to explore it in greater depth. Reflection is retrospective and requires a questioning approach, not taking things at face value, constantly evaluating and reviewing and thinking with a focus on always doing things better. CPD development is recorded through the process of reflection.

An example of reflective practice

A ward manager asked for some help with an HCA (health care assistant) who was not progressing on a course which should have been completed six months ago. The manager felt she had done all she could but could no longer help the HCA.

An RCN learning rep met with the HCA and spoke to her about the issue and the challenges she felt she faced. She felt let down by the staff; that they never had time for her and did not really understand her. The rep organised to work with her for a morning on the clinical skills she appeared to be struggling with. They worked well together and the HCA performed the clinical skills with no problem on a number of occasions.

When they reviewed this the HCA said she had felt intimidated when she was in front of her other colleagues. The rep was able to discuss this with the ward manager who had no idea about the HCA’s feelings.

On reflection, the rep could see that the manager and nursing colleagues had just not understood how this HCA needed to learn. When working with the HCA, he had found the key to unlocking her learning.

Private study

Private study is a flexible way to meet CPD needs. It allows nurses to set aims and to determine what and how they want to learn.

An example of how nurses can undertake private study

Your aim

You may decide that you need to refresh and develop your knowledge of resuscitation and basic life support your aim. You will need to refresh yourself about the steps to take on finding a collapsed person, the possible causes of unconsciousness and how to manage a person in respiratory or cardiac arrest.

Your learning outcomes

Once you have identified some aims and learning outcomes, you will need to plan how to achieve them. You may decide that you need to attend a first-aid refresher day organised by your employer, or undertake private study if your organisation does not hold study days. This may mean visiting a nursing library and carrying out a literature search. If you have not done this before, then ask the librarian for help. They are experienced in literature searching and many run courses that may help.

You may study an article in a professional journal or UK guidelines. Whichever method is right for you, the important thing is to reflect on and record what you have learnt from the experience and keep this in your personal professional profile, together with your aims and learning outcomes. This will allow you to show how you have kept up-to-date in this area. If you feel that you need to test your learning, you can arrange discussions with colleagues or present your findings from private study to a small group of colleagues and complete your reflections after the discussions.

Accessing lifelong learning resources

As a learning representative you may be called on to facilitate access to support or resources for members who need help with lifelong learning skills. For example:

- studying
- presentation skills
- information retrieval
- numeracy and literacy skills
- information communication technology (ICT) skills.

A range of resources are available such as online courses in computers and self-development to improve maths and English skills. Go to the Learndirect website: www.learndirect.com

Learning for Life campaign

In 2013 the Social Partnership Forum asked NHS Employers to work with the Department of Health, NHS Trade Unions, and Skills for Health to create a campaign promoting workplace learning. The Learn for Life campaign produced a set of aims to:

- increase awareness of workplace learning
- create an increase in the amount of learning undertaken
- boost the amount of support for the development of NHS staff.

The campaign will improve the perception of workplace learning and ultimately increase the positive impact of learning on patient care.

www.nhsemployers.org/Aboutus/latest-news/Pages/Learningforlife-NHSWorkplacenewscampaign
The Unionlearn website offers a wide range of information for learning representatives on skills for life:  
www.unionlearn.org.uk

The Directgov website provides information on adult learning, skills for life qualifications, and funding opportunities:  
www.direct.gov.uk

The BBC website also offers a range of useful resources. The section on learning includes guides to developing better skills in reading, writing, communication and information technology. It also includes information about how to use the internet. Access this from the BBC website:  
www.bbc.co.uk/learning

There is a range of RCN resources to support continued learning for RCN learning representatives at:  
www.rcn.org.uk/activistslearning

Promoting RCN CPD initiatives

The RCN is committed to supporting the CPD and Prep requirements of its members and is expanding its services all the time. As a learning representative you can help nursing staff by being aware of, and promoting CPD initiatives that are relevant to their area of practice. This section sets out some of the RCN tools to help nurses with their CPD.

RCN Learning Zone

The RCN Learning Zone is a unique and flexible online eLearning resource. It enables you to learn what you need, enhance your professional and personal effectiveness and so improve patient care. It allows members to build up their own electronic professional development portfolio. This facility is available to RCN members only and is accessed from the RCN website:  
www.rcn.org.uk/learningzone

The key areas include:

• an electronic portfolio to encouraging reflection on learning, capture evidence of achievements and build a CV

• learning opportunities on personal development, clinical skills, activist skills and skills for learning

• a searchable compilation of professionally relevant resources – books, journals, websites and all the RCN career and competency frameworks.

The package includes a mixture of media such as animation, graphics, and engaging interactive learning experiences.

The RCN Learning Zone recognises the pressure and challenges of working to provide modern-day health care and work/life balance. With this in mind, the learning is accessed by creating short, sharp, bite-sized chunks called learning opportunities. You can print any of the material on the site and take it away with you to read when computer access may not be available.

The RCN Learning Zone also provides learning opportunities for members to develop a range of skills such as information literacy and numeracy.

CPD articles

These appear in every issue of Nursing Standard and regularly in other specialist journals including:

• Emergency Nurse

• Elderly Care

• Paediatric Nursing

• Primary Health Care

• Mental Health Nursing.

The journals cover a variety of nursing topics such as skin care, neurology, mobility and pharmacology. They are accompanied by an assessment in which nurses can reflect on what they have learned and how it can be applied to practice.

RCN accreditation

Educational events and resources

The RCN began the accreditation process for quality-assuring CPD development for nurses in 1994, and the RCN Accreditation Unit became part of the RCN in 2001. The accreditation process provides rigorous assessment by subject specialists and educational reviewers to ensure that an event, course or piece of learning material is up-to-date, of best practice, and promotes excellence. A key purpose is to support nurses and the wider health family to be competent in practice, and to develop skills and competence further.

The unit offers accreditation on a UK-wide basis to external organisations that provide educational initiatives, which includes: conferences and short courses; facilitator packs; eLearning; further and higher education modules, and educational initiatives for health care support workers.

Accreditation entitles participants to a certificate of attendance, and provides a framework for reflection so that they can identify for themselves the learning that has taken place.

External organisations pay an accreditation fee.

To find out more, contact the RCN Accreditation Unit:

020 7647 3647
accreditation@rcn.org.uk
SECTION 6: HOW THE RCN SUPPORTS LEARNING REPS

Working with RCN officers
Feedback from current learning representatives suggests that the role is more successful when they work closely with RCN officers. So, it is important that learning representatives understand the role of officers, and importantly how they can receive support from them and access resources.

More information about working with RCN officers and the wide range of resources and support that the RCN offers learning reps can be found in the RCN Representatives joint handbook and on the RCN web site:

www.rcn.org.uk

RCN conferences, events and resources
Information about RCN accredited courses, conferences and events can be found on the RCN website. A variety of meetings and study days are also organised by RCN regional offices throughout the UK, many of which are free to members. Contact your regional office for further details and check the listings in RCN Bulletin every fortnight.

You can also contact RCN Events or RCN Direct:
RCN Events
020 7647 3577
rcn.events@rcn.org.uk

RCN Direct
0345 772 6100

Accessing RCN information and advice
RCN Direct
RCN Direct can offer information and advice about Prep, CPD and careers. You can also access the Advice A to Z online and view over 100 employment and health care topics.

For employment and clinical advice go to:

www.rcn.org.uk/adviceaz

You can also call on:
0345 772 6100 (UK)
00 44 20 7647 3456 (overseas)

Advice is available from 8.30am to 8.30pm, seven-days-a-week, 365-days-a-year.

RCN offices
Most RCN offices have an excellent stock of RCN leaflets and other materials that you can take away with you. Some offices also offer access to the BNI (British Nursing Index), online journals and other quick reference information services.

RCN careers advice service
The careers service provides confidential advice and guidance on writing application forms and CVs. To make an appointment with a careers adviser, contact the RCN member support services helpline on:
0345 408 4391
careerandwelfare@rcn.org.uk

RCN library and heritage service
The RCN library and heritage service is home to Europe’s most comprehensive nursing collection. You can find information about what resources are available at:

www.rcn.org.uk/library

The library and heritage services pages on the RCN website give you access to:
- over 1,000 e-journals
- over 1,500 e-books
- health care databases for literature searches that include: BNI and CINAHL (Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature); maternity and infant care; MEDLINE; The Cochrane Library; and others
- RCN Library Catalogue for details of books, reports and theses held by the RCN libraries. Many are available electronically
- RCN Archives Catalogue for details of records held in RCN Archives.

We provide postal loans for RCN members. There is normally a charge for the cost of postage, but for representatives this is waived. However, you will still be responsible for the cost of returning the books. We also provide a document photocopy and delivery service from our RCN libraries. We can also obtain books from other libraries if you cannot find what you are looking for.

If you are supporting members who require help using the library and heritage services resources you may wish to refer them to the following services.

Virtual enquiry service
RCN members and representatives can chat online with an information professional using our virtual enquiry service for any information queries including:
- sources of information
- search strategies and techniques
- evaluating information
- using library and heritage services
- accessing e-resources
- the availability of specific items.

You can also contact us by telephone, email or in person. Our contact details are provided below.

Guides to searching
Guides to searching are available on our website to read, download or print out that include step-by-step guides to:
- introduction to using the CINAHL database
- using the ejournals
- searching the British Nursing Index
- finding books reports and theses using the RCN library catalogue.

Learning and training sessions
The library services offer learning and training sessions online via webinars and face-to-face support, led by expert information professionals. Sessions include literature searching, how to use databases, how to use the library resources and how to find articles.
Online learning: how trustworthy is it?
The CPD online learning section of the website has a resource to guide you through some of the issues and activities involved in finding, using and managing information. It is designed to help you develop your skills in accessing the right information at the right time, applying it and evaluating it appropriately. It is relevant to nurses, midwives, students, and support workers in health and social care.

Visit an RCN library
We have four libraries around the UK:
- London
- Belfast
- Cardiff
- Edinburgh.

Each library has a dedicated team of expert staff available to assist you with all your information needs.

Whether you are looking for a quiet area to study on your own or an informal meeting place, we have the space, resources and technology to support your learning. Facilities include printing and photocopying services, free wifi, and access to PCs.

The new RCN Library and Heritage Centre in London also has the Nursing History Collection, and an exclusive members’ area. You will be able to explore the exhibitions, attend events and visit the cafe and shop.

RCN archives
The RCN’s vast archives include organisational records, personal papers of nurses and the records of other nursing organisations. The collections date back into the 19th century and form a unique record of the nursing profession. Research resources include photographs, oral history interviews with nurses, private papers donated by individual nurses and nursing badges. Visit RCN Scotland in Edinburgh or contact us with your research enquiry.

RCN archives is a founder and partner of UK Centre for the History of Nursing & Midwifery. The centre is based in Manchester and organises conferences, seminars and research projects. It has a comprehensive website:
www.ukchnm.org

For further information, email:
enquiries@ukchnm.org

LRD (Labour Research Department) publications online
RCN activists have free online access to a vital source of information. If you are trying to find about an employment law or a broad range of other key trade union issues Labour Research Department (LRD) publications online is the place to start. This service allows you to search a range of publications produced over the last 10 years by LRD, which is the leading research and information service for trade unionists.

LRD publications online is only available to RCN activists, and not to other RCN members. To access LRD publications online, go to the activist area on the RCN site. www.rcn.org.uk/support/activist

Information resources
As an RCN member, not only can you download all the RCN’s publications from the website (free of charge) but you also have access to the RCN library and heritage e-resources where you can view and use eBooks, over 1,000 full text journals and databases such as BNI. You can also search the catalogue and even renew books you have borrowed from the RCN library.

So, whether you are searching for news and events, or you are looking for information on a specific nursing-related subject, the website should be your first point of contact. The RCN website is constantly evolving, so keep checking in to find out about all the latest updates.

The Nursing Standard website can be found at the following link:
www.nursingstandard.co.uk

RCN website
The RCN website is a key resource for learning representatives. Recently redesigned to make information much easier to find, the website contains a wealth of useful information. It is now more personalised than ever, and all RCN members can use the website to update their membership details and contact other members.

www.rcn.org.uk

RCN activists
Find out all the latest activist news, read regularly updated messages from the UK Learning Representatives Committee and access stationery, LRD online, the activist member–check and all the latest legal updates on the activist area of the website. This is also where you will find the latest version of this handbook, which you can print whenever a new edition is published.

Most importantly, as an activist, you will automatically become a member of the activist community. Pop in and talk to learning representatives and other activists from across the organisation. Where better to get your questions answered?

www.rcn.org.uk/activist

Learning zone
Use the learning zone to help with your personal and professional development. With easy-to-use bite-size learning resources, you can brush up on your clinical and activist skills, or your skills for learning. There is also an electronic portfolio available that is great for keeping your CPD records up-to-date for the NMC’s Prep requirements. As a learning representative, this is a key area for you to show to other RCN members.

RCN communities
Communities are a fantastic new way of finding out online about what is going on in your specialty, and discussing the latest developments with other RCN members. You can register for one of the specialist discussion areas found across the RCN website and can also join in the general chat in the brand new discussion zone.

www.rcn.org.uk/dz
RCN contacts
Royal College of Nursing Library and Heritage Centre
20 Cavendish Square
London W1G 0RN
0345 337 3368
rcn.library@rcn.org.uk

RCN Northern Ireland Library and Information Zone
17 Windsor Avenue
Belfast BT9 6EE
028 9038 4612 / 4613
library.belfast@rcn.org.uk

RCN Scotland Learning Hub
42 South Oswald Road
Edinburgh EH9 2HH
0131 662 6163 / 6164
scotland.library@rcn.org.uk

RCN Wales Library and Information Service
Ty Maeth
King George V Drive East
Cardiff CF14 4XZ
029 2068 0734
wales.library@rcn.org.uk

RCN Archives
42 South Oswald Road
Edinburgh EH9 2HH
0345 337 3368
archives@rcn.org.uk

Virtual enquiry service:
www.rcn.org.uk/virtual_enquiry
SECTION 7: GOVERNMENT AND OTHER LIFELONG LEARNING AT WORK INITIATIVES

The Government has introduced a number of initiatives to support its commitment to lifelong learning such as Learn Direct:

www.learndirect.com

Learn Direct includes a comprehensive section on adult learning. It offers information and advice on a range of topics that include: choosing courses; types of learning; financial help for adult learners; and improving skills such as computers and IT, reading, writing and numeracy.

Sector Skills Councils

Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are independent, employer-led, UK-wide organisations. The SSCs and the UK Commission work in partnership across the four nations to increase employer investment in skills, and to drive enterprise and create jobs and sustainable economic growth. They share a belief that the sectoral approach is the most effective way to do this.

Their four key goals are to:
- reduce skills gaps and shortages
- improve productivity, business and public service performance
- increase opportunities to boost the skills and productivity of everyone in the sector’s workforce
- improve learning supply through apprenticeships, higher education and national occupational standards (NOS).

There are two skills councils for health care:
- Skills for Care
  www.skillsforcare.org.uk
- Skills for Health
  www.skillsforhealth.org.uk

Skills for Health covers the whole health sector, which includes the NHS, independent and voluntary sector employers.

There are also Sector Skills alliances, which are cluster of sector skills around an issue or sector. You can find information at:

www.ukces.org.uk/ourwork/sector-skills-councils

Apprenticeships in health

Apprenticeships are becoming increasingly popular as an effective route towards gaining specific vocational qualifications. They are not just for young people. Many established workers now undertake apprenticeship qualifications while carrying out their jobs at the workplace. The RCN and Unionlearn have put together a brief leaflet about supporting apprentices at the workplace.

Apprenticeships: A short guide for union safety representatives:

www.unionlearn.org.uk/campaigns/apprenticeships/for-reps/health-and-safety-apprentices@stash.Ckuv144.dpuf

www.apprenticeships.org.uk

Unionlearn

Unionlearn was established in 2006 by the Trades Union Congress (TUC) to provide an ongoing framework to support union-led learning in England. The union learning agenda is itself a dynamic way of developing trade unions, responding to the needs of trade unionists and constitutes an important element of the union offer to employers at the The Government’s Union Fund (ULF), set up in 1998, co-ordinates and supports trade unions such as the RCN in their bids for funding. The fund aims to build union capacity to sustain and embed work on learning and skills as a core activity. It does this by integrating union learning representatives into workplace union organisation, and by demonstrating clear links between the learning and organising agendas of unions.

The ULF is open to all unions to bid for funding for projects that encourage greater take-up of learning at work and that boost their capacity as learning organisations. Each country has its own Unionlearn and ULF arrangements. There are union learning funds for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. For information go to:

- England: www.gov.uk
- Northern Ireland: www.delni.gov.uk
- Scotland: Learn Direct Scotland www.learndirectscotland.com
- Wales National Assembly for Wales www.wales.gov.uk

The key goals for the ULF are to:
- build on capacity to sustain and embed work on learning and skills so that it becomes a core activity for all trade unions
- develop the key role of the union learning representatives (ULR) in raising demand for learning among low skilled workers and other disadvantaged groups
- help unions and ULRs develop a framework to provide high quality information and advice and guidance to stimulate the take up of learning and promote progression
- help unions form active partnerships with employers and develop learning agreements to tackle both organisational and individual skills needs
- help unions form active partnerships with learning providers
- develop union capacity to engage in effective partnerships working with other key partners and stakeholders.

A wide range of resources for trade union learning representatives can be found on the TUC Unionlearn website:

www.unionlearn.org.uk
Working abroad

Members considering working or undertaking and elective placement abroad can contact RCN international services. They can provide advice and the contact details of organisations such as:

- European Federation of Nurse Associations: www.efn.be
- International Council of Nurses: www.icn.ch
- Commonwealth Nurses Federation: www.commonwealthnurses.org

If you’re a nursing professional thinking of working overseas, we have a range of online advice guides to help you plan your move.

For information about volunteering and humanitarian work visit the RCN International Humanitarian Community at: www.rcn.org.uk/development/nursing_communities/special_interest_groups/international_humanitarian

Sponsorship and fundraising

The RCN takes a proactive approach to secure sponsorship for RCN activities. The fundraising unit acts as the focal point for the interface with the pharmaceutical and health care industries.

National sponsorship

The RCN has major projects that are appropriate for fundraising support. These include research funding, sponsorship of an advisory or research post, or an event or conference. Potential sponsors can be approached by the fundraising unit. There is also an increasing need to gain greater funding from trust funds and philanthropic donations, and work in this area continues to increase.

Local sponsorship

RCN offices need sponsorship money to support activities such as study days, board conferences and focus groups.

It is vital that there is a consistent approach to sponsors and sponsorship arrangements to ensure that the value of the RCN name and logo is not undermined. For this reason, there is a sponsorship process to help learning representatives, who should keep the fundraising unit informed about any proposed approaches to sponsors.

For assistance and advice on fundraising and sponsorship, telephone the fundraising team on 020 7647 3934.
SECTION 8: APPENDICES
APPENDIX 1: USEFUL CONTACTS

Department of Health (DH)
- Richmond House, 79 Whitehall
  London SW1A 2NS
  020 7210 3000
  www.gov.uk/dh

Health in Wales/ Public Health Wales
Health in Wales is the website of NHS Wales. It brings together information sources about health services and the health and wellbeing of the people of Wales.
- 14 Cathedral Road,
  Cardiff CF11 9LJ
  029 2022 7744
  www.wales.nhs.uk

National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay, Cardiff CF99 1NA
029 2089 8200
www.wales.gov.uk

NHS Education for Scotland
(Formerly the National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting for Scotland.)
- 22 Queen Street,
  Edinburgh EH2 1NT
  0131 226 7321
  www.nes.scot.nhs.uk

Northern Ireland Executive
- Department of Health, Social Sciences & Public Safety
  Castle Buildings, Stormont,
  Belfast BT4 3SJ
  028 9052 0500
  www.dhssni.gov.uk

Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council for Nursing and Midwifery (NIPEC)
(Formerly the National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting for Northern Ireland.)
- Centre House, 79 Chichester Street
  Belfast BT1 4JE
  028 9023 8152
  www.nipec.n-i.nhs.uk

Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC)
- 23 Portland Place,
  London W1N 3AF
  020 7637 7181
  www.nmc-uk.org

RCN Accreditation Unit
- RCN Accreditation Unit
  20 Cavendish Square
  London W1G 0RN
  020 7647 3647
  accreditation@rcn.org.uk

RCN Direct (RCND)
RCN Direct is the gateway to the RCN and provides comprehensive information and advice on a whole range of issues including:
- employment
- nursing
- membership
- journal subscriptions.
- www.rcn.org.uk/direct
- 0345 772 6100 if you are based in the UK.
- 00 44 20 7647 345 if you are based overseas.

Advice is available from 8.30am to 8.30pm, seven days a week, 365 days a year.
Membership calls from 8.30am to 8.30pm, Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays).
- For advice
  rcndadvice@rcn.org.uk
- For membership
  membership@rcn.org.uk
- The quickest way to update your personal details is to go to:
  www.rcn.org.uk/myrcn

RCN Publishing Company Ltd
- The Heights, 59-65 Lowlands Road
  Harrow-on-the-Hill
  Middlesex HA1 3AE
  020 8423 1066

Membership Support Services
The team offers help through counselling, career guidance, immigration advice, welfare rights and guidance, and advice for work injured nurses and disabled nurses.
- www.rcn.org.uk/mss
- 0345 408 4391

Scottish Executive
- Health Department
  St Andrew’s House
  Regent Road
  Edinburgh EH1 3DG
  0131 556 8400
  www.scotland.gov.uk
APPENDIX 2: USEFUL WEBSITES

**BBC Learning**
www.bbc.co.uk/learning

**British Council**
The British Council has a wide range of learning resources that can be accessed through their website.
esol.britishcouncil.org

**Campaign for Learning**
The Campaign for Learning is a national charity that promotes learning. It also provides a range of information and resources for representatives taking part in the annual learning at work day.
www.campaignforlearning.org.uk

**Directgov – Education and Learning**
Developed by the DfES and partner organisations to bring together information that will help adult learners make informed decisions about taking up learning.
www.direct.gov.uk/educationandlearning

**NIACE – The National Institute for Adult Learning**
This organisation aims to encourage all adults to engage in learning of all kinds.
www.niace.org.uk

**RCN**
www.rcn.org.uk

**RCN Learning Zone**
www.rcn.org.uk/learningzone

**TUC Unionlearn**
www.unionlearn.org.uk
APPENDIX 3: MODEL LEARNING AGREEMENT

Lifelong Learning Agreement

1. Introduction

1.1 INSERT NAME OF ORGANISATION and the recognised trade unions and staff side organisations (the Partners) acknowledge the benefits of lifelong learning and development for all its employees and all parties are committed to working in partnership to promote and support lifelong learning across the organisation and ensure equal access to learning opportunities. INSERT NEXT LINE IF APPLICABLE

The organisation has signed the Skills Pledge and part of this is to support staff to gain a Level 2 qualification in Literacy and Numeracy.

2. Purpose

2.1 This Learning Agreement provides a framework for partnership working between the Partners on all matters relating to lifelong learning and training and development including the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF).

2.2 The Agreement outlines the crucial role played by Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) in promoting and supporting aspirations for learning across the INSERT NAME OF ORGANISATION. ULRs are recognised as active partners in ensuring effective outreach to employees.

3. Union Learning Representative (ULR) role

3.1 The Partners acknowledge and support the role of ULRs and in particular their contribution to employee engagement, including:

• raising awareness of lifelong learning issues in the workplace, especially with non-traditional learners to identify potential skills and talent for the business
• helping to identify members’ needs and to work with INSERT NAME OF ORGANISATION to prioritise and support members and colleagues with their specific learning needs including Skills for Life, literacy and numeracy, basic IT skills and ESOL
• liaising with members and colleagues to identify occupational skills needs and gaps in provision or specific interests
• encouraging members and colleagues to access and participate in lifelong learning and the INSERT NAME OF ORGANISATION offer to support business needs
• motivating members and colleagues to reach their potential
• supporting a whole organisation approach to learning - a ‘learning culture’
• helping to identify and apply for sources of funding to support lifelong learning including working with external partners

• addressing improvement in patient care and delivery of services including reduction of avoidable errors by helping to identify appropriate tailored training
• assisting, supporting and mentoring members and colleagues to address and cope with change.

4. Scope

4.1 This Agreement covers all employees of the organisation and will not be used as an alternative to collective bargaining with Staff Side. The Partners agree that individual issues arising from any educational or learning initiative, not obviously resolvable, shall be subject to the existing INSERT NAME OF ORGANISATION policies and procedures. This Agreement reflects the strength of commitment of the Partners and as such is protected from any grievances between the parties that may arise outside its scope, thus ensuring the work towards a whole organisation culture of learning is not jeopardised.

5. Lifelong learning and professional development

5.1 A definition

The purpose of lifelong learning is to continue to build skills and knowledge through experiences encountered in the course of a lifetime of an individual. It can be through formal involvement such as training, counselling, tutoring, mentorship, apprenticeship and higher education, and informal through the learner’s own experiences or situations. It is lifelong, voluntary and self-motivated for either personal or professional reasons and enhances social inclusion, active citizenship, personal development and employability. Lifelong learning places the needs of the learner at the centre of the provision paying particular regard to varying learning styles and levels for adult learners.

5.2 This Agreement refers to the growth and development of Lifelong Learning opportunities within the organisation and the needs of employee. These needs may or may not be a requirement of their job role, but a requirement for their own personal development. Learning needs which are job related will be in the first instance addressed with a line manager.

5.3 The partnership recognises the pivotal role ULRs have in developing a culture of learning within the workplace and the number of activities which ULRs can carry out that underpin the development of lifelong learning opportunities.
The attached Annual Action Plan can detail agreed activities of the learning partnership and the following list gives examples of these activities, and is not exhaustive:

- provide support, information and guidance to all staff (members and non-union members) in relation to learning opportunities which is based on peer support
- assist, support and mentor members and colleagues to build their confidence to take up opportunities to use their transferable skills to support business and personal development needs
- support and organise learning events
- carry out learning surveys, collate and report on learning needs analysis
- provide pre and post support for staff appraisal and reviews.
- provide support and guidance on learning issues in relation to competences to do the job
- liaise with, negotiate and agree provisions with local training providers
- introduce union learning resources in to the workplace for broader use
- dissemination of information about learning opportunities and initiatives via union and organisational communication systems
- mentoring and induction support for staff including apprentices
- access to funding opportunities via union learning initiatives
- provide specific knowledge via on-going union training on for example: dyslexia, skills for life, e-learning support and other learning progression barriers
- access to a range of learning resources and tools via unions' lifelong learning, education departments and institutes and those of their partners, for example the Open University.

6. Roles and responsibilities

6.1 EMPLOYER

The employer will ensure that all staff are made aware of and enabled to benefit from and comply with this Agreement.

The employer will ensure that staff with supervisory or line management roles carry out their responsibility to promote access to and effectively disseminate information about learning opportunities and are made aware of the important role ULRs play in supporting a whole organisation approach to learning and the value of their contribution to business needs. Further, that these staff are equipped to actively support and enable ULRs to carry out their duties in line with this Agreement and ACAS guidelines and the current facilities/ recognition agreement. INSERT ANY PREVIOUSLY AGREED TIME OFF SECURED THROUGH A FACTILES AGREEMENT OR JUST REFER TO ‘REASONABLE TIME OFF’

6.2 TRADE UNION and STAFF SIDE

Trade unions and staff side organisations are responsible for identifying, recruitment/election and training of ULRs and their ongoing continuing professional development and support. The appropriate officer will inform INSERT NAME OF ORGANISATION Head of Workforce Development of the names of appointed/elected ULRs, confirming that appropriate training has taken place to enable them to carry out their duties effectively in line with ACAS guidelines and the Employment Act 2002.

The staff side organisations and trade unions may wish to appoint a lead ULR or co-ordinator according to their branch rules. The joint staff side organisations and trade unions may agree to appoint an overall lead ULR to liaise with INSERT NAME OF ORGANISATION on their behalf. They will use their communications networks to effectively disseminate information to support a whole organisation learning culture.

6.3 JOINT

6.4 The Joint role of the partners will be to encourage a ‘culture of learning’ within the organisation. The established Workforce Planning and Development Steering Group (WPDSG) or INSERT THE NAME OF YOUR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT GROUP will be the mechanism for joint responsibility for determining, introducing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating lifelong learning initiatives. WPDSG will produce a joint Annual Action Plan; setting goals and targets for the learning provision within the workplace for the forthcoming 12 month period.

6.5 The Partners, according to the agreed terms and references of the WPDSG will ensure that all sectors of the workplace are represented equally on the group with an equal balance of management and staff-side membership, comprising ULRs, workforce development operations manager, professional/workforce development staff and other learning partners when required. Members of the WPDSG will be provided with all relevant information concerning the learning provision and their duties/responsibilities as members of the committee. Minutes of the WPDSG will be shared with relevant stakeholders in order to highlight the partnership work of the WPDSG to help ensure wider engagement toward the organisations’ ‘learning culture’.

7. Summary of agreement

By signing this Agreement we agree to:

Commitment to lifelong learning to work in partnership to address joint aspirations around learning provision and maximise learning opportunities for LCHS staff agreeing to the principles and aims outlined in this Agreement.

Commitment to the role of and value of the ULR to INSERT NAME OF ORGANISATION and support for reasonable time off to carry out their duties.

Commitment to equality and human rights through positive policies to promote equal opportunities in line with INSERT NAME OF ORGANISATION Equalities of Opportunity Policy, Harassment and Bullying Policy and ensuring that all opportunities for lifelong learning are brought to the attention of all employees and that they are actively encouraged to fully participate in learning initiatives.
Commitment to confidentiality in line with INSERT NAME OF ORGANISATION Confidentiality Policy. Further, any learning needs analysis is undertaken with the full co-operation of all partners and that any such analysis will be used solely for learning and educational purposes. The analysis will not be used in relation to other issues such as pay, performance appraisal, redundancy and disciplinary procedures. Where information is gathered in confidence both sides accept that personal information will not be passed on eg where a learning needs analysis conducted by a ULR has highlighted a skills for life need which the individual does not want the employer to know.

Commitment to integrity of the spirit of partnership of this Learning Agreement and the work of the WPDSG and the individual and joint roles and responsibilities of both the employer and the trade union to undertake to ensure that is not used as an alternative to collective bargaining with Staff Side and existing negotiation procedures and arrangements other than those specified in this agreement will be maintained. Every endeavour will be made to insulate the learning partnership in a situation of industrial dispute. The Partners agree that all individual grievances arising from any educational or learning initiative shall be subject to the existing INSERT NAME OF ORGANISATION Grievance Procedure.

The Workforce Planning Development Steering Group will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the Agreement, carrying out a review 12 months from the date of implementation.

Signed: ............................................................ Date: ............................................................
Director of Human Resources

Signed: ............................................................ Date: ............................................................
Staff Side Chair

Trade Unions represented by staff side at the date signing were:

UNISON, RCN, RCM, Unite ..........................................................
## SAMPLE Business Unit Joint Learning Action Plan

**LCHS Lead ______________________**

**Dec 2014 – Dec 2015**

### When

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<th>Leads</th>
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<td>1. Sign Learning Agreement</td>
<td>December 2014</td>
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<td>2. Reconvene WPDSG</td>
<td>January 2015</td>
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<td>3. ULR Audit</td>
<td>January – March 2015</td>
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<td>5. Joint events calendar</td>
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<td>learning*</td>
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<td>– plan interventions</td>
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<td>– identify teams/division</td>
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<td>– identify groups**</td>
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<td>– link closely with LCHS</td>
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<td>access to resources***</td>
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* Specific work on barriers to learning will address e-learning, skills for life, confidence

** Groups could include new staff, including apprentices, HCAs, Women, BME, manual staff

***Access to trade union and staff side organisation’s resources will support the work. These are typically used to tackle barriers by tailoring resources and courses, for example, BME staff into management, HCA CPD days and dyslexia support. In addition, resources to address skills gaps, eg drug calculations (RCN) and report writing (UNISON). Discounts with the OU, WEA and other partnership arrangements can support delivery of courses.

**NOTE:** The AAP might become very specific, according to what is required, for example, a focus on HCAs or apprentices or particular areas.

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