**Lawrence Hunter – Education Officer Report 2020/21**

In a year where we have all lived in the shadow of COVID 19 we have experienced unprecedented challenges in providing education for our activists. To help resolve matters, as the current Chair of the Scottish Learning and Organising Committee, I have worked diligently with the Learning and Organising Team to establish an alternative to traditional face to face education. Throughout 2020 I have chaired weekly meetings to discuss how to resolve our challenges and to identify new methods of training.

**UNISON Scotland Safety Campaign**

UNISON representatives and branches in Scotland have done unprecedented work in a short and intense period around ensuring the health and safety of our members.  To support the demands made on our health and safety network, our Learning and Organising Committee support has focused on building capacity in branches, bringing more members into the health and safety team locally.

Webinar materials were developed for 2 courses in **Covid - a Safe Return to Work** & **Workplace Inspections**, we have provided 79 trained tutors, 55 branch-based courses have been delivered and over 350 members have participated in a course. I tutored on the local presentation to members which provided a useful insight to the local situation and allowed for me to assist new steward to tackle local challenges.

The Learning and Organising team undertook a survey of the previous course participants to get clearer information on the support they need to progress, getting more involved in branches, become reps or more active as members.  Over 300 reps who took part in our first course have been written to and sent a copy of UNISON Scotland ‘Be on the Safe Side The organising approach to safe work after lockdown - Information Pack & Safety Checklist’.

In relation to new reps requiring further training and support to become fully active, the Learning and Organising team will be providing the Health and Safety course online from January 2021 and will continue to offer the course hosted by Fife TUC education course alongside our own provision.

**UNISON Scotland Activist Education Programme –**

During the pandemic an immediate decision was made by UNISON UK that all courses would be cancelled including activist education courses. UNISON Scotland were able to offer limited access to TUC courses, initially just the Organising Stewards course then in August were able to provide an online facilitated Health and Safety course.

UNISON Scotland Learning and Organising Committee met on 30 October and agreed the following:

1. From 2021 UNISON Scotland will offer the following courses online:
- Organising Stewards
- Health and Safety
- ERA Refresher
2. These courses will be tutored by a team of UNISON Scotland Lay & Staff tutors, with a staff member being present at each course to ensure technical support.

These courses have now been announced and I am about to embark on tutoring on the first of these online courses for new stewards. The demand for attendance on the courses has been exceptionally high and may even require us to set up more dates in 2021.

Should you be interested attending any of these sessions or require advice on UNISON education, please do not hesitate to contact me at lhunter@clacks.gov.uk

Access will continue to online TUC provision, using UNISON materials, please complete the Fife College application form and return to Activist Education team on activisteducationscotland@unison.co.uk.

**Update on Branch Officers Training**

**Online course materials**

LAOS have been converting some branch officers training materials to online course materials which we can now access. UNISON Scotland intend to make these courses available online in the 2021, these are:

1. Branch Secretary (intro to the role),
2. Branch Chair,
3. Branch Education Officer,
4. Branch Equality Officer,
5. Branch Health and Safety Officer.

**Other Branch Officer courses**

Training for new Treasurers and the OLBA online training as well has been arranged through our UK Finance department

UNISON Learning and Organising Service are looking to have the Branch Welfare Officer course ready for January.

UNISON Learning and Organising Service are also of the view the Branch Equality Officer training can accommodate the Branch SOG Roles as well.

**Digital Organising**

UNISON Scotland is developing plan for digital organising - using materials & tools to create a Digital Organising Pathway.  We are keen to develop activist’s education courses to assist branches and in the context of specific campaigns with implementing that locally.  Our Committee has agreed to developing a three-tier training option for branch activists to ensure they can fully participate in the strategy.  We aim to understand the digital strategies and building organising strategies around them, in local branches and across sector.

**Digital accessibility**

Currently we have no consistent approach to ensuring access to our members who do not have access to online equipment or Wi-Fi.  That particularly effects those on low incomes.  The Learning and Organising committee is seeking a wider discussion in UNISON Scotland on how that gap is filled.  To ensure that our courses are accessible to all members equally.  This should also ensure Covid safety regulations when equipment is transferred from one person to another. I have already raised this matter with the local branch and we are looking into solutions which help more members/stewards participate in training. I would welcome comment from anyone on suggestions as to how we tackle this situation locally.

**Members Learning Update**

Member Learning has made an excellent transition to online tutored courses which we have managed to fund through our Scottish Union Learning Projects and demand outstrips supply on all our courses.

Courses have been developed with our Training Providers to deliver a range of courses including Trauma/PTSD, Grief/Bereavement, Assertiveness, Challenging Racism and Menopause Awareness. Dates for 2021 sessions are to be announced in the next month or so.

**The Future**

I look forward to continuing my work as the local branch Education officer to help ensure local members and activists receive adequate training to help them develop and to ensure that we as a branch are strong and supportive in a time when we are experiencing the major impact of COVID 19, BREXIT and uncertain political times.

Keep Learning and Keep Active

Lawrence Hunter