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Union Learning Fund Project Steering Committee (England)

RCN Regional Boards (England)

RCN UK Learning Representatives Committee

RCN Membership and Representation Committee.









Learning agreements benefit the individual, the employer and the RCN by ensuring that learning is protected, promoted and available to all.

**Learning agreements**

In the last few years, many workers in the health care sector have seen huge cutbacks in learning provision within the workplace – in some places mandatory training is all that is on offer. All members, whether post-graduate or first-time returners to learning, benefit from the opportunity to

- **Evidence base** – there is evidence across industries that members who get involved in learning through their union are far more likely to engage further. Learning can create a pathway to becoming more active in the workplace and at branch level.
- **Retention** – learning agreements can highlight the positive and proactive work that we undertake as a union. By protecting learning, especially in times of economic uncertainty and organisational change, we can remain a positive presence in members' working lives.
- **Delivery** – as a royal college and trade union, the RCN has always delivered high-quality learning that provides relevant and exciting opportunities for nurses and HCAs. A learning agreement recognises and celebrates this.
- **Impact** – by developing a partnership learning agreement, the RCN will have a voice on a learning committee which directly influences decisions about learning and development, at a strategic level.







Each workplace is different, so the following list is a guide. If you don't have a joint union process or if there is only RCN recognition – or even no union recognition – in your workplace then parts of this process may be omitted.

If you keep in mind that your aim is to get a learning agreement in place by convincing the employer that such an arrangement is not just a good idea, but is vital for effective employee engagement and addressing skills gaps, then the process can be straightforward. To achieve this you will need to



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By working jointly with the other unions in your workplace, you can present a very powerful package of support.

## **T** **t at** **ta** **rt** **r** **!**

Basically at this stage, if the employer is interested it's just the detail that needs to be agreed. If they are not interested, then your next stage is exemplification; in other words, you give examples of other organisations similar to your employers who have learning agreements, and highlight the valuable impact/outcomes. Offer to put them in touch with their counterparts in these other organisations/businesses or to provide them with some written evidence of similar examples.

Don't forget the RCN can support you at any stage in this process. Contact your regional officer for support in evidencing other organisations' learning agreements or email [learning.agreements@rcn.org.uk](mailto:learning.agreements@rcn.org.uk) for support.

Remember, most employers are open to this kind of agreement. It raises their profile and demonstrates good partnership working, enables them to improve their employee engagement percentages and helps meet some of their other business needs. See the the benefits of learning agreements leaflets (004 252 and 004 237) to remind you of why many employers value such arrangements, especially in times of changes and huge efficiency drives.

Learning agreements exist in both the public and private sector of a wide range of industries and businesses. For the independent health care sector these kind of agreements can be a useful way of formalising the RCN offer of learning resource and help move toward (if already not already in place) recognition for ULRs.

While the development process can be different than in the NHS, you can use the template as a basis; talk to the RCN about what resources are available and arrange to meet with your head of education and/or HR to start the ball rolling. There is a specific leaflet for your employer called Learning agreements: the benefits for independent health care sector employers (004 252). You will find this useful when presenting your case.

Remember, the RCN can support you at any stage; this includes meeting with you and your employer. Just email [learning.agreements@rcn.org.uk](mailto:learning.agreements@rcn.org.uk), if you want support.

If you achieve a signed learning agreement, then you should mark the occasion.

1. Celebrate. Have an event to raise your profile and the awareness of the agreement. Invite staff and members, and send out a press release to local papers and the RCN communications team. Take photos of the signing and send these to us at [learning.agreements@rcn.org.uk](mailto:learning.agreements@rcn.org.uk); we will want to publicise your good work and you may see yourself in the next Activate magazine.
2. Send an electronic copy of your agreement to [learning.agreements@rcn.org.uk](mailto:learning.agreements@rcn.org.uk), listing any other unions who are signatories on the agreement. The RCN will place this information on file.



The following section has been developed from a range of questions that our learning agreement teams get asked on a regular basis. We hope it will feel like you have them with you to help you overcome any challenges or barriers as you negotiate your agreement and make it work for members and your employer.

1	What is the purpose of a learning agreement?
2	Is the learning agreement part of the recognition/facilities agreement or is it separate?
3	Who should be involved in negotiating and agreeing the terms of the learning agreement?
4	What are the key features of a strong learning agreement?
5	H-7(h)dpT0arning agreement?kTd(ph)11(e5 0 scn/g aT Td3SQq 1)9(a)12(r)T1_1 1 4-1.93 4w

The purpose of a learning agreement is to increase trade union influence on learning within the workplace. For many workers, particularly in the health care sector, training and learning has been cut back recently, and in many cases the only offer from the employer is mandatory training. However, it is vital for the personal and professional development of all workers that they continue to gain access to a full range of learning opportunities that enable them to progress and develop. A learning representative is a trained representative who understands the link between access to lifelong learning and job satisfaction. The learning agreement secures the role of the learning representative and our members' continued learning and development in the workplace.

No, the learning agreement is a separate single issue arrangement. However, it can influence the collective bargaining for skills. For example, if by having an active workplace learning agreement we can demonstrate improvements in workers' attainment levels and performance, then we have robust data to use for successfully bargaining for skills.

In times of cutbacks and wage freezes, collective bargaining for skills offers tangible benefits for all workers; for example, paid time off for learning, access to higher levels of learning and promotion from within strategies. So, a learning agreement can be the starting point for bargaining for skills and therefore have an impact on facilities agreements.

The agreed facilities for ULRs should be referred to in the learning agreement. If you have facilities

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There is no discrete budget or funds. However, the RCN has a whole raft of CPD and learning opportunities available to members via the RCN Learning Zone. Often these resources can be made available to employers via a learning agreement.

Listed below are some of the learning resources available to you as a RCN member to which you can negotiate extended access for your employer via a learning agreement. Some are free and some can be accessed at a reduced cost for members or more widely if part of a learning agreement.

- **Learning Zone** - [www.rcn.org.uk/development/learning/learningzone](http://www.rcn.org.uk/development/learning/learningzone)
- **Nurse Practice** - [www.rcn.org.uk/development/practice](http://www.rcn.org.uk/development/practice)
- **ELibrary** - [www.rcn.org.uk/development/library/elibrary](http://www.rcn.org.uk/development/library/elibrary)
- **RCN Career Start** – established and bespoke programmes commissioned by health sector employers - [www.rcn.org.uk/development/rcn\\_leadership\\_programmes](http://www.rcn.org.uk/development/rcn_leadership_programmes)
- **Continuing Professional Leadership** <http://www.rcn.org.uk/development/practice/leadership>
- **Leading Quality Care Programme** [www.rcn.org.uk/aboutus/rcn\\_consultancy\\_service/leading\\_for\\_quality\\_care](http://www.rcn.org.uk/aboutus/rcn_consultancy_service/leading_for_quality_care)
- **RCN ELibrary** (including library services in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland) - [www.rcn.org.uk/development/library](http://www.rcn.org.uk/development/library)
- **RCN Career Events** - support the development of members' career and practice - [www.rcn.org.uk/newsevents/events](http://www.rcn.org.uk/newsevents/events) events are held across the regions and branches in England and the three Celtic countries – Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland
- **RCN Publications** - electronic versions are free to download from the RCN website - [www.rcn.org.uk/publications](http://www.rcn.org.uk/publications) and hard copies can be ordered but will entail a small charge
- **Forums** - RCN forums - [www.rcn.org.uk/forums](http://www.rcn.org.uk/forums)
- **Communities** - [www.rcn.org.uk/development/communities](http://www.rcn.org.uk/development/communities)
- **RCN Student** - [www.rcn.org.uk/development/students](http://www.rcn.org.uk/development/students)
- **Newly Qualified Nurses** - [www.rcn.org.uk/development/newly\\_qualified\\_nurses](http://www.rcn.org.uk/development/newly_qualified_nurses)
- **Health Care Support Workers** - [www.rcn.org.uk/development/health\\_care\\_support\\_workers](http://www.rcn.org.uk/development/health_care_support_workers)
- **Nurse Leaders** - [www.rcn.org.uk/development/nurse\\_leaders](http://www.rcn.org.uk/development/nurse_leaders)
- **Research and Development** - [www.rcn.org.uk/development/researchanddevelopment](http://www.rcn.org.uk/development/researchanddevelopment)

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## Learning agreement with NHS

### 1. Introduction

1.1 **Lindon Community Health Services NHS Trust, (LCHS)** and the recognised trade unions and staff side organisations, the partners<sup>1</sup>, 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. 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 The purpose of this agreement is to support staff to gain a Level 2 qualification in Literacy and Numeracy.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]



**7. Start Agreement**

By signing this Agreement we agree to a:

- **Commitment** 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 **ULR** to LCHS with reasonable, supported time off to undertake their training and carry out their duties.
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Sa a t a : b t* t a r O r a at ' L a _____ D 2011 D 2012		
	W	L a
1. Sign Learning Agreement	December 2011	Partners
2. Form a learning committee	January 2012	Organisation's Lead
3. ULR Audit - count, map ULRs - brief on learning agreement - recruit and train, where gaps - network into workplace, County and Regional groups.	January – March 2012	Lorraine M (LM) and Irene M (IM)
4. Communications strategy - internal to managers - internal to sta - external to stakeholders.	March 2012	Work Planning and Development Steering Group
5. Joint events calendar - map and plan for national learning event days, eg Adult Learners' Week, awareness days/months - publish calendar and promote alongside LCHS learning o er - seek appropriate funding.	January 2012 – (with existing e(L.B.))	NVQ Centre manager

