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Widespread benefits of union training

More than three-quarters of employers say union-led training programmes have a positive effect in their workplaces, according to an independent review.

The independent evaluation of union-led training and learning — by academics at Leeds University Business School and the University of Exeter — found that both employers and staff gained from union involvement in training at work.

The review also found for employers that:
- over two-thirds (68%) said unions were particularly effective at inspiring reluctant learners to engage in training and development;
- almost half (47%) said their staff were more committed as a result of unions facilitating training and development opportunities; and
- a third said organisational performance increased as a result of union learning.

For workers:
- four in five (80%) employees said they had developed skills that they could transfer to a new job;
- three in five (62%) said new skills they acquired made them more effective in their current job;
- one in five (19%) said they had gained a promotion or increased responsibility and one in 10 (11%) gained a pay rise.

The training also led to more union engagement for employees. Nearly half (46%) of non-union members that took up the union offer of training and development later joined a union.

There are economic benefits to be gained from the training. The review found that for every £1 invested in the union learning fund (ULF) — which supports union-led learning and training — there is a return of £12.30, with £7.60 of this going to the worker taking part in the training, and £4.70 going to the employer. This leads to an estimated net contribution to the economy of £1,452 million and the estimated return to the Exchequer is £3.57 for each £1 spent.

Liz Rees, director of the TUC's education arm unionlearn said the report shows the clear value of union-led training and learning at work, for employers as well as the workforce.

"Bosses see staff engagement, commitment and productivity rise as a result of unions making a major contribution to training and development in the workplace," she said.

"Trade unions are the best way to get ahead at work. Thanks to the Union Learning Fund and the TUC's unionlearn, we support more than 200,000 employees through learning and training at work every year. This is made possible by union learning reps who — day in and out — encourage colleagues to enrol."

www.tuc.org.uk/union-issues/more-3-4-employers-say-unions-make-difference-training-review-finds

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Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2016

Full-time average weekly earnings increased in real terms, while the gender pay gap closed by a small margin in April 2016, official figures show.

The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) reveals that in April 2016, median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees were £539, a 2.2% increase on the year before. The 2.2% growth seen this year is the joint highest growth in earnings since the economic downturn in 2008, matching the growth seen in 2013.

As inflation under the Retail Prices Index rose by 1.3% in the year to April 2016, weekly earnings were 0.9 percentage point higher in real terms than 2015.

Women's full-time weekly earnings outstripped males with a 2.9% rise against a 1.9% for men.

However, there was reversal where part-time workers were concerned, with male earnings up by 7.7% against a 6.0% increase for women's.

Median gross weekly earnings — April 2016 [1]

£ per week	Full-time	Part-time	All
Men	£577.80	£167.40	£530.80
Women	£480.50	£181.40	£349.10
All	£538.70	£177.40	£438.60
% increase 2015-16			
Men	1.9%	7.7%	2.6%
Women	2.9%	6.0%	3.6%
All	2.2%	6.6%	3.2%

[1] Employees on adult rate, pay unaffected by absence

Gender pay gap The gender pay gap, based on median hourly earnings excluding overtime, has narrowed for full-time employees to 9.4% from 9.6% in both 2015 and 2014. This is the lowest figure since the survey began in 1997, but the gap has changed little in the last four years. The 2015 survey said the gap had narrowed to 9.4% last year, but the rise has now been revised upwards to 9.6%.

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady said: "The full-time gender pay gap is closing at a snail's pace. At this rate, it will take decades for women to get paid the same as men.

"We need a labour market that works better for women. This means helping mums get back into well-paid jobs after they have kids. And encouraging dads to take on more caring responsibilities.

"The government should also scrap tribunal fees, which stop women getting justice from bad employers who have discriminated against them."

Jemima Olchawski, head of policy and insight at the gender equality and women's right group the Fawcett Society, said "progress in recent years has been far too slow" and called for a step change.

"That means creating more quality part time work, encouraging men to play a greater role in paid and unpaid care work and ensuring employers with a gender pay gap have an action plan to address it."

On 10 November, Fawcett will be marking Equal Pay Day, the date when women effectively stop earning for the year as a result of the gender pay gap.

The gender pay gap for all employees (full-time and part-time) was cut to 18.1% in April from 19.3% the year before.

For part-time employees, the higher rate of pay for women than men results in a "negative" gender pay gap of 6.0% in April 2016 against 6.6% in 2014. However, the gap narrowed as a result of male part-time earnings growing faster than women's.

In terms of age groups, the gap in hourly earnings, excluding overtime, for full-time workers, increased in favour of men over the years until late in working life when it narrowed slightly.

For 22-29 year-olds the gap was less than 1%. The gap widened to 1.6% in the 30-39 age bracket, then to 13.4% for 40-49-year-olds and the out to16.2% for 50-59-year-olds. It then narrowed to 14.0% for those aged 60 and over.

Distribution of earnings The monetary gap between the top 10% of men and women and the bottom 10% in April 2016 was at least £748.00 a week – based on the distribution of gross median weekly earnings for full-time employees on adult rates.

For full-time adults, the top 10% had weekly earnings of at least £1,057.70 or 196% of the £538.70 median, while for the bottom 10% on less than £308.90 it was 57% of the median.

The weekly earnings figure of at least £1,160.30 for the top 10% of men was 201% of their median figure of £577.80, while for the bottom 10% on £328.90 or less it was 57% of the median.

The top 10% of women had earnings of over £900.90 or 187% of the median figure of £480.50, while for the bottom 10% on less than £289.80 it was 60% of the median.

Distribution of full-time gross weekly earnings [1]

Men	
10% earned less than	£328.90
50% earned less than	£577.80
10% earned more than	£1,160.30
Women	
10% earned less than	£289.80
50% earned less than	£480.50
10% earned more than	£900.90
Men and women	
10% earned less than	£308.90
50% earned less than	£538.70
10% earned more than	£1,057.70

[1] Employees on adult rate, pay unaffected by absence

Longer view Geoff Tily, senior economist at the TUC, has crunched the ASHE figures for a longer period and on the Touchstone blog has detailed the real decrease in weekly wages for full-time workers across the UK's countries since the 2008 economic crisis.

These show that, overall, the UK weekly wage in 2016 has declined in real terms by 6.2% since 2008; for England the decline was 6.3%, Scotland 3.8%, Wales 2.4% and Northern Ireland 1.9%.

The worst performing region was the East Midlands with a 9.6% decline in real terms since 2008.

https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/annualsurveyofhoursandearnings/2016provisionalresults

www.tuc.org.uk/economic-issues/equality-issues/gender-pay-gap-closing-%E2%80%9C-snail%E2%80%99s-pace%E2%80%9D-warns-tuc

www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/2016/10/new-ons-figures-reveal-mean-gender-pay-gap-slow-close/

http://touchstoneblog.org.uk/2016/10/real-wages-are-still-down-everywhere-and-by-nearly-10-per-cent-in-the-east-midlands/

Economy grows in third quarter

The UK economy expanded in the third quarter of the year, official figures show.

The economy, as measured by gross domestic product (GDP), is estimated to have increased by 0.5% in July-September quarter compared with growth of 0.7% in second quarter (April to June 2016).

The 0.5% growth figure is a preliminary estimate for the third quarter and is the first full quarter after the referendum vote came out in favour of leaving the EU. It is far too early, however, to say the vote has had any influence. The Office for National Statistics said that "the pattern of growth continues to be broadly unaffected following the EU referendum".

However, the depressing fact is that only services posted an increase in output, with a 0.8% increase.

Output decreased in the other three industrial groupings: construction decreased by 1.4%; agriculture by 0.7%; and production by 0.4%, within which manufacturing decreased by 1.0%.

In the third quarter, GDP was 2.3% higher than the same quarter a year ago.

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady said: "We can't yet say what impact Brexit will have on our economy, but these figures show there's no room for complacency. British manufacturing is still struggling, and now faces real uncertainty following the vote to leave the EU."

She called on the government to use the Autumn Statement to be made by chancellor Philip Hammond on 23 November "to boost Britain's jobs and wages. This means investing in infrastructure like roads, rail and homes, and raising the national minimum wage".

www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/bulletins/grossdomesticproductpreliminaryestimate/julytosept2016

Give boost to childcare, say employers

Chancellor Philip Hammond should spend another £2 billion a year on childcare to get more women into work, boosting the economy as well as opening up options for new parents, the CBI employers' organisation has urged.

The call came in the business body's' submission to the government in the run-up to the chancellor's Autumn Statement on 23 November.

The CBI notes that prime minister Theresa May has committed her government to work for the many, not the few. As part of its efforts to achieve this, government needs to focus on narrowing the gender pay gap by improving the provision of childcare, the CBI says.

Families are financially disadvantaged by the gap between Statutory Maternity Pay ending at 38 weeks and childcare support kicking in after 52 weeks. An extension of Statutory Maternity Pay to 52 weeks and the provision of 15 hours of free universal childcare to all children from the age of one to four would help close the gap.

Such measures would have an initial net short-term cost of £2.1 billion in 2017-18 and £2.3 billion in 20-21 if money is saved from other areas (such as the Tax-Free Childcare vouchers scheme).

The dynamic impact of these policies to close the gap would reduce the net cost to £0.3 billion in the longer term. This would come from improve household finances and corresponding tax revenues thanks to improved persistence by mothers in the jobs they did before maternity leave, less "trading down" and by helping to address opportunity gaps and, over time, the gender pay gap.

Additionally, high-quality childcare can help raise attainment for some children from more challenging backgrounds in the vitally important early years of their education.

The CBI says that extending some supported offer to the parents of one- and two-year-olds would enable parents to remain engaged in the labour market in a more effective way, boosting their incomes and long-term prospects – and supporting a stronger future for children.

www.cbi.org.uk/cbi-prod/assets/File/Letter-to-Chancellor–and-CBI-2016-Autumn%20 Statement.pdf

Academies links with trustees' businesses

More than one in three academy trusts have declared related-party transactions and paid money to businesses with links to staff and trustees.

Peter Lauener, chief executive of the Education Funding Agency, said that last year 1,055 of the 2,905 academy trusts submitting accounts had related-party transactions.

He said 74 (7%) of these warranted further scrutiny by the government, with 24 trusts found to have broken rules when making payments to related parties.

He also said that last year there were 50 individual related-party transactions of more than £250,000 – amounting to around £13 million in total.

The admission follows regular media coverage of such payments, most recently the Wakefield City Academies Trust which paid nearly £450,000 to companies belonging to its interim chief executive and his daughter.

Worries have also been raised about transactions involving the Bright Tribe multi-academy trust.

Stephen Timms, Labour MP for East Ham, asked whether trusts should be outlawed from such related transactions.

However, Lauener said: "The more responsible the role an individual has – the more important it is they can be completely satisfied all their transactions are not just in line with the financial handbook but also in the spirit of these rules."

He said most transactions were sound and had followed the right procedures.

Education for all Bill Education secretary Justin Greening has announced that a Bill to convert all schools in England to academies has been dropped.

Ditching the Bill would appear to clear the way for prime minister Theresa May's plans for to introduce more grammar schools.

http://schoolsweek.co.uk/a-third-of-academy-trusts-paid-businesses-linked-to-staff-and-7-other-findings-from-todays-education-committee/

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