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# **‘Union learning helps highlight what PCS does’**

Anne Grier is an HMRC regional learning coordinator (RLC) in London & SE who has been involved in union learning roles for more than a decade.

Along with her RLC colleagues in other regions, she coordinates learning opportunities for members in the HMRC branches she covers. As a team they primarily try to focus on three broad subject areas – wellbeing, diversity and inclusion, and digital – but will also look into any topic that members request.

“For example, if we do a workshop, a member might then ask if we deliver something on another topic and then we'll look into it. Nine times out of 10 we can do it,” she says.

“What we're trying to do now is use resources that we've got already, for example by asking around Union Learning Reps (ULRs) if they have got experiences in certain areas. There's a little funding from PCS but mostly it is down to us to deliver it. [Since the ULF England fund](#) was cut, we just have to be a bit more creative about how we resource things.

“For instance, I did a workshop on mental health advocates. We have mental health advocates in our offices, and there are also reps that are mental health advocates, so I did one on that topic and it was well received.”

## **Learning at Work Week**

In May, Anne and her fellow RLCs, Pete Goddard and Shaun Sullivan, worked together to plan several events within the wider HMRC Learning at Work Week (LAWW), which were attended by hundreds of members.

The sessions they offered included wellbeing, work-related topics such as internal job applications, and union-related topics such as introducing some of the different roles in a PCS branch. They also ran a series of one-hour workshops on different periods of black history.

“It's good to have a theme like black history because it draws in interest. The word gets around and it creates a buzz,” added Anne. “It also highlights what PCS does because people may think it's just about negotiations and going on strike and things like that. What we're trying to do is let people know that there are other things that happen within PCS, such as learning and development. Learning helps people with their career, too.

“When you're working you just do the work that you're doing, but you're not necessarily being creative. This allows people to think outside the box and consider other things.

“For instance, with race equality and all the things that have been happening around that issue. There's a lack of understanding among some people who don't have knowledge of it. So, workshops like that are raising awareness.”

### **Learning role is ‘giving back’**

Holding the sessions online boosted their numbers, for example with more than 100 people coming to the ‘Success Profiles’ sessions on applying for new roles.

“It went well and I'm pleased people enjoyed it – the feedback I got was very positive. I enjoy this role. I do like learning new things and it's like giving back and making people aware there are things out there that you can learn, even though it's outside of what you normally do. And sometimes that can also help to make your job more interesting,” she said.

“I think we should have more ULRs. They can get involved in smaller projects, it doesn't have to be on a big scale like we do, but just to be there to assist in learning is a very valuable.”

The HMRC learning coordinators will also be making plans for learning opportunities to coincide with Black History Month, in October, and will be running more PCS sessions during the next LAWW in HMRC, in November.

### **FIND OUT MORE:**

- Are you interested in knowing more about the ULR role? Contact your branch or group officers for more information.

You can also email [learning@pcs.org.uk](mailto:learning@pcs.org.uk)

- Courses are available for new Learning Reps. Enter “Learning Reps” in the [PCS Academy](#) search bar.
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