



THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL POLICY STATEMENT

**EMBEDDING UNION LEARNING IN THE FBU'S
FUTURE**

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2009

EMBEDDING UNION LEARNING IN THE FBU'S FUTURE

Following the unanimous passing of Composite Resolution A at Annual Conference 2007 and recognising Resolution 65 of Annual Conference 2004, the Executive Council (EC) set-up a working group to discuss and make proposals regarding the embedding of Lifelong Learning within the FBU.

The composition of the FBU's Embedding Lifelong Learning Group (ELLG) is:

Chair - Vice President
National Officer with Education and ULF remit
Two EC Members
Two Regional Education Officers
Two ULF Regional Co-ordinators
ULF Manager
ULF Finance Manager
FBU Education Advisor

The ELLG discussed the issues and recommendations contained within the EC report of embedding learning and have sought information from a number of sources including other trade unions. ELLG members spoke with a number of officials at all levels of the FBU and have taken on board a wide range of views as to how the union should embed lifelong learning and considered the current role and status of Regional Education Officers and explored any financial implications for the union. The work of the ELLG was considered at the meeting of the Executive Council at its meeting in February 2009 where it was agreed that an EC Statement would be put to the FBU's Annual Conference.

The Executive Council recognises the importance of mainstream trade union education and the vital role it plays in ensuring union officials have the skills and opportunity to access quality education. The Executive Council have been mindful of the importance of ensuring that embedding lifelong learning would not have a detrimental effect in the delivery of trade union education and to ensure that it would enhance the delivery of trade union education; it would also help increase the skills base of officials, giving them the opportunity to improve their skills.

Union Learning Reps and the position of Brigade Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator were adopted into the union's rule-book in 2006. Due to gaining further funding (ULF) across the UK the original decision not to incorporate a regional position within the rule book has not been altered. However, the funding situation is due to change in 2010 and the FBU needs to have a policy which takes into account this changed background. Having considered all of the options the Executive Council recommends that the role of the Regional Education Officer is widened to include lifelong learning and that the post is renamed the 'Regional Education and Learning Organiser (RELO).

The proposal would add further strength to the union's current organisation structure in relation to education and learning. The RELO would have responsibility on behalf of the Regional Committee to organise learning and FBU education within Regions.

This would help to ensure that ULRs who may be new union officials are encouraged to take up a more active role within the union. The position of the branch and brigade ULRs will be considered further prior to Annual Conference 2010.

The Executive Council acknowledges that to achieve this and for the eventual regional postholders to gain the understanding that current regional ULF co-ordinators have, there

will need to be a handing over period. The Executive Council proposes that the new RELO post be created as soon as possible after Conference 2009 and that the postholder 'shadows' the ULF co-ordinator until Annual Conference 2010 where the EC proposes the appropriate rule changes.

The Executive Council considers that by carrying out the above changes the role and status of Education Officers will be enhanced and enable the delivery of a quality overall education and learning package to officials and FBU members whilst at the same time ensuring that our education and learning provision takes place; this at the same time ensures a robust future for the Fire Brigades Union.

The Executive Council has reviewed the number and method of employment of ULF project staff. The FBU learning centre staff continue to be employed through the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) they work in and moves are ongoing to secure their future through 100% management support. The ULF manager is now employed on a fixed term contract by the FBU thereby ensuring he is answerable to the General Secretary and EC. Four regional co-ordinators are employed on a consultancy basis with the others seconded from their own FRS. At present there is no indication from the Government of further ULF funding past 2010.

The Executive Council has considered the impact of lifelong learning and the various issues associated with Workforce Development. The ULF manager is now invited to attend the Workforce Development Group under the National Officer. There is a close relationship between Scottish/National Vocational Qualifications (S/NVQs), FRS qualifications and Lifelong Learning - especially in relation to Key skills / Skills for Life. The group recommends that the EC continue to support the role that the current ULF project plays in supporting members in Workforce Development under the guidance and instruction of the National Officer.

Financial costs to the union in embedding learning are negligible. ULRs are already recognised within the rule book and apart from the costs of training and attending events, work within their branch.

The proposed 'Regional Education and Learning Organiser' is not an additional official but the extended remit of the proposed RELO position may require the post holder to increase travel / attend additional meetings. There is, therefore, the possibility of a small increase in travel and subsistence expenditure within the regions. There would be no correlating increase for attending the current national education officers meetings.

Conference is therefore asked to agree:

1. to extend the remit of the Regional Education Officer to include Lifelong Learning and that this position becomes 'Regional Education & Learning Organiser' (RELO). The position to be filled in line with current union rules -appointed by Regional Committee;
2. to have these posts in place following Annual Conference 2009 and the appointed person 'shadow' the Regional ULF co-ordinator;
3. that the EC will bring the necessary rule changes required to fully embed the above position and other appropriate changes to Annual Conference 2010;

4. that continued funding from central government and/or FRSs be further explored;
5. during the transition, that the ULF project staff continue to help and advise the union on lifelong learning matters linked to Workforce Development under the appropriate National Officer. The position to be reviewed by the Executive Council.