

NUT Learning Reps' Guide





Find out more at:

teachers.org.uk/learningreps

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Introduction to being an NUT learning rep

Thank you for agreeing to be an NUT learning rep. As an NUT learning rep you play a vital role in the largest teachers' union and are key to its continued success.

The role of an NUT rep is enormously rewarding, and many of the skills you develop in the role are transferable to your professional life. The role is flexible – you decide how much time you put in.

Any contribution towards building your union is greatly appreciated.

This guide sets out some of the activities an NUT learning rep can get involved in. It may be that you undertake some but not all of the elements discussed in this guide.

Remember that the strength of the Union is based upon members participating and making their voices heard. By acting together at work we can make a difference to the issues that are of importance to teachers.

If at any time you think that you would like some advice, assistance or resources to help you in your role then you can visit the union's website www.teachers.org.uk/learningreps or contact your local association/division secretary.

If you are a new rep or have not yet attended training you should book yourself a place on a NUT Learning Reps Course (see the union website at www.teachers.org.uk/courses/representatives).

So, have a look at this introductory guide. It should help you get started with the basics of the role and point you in the right direction for help and support.

Together we can make a difference!

Your rights as an NUT learning rep

As an NUT learning rep you have certain rights assigned to your role under employment law. You are entitled to:

- Time off for training;
- Somewhere to display NUT materials;
- Approach non-members about joining;
- The use of a room for meetings;
- Reasonable use of facilities, such as email, telephone and a photocopier.

Your association/division secretary can give you more details about how to implement these rights in your workplace.

Getting started

The role of an NUT learning rep is both exciting and rewarding. By starting with the basics and then moving on in the role at your own pace you can build your confidence and skill level as you go. Once you have been elected there are several preliminary tasks you need to undertake, which are listed below:

- Let the head teacher/principal know that you have been elected as the NUT learning rep; and
- Talk to the NUT workplace rep, who should have a list of members in your workplace, provided by your association/division. This is a great time to introduce yourself to members and tell them about NUT learning and CPD opportunities.

Making a difference where you work

Some of the tasks an NUT learning rep could carry out are explained over the following pages:

Supporting members in your school

- Inform members about Union CPD courses and training
 - Local training
 - National training
 - CPD
 - ICT courses
- Inform members about training opportunities in your school;
- Liaise regularly with the NUT workplace rep and other members of the NUT team in your workplace;
- Organise NUT group meetings to discuss educational issues and campaigns;
- Set up an NUT learning section of the noticeboard and display materials for colleagues;
- Check the Courses section of the NUT website regularly; and
- Keep the association/division learning rep and/or association/division secretary informed of any activities you are planning in your workplace. Educational campaigning group meetings might, for example, be organised by a cluster of schools/colleges.

Teaching Schools and School Direct

- If you are in a Teaching School or have School Direct trainees at your workplace you should liaise with the NUT workplace rep to ensure that you know who the new students are and when they are starting their training;
- School Direct trainees will have had little or no contact with the Union prior to taking up their appointment; and
- You will play a lead role in recruiting these students to the NUT and monitoring their training entitlements throughout the training period.

Consultation

- Ask your members, through surveys or at meetings, about their learning and training needs;
- Consult with the workplace senior leadership team and/or training manager on teacher learning and training issues; and
- Let the head teacher/principal know about any concerns expressed by members about learning and training issues.

No NUT rep in your workplace?

- Let your division/association secretary know. You can also inform your regional/Wales office. (Go to www.teachers.org.uk/contactus)
- Talk to members in your workplace about becoming the NUT workplace rep

Every workplace needs a strong union team!

Talking with colleagues

Talking to members about learning and training issues is an important part of being an NUT learning rep. Your job is to listen to members and assess their learning, training and CPD needs. This may be carried out through conducting a learning needs survey amongst members in your workplace or holding an NUT group meeting. You should then, in discussion with members, formulate solutions that may involve discussion with the senior leadership, or the training manager, in your workplace or may be found elsewhere.

There are many ways in which to communicate with members. The form of communication you adopt will depend on the specific context but also the aim of your communication.

You should liaise with the NUT workplace rep to obtain the email addresses of all members in the workplace as this is probably one of the most efficient ways of communicating with them, especially in larger workplaces or those occupying more than one site.

Holding workplace meetings

Meetings are important; they get members involved and facilitate discussion.

As the NUT learning rep you may wish to organise workplace meetings to discuss current educational and pedagogical issues of relevance and/or concern. Members should be aware that union meetings in your workplace can be about educational issues as well as pay and conditions and campaigning priorities.

Meetings need not be formal and can be more of a discussion between colleagues on issues of interest. They should ideally be held once a term.

When organising a meeting you should remember to:

- Choose a convenient and accessible time and place for members;
- Let members know what the meeting is about and why they should attend (members should also feel that they can suggest discussion items for meetings);
- Advertise the meeting well in advance by speaking to members individually to encourage attendance; through email; announcements in briefings; and newsletters;
- Be inclusive;
- Allow questions, contributions and discussion for all members;
- Avoid using jargon;
- Don't presume or patronise;
- Get members involved in activity where possible; and
- Minute any action points and circulate them to members.

Learning reps section of the NUT noticeboard

Your workplace should have an NUT noticeboard which is managed by the workplace rep.

As the NUT learning rep you should negotiate with the workplace rep and any other relevant colleagues a board space for placing NUT learning and CPD materials, as well as your learning newsletter and any other relevant materials produced by the NUT, yourself or other NUT members in your workplace.

You can download an NUT learning rep banner for the noticeboard from the website at www.teachers.org.uk/learningreps

Building the Union

The NUT is the largest teachers' union due to the recruitment work undertaken by our reps. It is important that you liaise with the workplace rep to ensure that you know who is and isn't a union member in your workplace.

Remember that recruitment is a year round activity. In Teaching Schools and where School Direct trainees are recruited they may join the school at different times during the year. When student teachers join your workplace you should introduce yourself as the NUT learning rep and tell them about the CPD opportunities offered by the NUT for students and NQTs. You should try to build a rapport with them and highlight the work the NUT does. Ask them to join if they are not already members. Go to www.teachers.org.uk/join for up to date details of the Union's joining offers.

Getting members involved

As well as recruiting new members it would also be useful for yourself and the workplace rep to identify other roles in your workplace which members could undertake.

Identifying a number of people willing to do a little will relieve you of workload and create a collective identity.

Getting people active in the union is easier if they see some relevance to that activity. Below are some tips on getting members more involved:

- Don't be afraid to ask members to do something for the Union. After all, it is their union and the worst that can happen is that they say 'no';
- Ask in person rather than by email;
- Be realistic about what you ask members to do;

- Ask members initially to perform small tasks that you think they would be good at or enjoy. As they become more involved you could ask them to take on more responsibility;
- Let members know that their particular help is needed;
- Never refuse an offer of help;
- Be enthusiastic about the importance of the work undertaken.

Talking with management

As an NUT learning rep you should aim to establish a dialogue with management and the training manager, if you have one in your workplace. A productive working relationship with management is something to aim for. The key thing to remember is that, when you are talking to management you are speaking as a representative of and on behalf of all NUT members and that you have the strength of the membership behind you.

Below are some tips on meeting with management:

- Have a clear agreed agenda before the meeting;
- Have a clear idea of what you want from any meeting by talking to members beforehand;
- Always take notes and never be afraid to ask a question or seek clarification;
- Act in a professional and confident manner; and
- Always report back to members on any outcomes.

Get involved and keep in touch

As an NUT learning rep you are already fulfilling one of the most important roles in the Union. But you may want to extend your activity and involvement beyond your workplace, and encourage members to do the same.

If you feel you want to increase your involvement there are plenty of ways to do this:

- Go along to association/division meetings;
- Take up a role in your association/division;
- Participate in local training;
- Attend regional/Wales council, where you will meet activists from other areas, share good practice and get valuable information about what is going on in the Union nationally, regionally and locally;
- Attend annual conference. You need to be elected as either a delegate or observer; and
- Get involved in one of the Union's self-organised groups.

Your key point of contact is your association/division secretary. If you do not already have their contact details please visit www.teachers.org.uk/contactus where you will find them. They have a wealth of knowledge and expertise you can tap into – never be afraid to get in touch. It is only by understanding the real issues and concerns of union members that the NUT can make a positive impact on the working lives of teachers.

Thank you again for taking on this role – together we can make a difference!

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The largest teachers' union
Our aim: one union for all teachers



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