

# tssa journal

summer 2018

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Association**

**General Secretary**  
Manuel Cortes

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Our members talk honestly about why they joined the union. The reasons, from several decades, vary but the general theme of collective strength comes through

## 6 A day in the life of a TSSA rep

Union representatives are the backbone of our union but are often the brunt of managers', sister unions' and fellow members' ire. Here we look at what goes on behind the scenes with our often unsung heroes

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## TSSA in Ireland

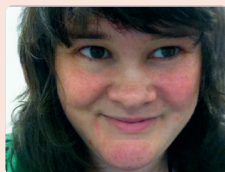
TSSA in Ireland now has its own social media presence.



Head over to:

[www.facebook.com/  
TSSAinIreland](https://www.facebook.com/TSSAinIreland)

and [@TSSAinIreland](https://twitter.com/TSSAinIreland) on Twitter  
to see what it's all about...



Welcome to the  
2018 edition of  
the TSSA Journal

## It's time to grow

The unashamed theme of this edition of the Journal is growth, we want our union to continue into the future as a vibrant and independent union representing the transport and travel sectors with strength and vitality.

To do this we must all be on board, committed to growing and expanding our current workplaces and looking to recruit members in new areas such as the Elizabeth Line and Crossrail, as well as HS2 as it is built and comes into action. We've got a lot to offer so we should get out and shout about it!

Dive into this issue and see the union through the eyes of our members – with the myriad of reasons that they joined TSSA, as well as our reps explaining what goes on behind the scenes.

Our union is building on our more than 120 year old traditions to grow into a 21st century union fit to represent staff in our industries today, to their employers, to the industry and to the government. No doubt our branches and structures will adapt to that as well, but what we are finding is that face to face conversations with our members are still the most effective way to organise a union. Like farmers, the machinery has changed over the years, but the seeds still grow in the same way.

Our reps and staff are taking on the challenges and learning new skills and strategies to engage our members and recruit to evolve, progress and develop a strong union but also advocate for our members effectively, win our battles with the employers and improve your working lives.

To have your say, email [comms@tssa.org.uk](mailto:comms@tssa.org.uk)

*Kerry Abel*

Kerry Abel, editor



# WHY I JOINED

# tssa

In their own words our members tell us what prompted them to join the union. Here we let the surprising range of reasons speak for themselves



"I joined TSSA as I believe in union representation in the workplace. The office I joined is currently all TSSA and it feels good to be in a strong membership that values the rights and policies with its members." **Yvonne Wood** Oxford Station



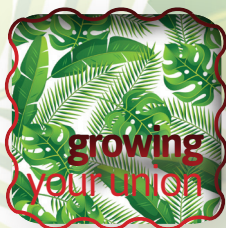
"I've always been a member of a trade union with the airlines and when I was made redundant the trade unions fought for our redundancy pay and T&Cs (terms and conditions). When I moved to the railway I knew I had to join a union. I feel that being in a trade union you are protected in various ways including health and safety in the work place, pay rises, shifts, annual leave and maternity/paternity pay. You are also stronger being part of a group of people with the same views instead of individuals with no support against the employers."

**Lorna Barclay** Glasgow Central station



"My dad always told me that wherever I worked, I should join a union. As things turned out, my first proper job was in the same railway office as my dad. He introduced me to the local TSSA rep, who gave me a form and I joined on the spot. Never looked back!"

**Chris Clark** Transport for London



"I have always been a member of a trade union. My dad was a staunch trade union man and passed on his socialist belief to me. With career promotions I joined the relevant union for the grade I worked in ending up in TSSA where I was volunteered for an officers role in the Belfast branch. I have worked

in various roles within the association and can't envisage never being a member of a trade union. You can stand alone brave and strong, but you become a lot stronger when you stand shoulder to shoulder with your brothers and sisters in the trade union movement."

**Gerry Kennedy** Translink

"I joined the TSSA because it best represents and safeguards the rights and views of all transport workers in Ireland and the United Kingdom."

**Paul Corcoran** Bus Atha Cliath/Dublin Bus

"I joined TSSA eleven years ago when the Thomson Call Centre at Cardonald was closing. We all made the decision to join TSSA to give us a collective voice in negotiations, for redundancy. I would recommend that anyone working in the travel trade join TSSA as we are stronger together."

**Lesley Pollock** Glasgow

"Cos you value your colleagues' welfare and rights and value your own principles and rights."

**Gary Pinkney** York

"I joined the TSSA because it provides peace of mind and a platform for your voice to be heard. You can have a say in the negotiations of any changes in your workplace and avoid simply having those changes imposed on you. I also wanted to be part of a campaigning union where members play a real part in changing and protecting jobs, the industry and society as a whole."

**Sarah-Jane Potter**  
Euston station

"I joined to ensure that acceptance and equality is available to everyone I work with."

**Keeley Lipscombe**  
Bexleyheath station

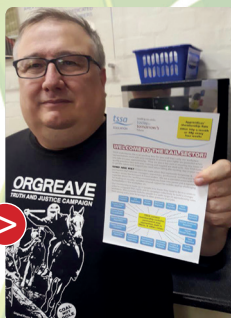
"Me? Dead easy. I was asked. And I was a believer in trade unions because of my Grandad."

**Mick Carney**  
Penge station and TSSA President



"I migrated from another union as TSSA had a better reputation and they haven't let me down after 23 years."

**Becks Barnes** Orpington station



"When I joined the company I went through a difficult time and TSSA supported me all the way. The support and service from TSSA is second to none."

**Abdel Zaki** Mornington Crescent underground station (pictured left, standing on the left)

"Our union is for members and belongs to the members. We need you."

**Bob Bayley** Birmingham and TSSA Executive member



We spoke to our TSSA workplace reps to ask them what motivates them and get an insight into what they do day to day

# A day in the life of a

## Barry James

rep at London Underground

**"My name is Barry and I am the industrial rep for Kings Cross Underground station.**

The average day in the life of a union rep is varied. Most days I'm dealing with staff concerns from the minor – such as whether the company pay for tea bags or major network wide issues which can result in people losing their livelihoods or not.

Sometimes I am asked to accompany members during

disciplinary or grievance hearings. Part of my role is to understand how management works and which managers are 'sympathetic' and which ones are less so.

Recruiting new members to our union is a big part of my role. Recruitment styles can vary from rep to rep but the main thing is getting yourself comfortable and finding your own way. I enjoy getting everyone on board and buying into whatever cause is on at the time.

It's easy to get the bug. I became a rep three years ago and before I knew it I found myself at rallies, conferences, training courses, and meetings.

Being a union rep can be very rewarding. There is no greater feeling than getting a thank you after helping a member out.

I try to enjoy the wins and not dwell on the defeats."



## Maryse Thiaw-Chu

H&S rep at Euston station

**"I became a Health and Safety Rep almost a year ago and I have also covered a local rep role for a few months, this has been very challenging for me as a new a Rep.**

You need to be dedicated to be in this role and really want to do it because members and colleagues will rely on you for many personal and professional issues.

Every three months there is the Health and Safety (H&S) walk about at my station, which



# TSSA REP

is London Euston, this is very interesting because I get to learn more about the different aspects of Health and Safety in different departments, such as platforms, first class lounge, booking office, cash office.

I usually report priority issues to the Health and Safety Manager, who then logs them and acts on them, although it could take months to see changes happening.

I also encourage my colleagues to report any other concerns that they may have regarding H&S, but once they are reported I investigate and try to get answers from my local managers then report them back to my colleagues. I try to keep them informed as much as possible by putting up notes on a dedicated H&S board or by talking to them directly.

As a Rep support is very important, whenever I needed help I knew where to find it, I get help from ex Reps who were reps for a long long time, and from my officials and help from other local reps, without them becoming a Rep would have been more difficult. To help me as well, I usually try to attend the

Branch meetings, I even have been selected to attend the

TSSA conference in June, it is an amazing opportunity to take part in that!

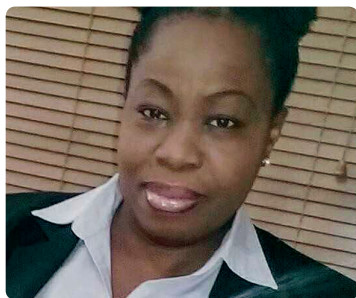
I did attend the "Becoming a Rep" training, it gave me a better understanding of what a Rep role should be and the dedication that comes with it. They want to be listened to and

*"Members want to be listened to and to be helped. They want the Union to support them"*

## *Members join the union because:*

- they want to fight for what is right
- they want equality at work
- they want to work in a safe environment
- they want their voices to be heard
- they want the union to be able to negotiate with employers
- they were asked to join

to be helped. They want the union to support them, although the union is the members themselves, the reps will support them as long as they understand that they have to be pro-active as well and support themselves."



**Motolani Sunmola**  
rep at Victoria station

**"As a rep I carry out many duties to represent members. I have recently questioned management over their treatment of a member of ours. In addition, if their suspensions had been reviewed regularly – the purpose being to revisit the reasons for the original suspension and to decide whether they remain valid, particularly in relation to the length of the suspension."**

Representing members of staff at hearings, talking through the case with the senior managers and pinpointing and reminding them of their duty of care to the member of staff. The most recent case I represented, was intended for dismissal, but resulted in a minor warning. This was in part due to careful preparation, collection of evidence and training from numerous courses attained from TSSA reps' training.

Pursuing justice and seeing to the welfare of the staff is my ultimate goal"

# What we stand for...

General Secretary, Manuel Cortes outlines TSSA's bargaining agenda

Statistics show that workplaces in which there is a trade union presence are safer and workers covered by collective bargaining have better terms and conditions than colleagues doing similar jobs than where unions are not recognised. Unions have also been at the forefront of the struggle for equality in all its guises. This means erasing any form of discrimination in our workplaces and in our society and ensuring that workers are paid the same for work of equal value. Our movement is also the largest voluntary organisation in Britain and Ireland with well over 6 million members.

Our very own union always strives to ensure that you, our members, always get an above inflation pay increase each and every year. Even when this is not possible due to difficult economic conditions, with your support we fight extremely hard to save jobs and ensure that your terms and conditions are protected. The 'Great Recession' created by bankers' greed really tested our metal. But almost a decade on, we have either recovered

all the losses that some of you suffered or are well on the road to doing so. Within British Train Operating Companies, Network Rail and a myriad of companies under the Transport for London umbrella – although the last decade was tough – we managed to maintain and improve the standards of living of the majority of you. Of course, the aim of our reps is to continue to do so year in, year out.

## *Being able to fight back*

You must have all heard horror stories of how far too many of our people, particularly our young, who are treated terribly by unscrupulous bosses who used the economic crisis to attack terms and conditions.

However, the key reason why this doesn't happen in your workplace is because you have our collective TSSA voice to represent your interests. If any employer tries it on, you and your colleagues can fight back through our union. You may not always get everything you want but without fighting back, you never will!

Our union always tries to grind out the best possible results for

you through negotiations. Our skilled teams of workplace-based negotiators are very good at squeezing every last penny out of employers. Yet, if at any point you and your colleagues feel very strongly about any issue, be it job cuts, workplace safety or derisory pay offers, with your support our union will take whatever robust action you collectively consider necessary. This also means that within our TSSA family, democracy is paramount, and your voice is what really matters.

I hope you recognise that our media exposure and communications with you, our members, continues to improve. Our union aims to influence the world around it so that you get the best possible deal at work. As our forebearers did, we also recognise that politicians critically influence our union's ability to deliver for you – the Tories usually in detrimental ways whilst our Labour Party continues to be, at the forefront of building a Britain for the many. That's why for almost a century our union's voice has been heard loud and clear within our Labour Parties in both Britain and Ireland.

We don't always agree with each other but without having your voice heard by its







leadership, change in favour of working people would be much harder to come by. That's why at the turn of the last century, pioneering unions in Britain, just like ours broke away from supporting the Liberals and created and maintained our Party. You and your colleagues have your voices heard loud and clearly within the Westminster corridors of power. And that's why in Ireland, a Rail Clerk, a member of our union, went on to second a motion by the great Irish Socialist, James Connolly, which led to the creation of the Irish Labour Party. Our

union seeks to influence our politicians in your interests. A good example, is what is currently being done to stop the British Transport Police from being broken up.

### ***Technological change***

We should all be rightly proud about our history but what really matters for our future is what you and your colleagues do in the here and now. Our union is as always, looking to get the best possible deal for you within your workplace and beyond. Technological change is proving to be a double edge sword. On

the one hand, it threatens many jobs, particularly for those of you who work in booking offices. On the other, it continues to shift power away from blue to white collar workers just like you. Whisper it, our union is now the most powerful one within the rail industry. Our Controller members, whether in Network Rail or in Train Operating Companies, can bring our railways to a standstill even if every other single worker turns up for their shift. With great power comes great responsibility but our union always acts on your wishes. >

- > Later this year, our relevant reps from across our industry will come together to put together and launch a Controllers' Charter. Not all of you working within Control rooms are covered by a recognition agreement so gaining this will undoubtedly be one of our top priorities.

For those of you in management grades who don't currently enjoy collective bargaining, we are in the process of putting together leverage strategies where possible, to gain these rights for you. This will evolve over time as we simply haven't got the resources to tackle each and every one of your workplaces at once. Yet, we will be on the lookout for opportunities to deliver this whenever they arise. Our union always continues to seek decent pay rises – for all of you within the many companies where our reps negotiate on your behalf. As always, you have the final say on whether any offer is acceptable as we hold referendum ballots on them.



### ***Winning equal pay***

In the 21st century it's outrageous that most employers have huge gender pay gaps. There are also areas within our industries and economy, which remain largely closed for woman. Sadly, equal pay, almost 50 years after the act, is still a distant reality for far too many. Our union has always fought and continues to fight hard for our women members. But frankly, our efforts so far, have left far too many of you still facing discrimination at work. The same is true for other under-represented groups within our membership. Of course, this was

wrong in the 19th and 20th centuries and can't really have any place in the 21st.

I am extremely proud, that as an employer, our union has a 0.6% gender pay gap. However, this did not happen by accident. Policies are in place which helped deliver this and our union will continue pressing your employers hard to do likewise. All of us must redouble our

efforts to ensure discrimination in our workplace, from the recruitment process onwards, has no place in our industries. Our reps will work harder than ever before to eliminate gender pay gaps and unequal pay and will also push for policies which foster a workplace environment where all can flourish. Our No Bystanders pledge is a great example of the type of campaigns you can get involved into stamp out prejudice whenever it shows its ugly head.

### ***Getting more involved***

Our union is critically dependent on you for its many successes. The sure way to ensure each and every one of you gets a better deal at work is by increasing our strength within your workplace. Here is where you come in. If you are not already one of our reps, why not give it a go? If you don't fancy this, you could become active within one of our many campaigns or our Branch structure. You can find our more information on how you can become more involved within our union by contacting our paid Organisers or our Members' Helpdesk. However, if none of this is for you, there is a very simple but powerful way you can help our union become stronger. Please speak to a colleague not yet within our TSSA family and get them to join. In doing so, you are making it easier for our union and our reps to get a better deal for you in your workplace – a win-win situation!



**Extra:** For specific updates on what is happening in your company: [www.tssa.org.uk/Your\\_company](http://www.tssa.org.uk/Your_company)

- For more information on TSSA's Equality initiatives, including the No Bystanders pledge, see [www.tssa.org.uk/equality](http://www.tssa.org.uk/equality)
- For how to get more involved, fill out this form and we will put you in touch with the most appropriate person: [bit.ly/Helpdeskform](http://bit.ly/Helpdeskform)
- To join TSSA visit [www.tssa.org.uk/join](http://www.tssa.org.uk/join)

# Trade union movement trends

An analysis of the challenges facing the organisation of working people and some ideas for growth

The latest UK Labour Force figures of trade union membership highlight some declines in those joining a union, although employment numbers overall lifted in 2016, union membership did not follow suit.

It's worth putting this decline in the context of gig-economy jobs and a climate of uncertainty which has been perpetuated by the Tory government. But as a movement we can not be complacent and examining these trends, seeing them as challenges to be overcome is what we are good at, after all we wouldn't have trade unions if everything was rosy in the workplace! Workers need us to unite behind when the going gets tough, if we work out new ways of uniting people then we will have a strong future.

Professional workers still have the strongest union presence, and we play a big part in that. While it is important to look at alternatives and better ways of working, we don't need to throw the baby out with the bath water and face to face conversations are still the best way to talk to our colleagues about joining a union.

The Unions21 report 'Roadmap to renewal: A manifesto for change' was launched in April

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ave. regular  
**WEEKLY PAY**  
(ex-bonuses)  
for GB employees

**15%** union wage gap in the **PUBLIC** sector, and **8%** in **PRIVATE** sector

and many of the strategies are relevant to our sector and our workers.

## *Invest in our reps*

The report highlights the key role of workplace reps on the ground, encouraging unions to invest in and train up their reps. It also points to the importance of the leadership role played by the Executive of a union. This is the democratic heart of our organisation and we all must engage in the processes and understand the decisions that are being made.

## *Make the case for collective bargaining*

Our reps and officers are always busy behind the

**15%** of **PRIVATE** sector workers are covered by an agreement

**59%** of **PUBLIC** sector workers have an agreement

**57%** of employees in **LARGER** workplaces reported that a trade union was present, compared with **24%** in **SMALLER** workplaces

scenes negotiating pay claims, representing members and ensuring that small problems do not become big problems in the workplace, but sometimes we forget to shout about what we're doing. If they get a good pay rise and the employer takes credit for it, our work gets lost in the ether. By highlighting the process behind a pay rise we are letting everyone know the role union reps play and we can get the credit for when things go well! The benefit of this kind of conversation with our colleagues is that it usually turns out to be two-way. If people are unhappy with their deal, we can have a conversation about what their ideas are and what ways they can help to change the situation. >



> ***Reflect the needs of our members***

Put bluntly, research carried out by other unions has exposed the need for our union experience and structures to reflect what members need now, not a model from 30 years ago. Members still need to contact a rep when they have a problem, but we can look at holding meetings differently, using social media effectively and engaging with members where they are, not where we want them to be. If members need specialist advice on pensions, or their immigration status and they trust their unions to help them – we need to adapt to provide this advice.

***Collaborate for the future***

The report looked at ways that professional unions could remain independent, and effectively represent their members. In order to fairly share resources that would benefit as many members as possible, it was advised that all sides share some functions, but create protocols and arrangements for allocating resources and making decisions.

There is no doubt that 21st century workers still need trade unions to help them stand up in the face of processes that attempt to squeeze and dehumanise them, of unscrupulous employers and of government policies. So, we need to face forward and make the changes that are necessary, while still maintaining our democratic heart.



# ***Time to Grow:*** **SEEING THE RESULTS**

**Organising Director Nadine Rae outlines our strategy for growing the union and updates on progress this year**

**O**ur Time to Grow strategy is delivering some good results for our union.

The strategy identifies that we need more members and active members to build power in our workplaces. The twelve action points in Time to Grow guide our work, what we need to improve on and what will ensure TSSA is the union that delivers for transport and travel workers

now and in the future. Here are just some examples of what our members are doing on Time to Grow:

***Setting goals***

Negotiating the huge reorganisation project 'Transformation' in Transport for London (TfL) has required a rigorous planning process just to know how to tackle

< **Sneak peek:** our LGBT+ equalities posters being created with our wonderful LGBT+ activists to challenge LGBT+ stereotypes

the 20 reps on full time release and pull together all of the strands affecting workers. Coming out with a positive result in difficult circumstances, when TFL is making staffing cuts, but still expecting a world class, major city transport service is definitely not easy, but TSSA, as the main trade union for the staff affected, has set clear goals heading into the negotiations. In spite of the obvious difficulties, since instigating our organising work we have achieved significant recruitment growth in the organisation – by 17.5% - as well as achieved our other targets to increase our bargaining power and the visibility of our union amongst staff.

### ***Be visible and active***

Our recruitment weeks have stepped up our general visibility in workplaces. Where our workplace reps have led the activities, we have seen great results with new members joining and a renewed pride from our existing members. Increased activity from reps has meant an uptick in membership. Where we were actively out talking to staff we saw a definite increase in members, after the last recruitment week we clocked up almost 1000 conversations at more than 40 workplaces and 88 people newly joined our TSSA family.

### ***Make members the face of the union***

Members of our LGBT+ Network have volunteered to be a part of our TSSA role models poster campaign. They have shared their stories, been photographed and will be on posters that can go up in workplaces to help challenge negative stereotypes and promote our union as leading on making workplaces inclusive for LGBT+. Our communications also reflect our membership and their activities more than ever before. You can see this in our General Secretary's weekly email to members, News on the Go.

### ***Stand up for respect & equality***

TSSA continues to lead on equality. Last year we were the first trade union to join Stonewall, the leading organisation for LGBT rights. Since then our LGBT+ Network has launched the #NoBystanders campaign, where members and allies can sign a pledge to tackle bullying and harassment wherever they see it. Our LGBT+ network has tripled in size in the past two years. We continue to lead the industry on Neurodiversity with the work of our Equality Reps, specialising in Neurodiversity awareness and support and are now developing training for line managers. This year,

we are the first UK trade union to pledge to Time to Change, the campaign to address issues of mental health and wellbeing in the workplace. Our members are also organising around issues such as flexible working, equal pay, and equal access to opportunities through apprenticeships, learning and development. In October we will hold a conference for our women members and our Future TSSA self organised group will hold an event for young workers also.

### ***Start from day one***

Inductions are key. BTP reps have recently seen great results from speaking at induction days, with 39 new joiners signing up in just one month! Other reps have been approaching new staff members in their first few weeks to make sure they know who their rep is and that TSSA is there for them from day one.

### ***Conduct priority growth projects***

Our focus on areas where there is potential to grow is showing results through increased membership. Earlier this year we signed a Memorandum of Understanding with HS2, which will enable our workplace representatives to be active and grow our union. In MTR Crossrail we have recruited new members who are starting as the Elizabeth Line prepares to open and have used the TUPE processes to ensure we

&gt;

- > have a network of workplace reps in place to tackle issues. Already we are winning issues affecting frontline staff, that our reps have identified and engaged with members and management on. In Network Rail and Transport for London we have continued to develop workplace representatives and leaders, so they can grow the union.

### *Work as a team*

Our work on the MTR Crossrail line has meant several existing TSSA branches and companies' staff have had to come together as well as crossing over with London Underground reps. This cross company working, coordinated by one of our reps led to reps organising visits to as many stations as possible, talking both face to face and collaborating to send out an electronic survey.

When the results came in, all the functional reps pulled together responses and worked to solve individual concerns and issues. This could not have happened without the team pulling together.

### *Be trained in organising & recruitment skills*

From September 2018 we will hold a recruitment training skills courses for all our workplace reps to ensure they have the knowledge they need to recruit new members, especially those entering the industry for the first time. Our practical programme

will also give members the opportunity to apply the skills they have learned in our training programmes with support from TSSA staff and other experienced reps. You can find out more at [www.tssa.org.uk/education2018](http://www.tssa.org.uk/education2018)

### *Know our workplaces*

On the new Elizabeth Line, we have worked with current reps from existing routes to go out and have conversations about their local issues. We've followed up concerns around changes to cash regulations so that the employer has had to halt any new policies until they have negotiated with us.

### *Prioritise issues that will grow TSSA*

Our new Network Rail strategy is called 'Changing Lives' so its clear our reps and active members are fighting for the issues that will not just make a difference, but eventually change lives.

### *Use collective bargaining*

Collective bargaining remains a central opportunity to grow our membership and fight for respect in the workplace

– including fair pay and pensions, job security and better workplaces in general. Recent struggles have resulted in wins for members, including the work done to secure the pay claim at (then) Virgin Trains East Coast.

Given what we know now about financial losses at the company, the two-year pay deal of at least RPI each year and a minimum of £600 gave staff security when times were tough.

In July we launch our TSSA Equality Bargaining Standards, providing a tool for reps to use with employers to measure their success in areas of

equality and win in areas the employers are failing to address. Our members will be able to get behind the standard and help win change.

### *Learn from ourselves and others*

Our partnership with Stonewall is a great example of how we can learn from other organisations and strengthen our union at the same time. Combining their expertise with our own knowledge and relationships, we are able to create real change in the areas of LGBT+ inclusive workplaces.



**Extra:** Every member can get involved with **Time to Grow** and help build a bigger, stronger TSSA. Go to [www.tssa.org.uk/t2g](http://www.tssa.org.uk/t2g) and let us know you want to help too





The change to digital railways is possibly an even bigger change than moving from steam to diesel. We spoke to Sal Morawetz and Adele Potten-Price in TSSA's Education, Equalities and Projects team to find out more about what TSSA is doing to prepare our members for the future

# THE NEW *workforce*

**W**e emphasise holding our employers to account for their part in developing the skills of their workforce, challenging them to show us their plans to address their long-term and short-term skills gaps.

Sal Morawetz explains, "Some employers are better than others in terms of planning ahead. They're all facing big challenges over the next twenty years. They all need to be thinking about succession planning, as well as looking at gaps in their current workforce."

Sal added, "Too many employers think of Personal Development Reviews (PDRs) as a shoddy way to keep staff's pay down – using performance related pay as an excuse. They need to be using PDRs as a way of planning staff development towards the jobs that are coming next, the skills they'll need for the new technology, for digital railways."

"This is where TSSA can step in. Firstly, we can look at the existing PDR structures and see if they're fit for purpose." (Spoiler: Most aren't!)

"Secondly, we can look at how the PDRs fit into the wider, picture within the company. We can check them against the diversity and gender pay gap – is it only the favoured few getting a leg up through internal training?"

"We know that there's a big gender pay gap in the rail industry – women aren't getting the development opportunities men are and so they're not getting the chance to progress to better paying jobs. We know this is the same for people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds."

"So part of TSSA's work is about saying to employers "Look, we have a huge opportunity with the new Employer Apprenticeship Levy"

All UK employers with annual salary bills of over £3million now have to pay an Employer Apprenticeship Levy. This money can be used to fund training not only for new staff but also existing staff – a genuinely new and positive opportunity. TSSA is particularly keen to ensure that employers across the UK make the most of the opportunity to train and develop their existing staff.

Sal continued, "In the transport sector employers are >





*"We know that there's a big gender pay gap in the rail industry – women aren't getting the development opportunities that men are"*

- > finding it hard to actually spend the money from the levy, and if they don't spend it, they lose it. But you've got to ask, have they been looking properly at getting opportunities for their existing staff?"

### **Apprenticeships**

One thing TSSA is doing where there are existing apprenticeships is monitoring their quality.

Sal says, "it's great to see more Apprenticeships designed by employers to reflect the jobs they actually have. But there are still too many badly designed apprenticeships floating around. In one case, with a good employer who had union reps on their steering group we were able to identify that the maths skills being taught in the college

were completely inappropriate and get that changed so that the apprentices weren't losing out.

"Some TOCS are still willing to exploit their most vulnerable workers, playing on the apprentices' fear of not getting a job. For example, one condition of the apprentice's contract is that they spend 20% of their time away from the job, studying. This employer put apprentices under pressure to study in their own time, in complete breach of the contract! It's essential that TSSA reps – and members – make sure they mentor apprentices on the ground and talk to people who are going through training to find out what their issues are. People will talk to us in ways they won't talk to management."

### **Neurodiversity**

One area where TSSA has been leading the way for other unions is in Neurodiversity. (Neurodiversity includes Autism, Aspergers', Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dyspraxia and Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder [AD(H)D]). TSSA's ground breaking work changing attitudes in the workplace is increasingly led by members with neurodiverse conditions themselves. For example, an autistic member on Network Rail's Western route gave Lunch and Learn sessions on "Autism Perspective" at 3 key locations.

Meanwhile two other members, Neil Lucock and David Muncaster delivered a SKETCH training session in Network Rail's Baskerville House – three short, sharp, sweet sketches demonstrating how people with autism behaved in the workplace. These were so well received that Neil, an Equality rep with autism, and David are planning another SKETCH session, this time on AD(H)D.



**Extra:** For more information on TSSA's Union Learning Reps see <http://bit.ly/TSSALearning>

- To read about our Neurodiversity work visit [www.bit.ly/Neurodiv](http://www.bit.ly/Neurodiv)
- For information about the Employer Apprenticeship Levy: <http://bit.ly/EALevey>