

Mining a new seam

By Astrid Stubbs

Trevor Sargison, unionlearn's regional education officer (REO) for Yorkshire and Humberside, first realised he needed some qualifications while working as a miner in North Derbyshire.

"I left school at 15 with no qualifications at all and it was only when I moved to a pit where there were health and safety problems that I started getting involved as a NUM union rep and discovered a need to be educated," he explains.

Trevor started his education through the NUM's day release programme at the University of Sheffield, eventually winning a scholarship to Ruskin College, Oxford, where he took the Labour Studies Diploma, followed by a degree in Economic History at Leeds University.

"I am a practitioner in TUC Education and a product of it as well," he proudly declares.

"I love the whole education field. You can put something back in that can never be replaced."

Trevor became a TUC tutor at Bradford College, then course coordinator and finally REO four years ago, just when most people are thinking of retirement.

"I tried retirement once – but you can only put up so many shelves," he laughs. "I still really enjoy what I'm doing and want to keep going while I'm still doing a useful job on behalf of the TUC."

Trevor is proud that his region has been at the forefront of diploma courses through Hull, Park Lane and Bradford Colleges introducing the first one-year access certificate in Trade Union and Industrial Studies.

"We still have a very good balanced programme of courses in

different part of the region, from the two-day induction course, through core courses and onto all three one-year diplomas," he says.

Trevor says a major bonus to the region is its teams of tutors in different centres, something he hopes to see consolidated in the future.

"When you look at the way education has developed, you also see the need for a number of people in any one centre to validate what's happening and just to support each other and develop courses," he says.

He also hopes to see the widest range of courses to support reps coming through, as well as online learning to enhance what's happening in the classroom.

"Those brave enough to take on the job of a voluntary officer need all the educational opportunities to support them in what they are doing," says Trevor.

Union activists need all the educational opportunities they can get to help them in their union roles, says Trevor Sargison

"Trevor is a brilliant tutor and negotiator who is respected within unions and loved by his colleagues."

Liz Rees, Head of TUC Education