

Name: Rolls Royce (Inchinnan)  
Size: 1200 employees  
Sector: manufacturing, aerospace  
Location: Scotland

### **The organisation**

The Rolls Royce Inchinnan factory opened in October 2004, close to Glasgow Airport. The factory manufactures aeroplane engine components and employs 1200 workers. The site is organised around four production divisions (stators, rotors, seals and forge) along with a support function. Two trade unions are recognised on the site, Amicus-Unite and the GMB, and union density is high. The majority of workers are highly skilled. For the four main production divisions, work is organised around three and four shift systems. The three shifts comprise 'early' (7am-3pm), 'back' (3pm-1036pm) and 'night' shifts (1036pm-7am), from Monday to Friday whilst the 4 shift system involves an extension of shifts into part of the weekend. Support staff operate a standard day-shift.

### **The history of workplace dialogue**

The workplace has a well-established framework for dialogue, the centrepiece of which is the sixteen-member 'Working Together' joint management-union forum, with equal membership from each side. It meets weekly to discuss a range of workplace issues, including training and learning. The site operates single table collective bargaining.

Issues around training and learning have been at the forefront of management and union agendas since the move to Inchinnan. The factory opened amidst a post 9/11 downturn in activity in the aerospace industry, and jobs were perceived to be under threat. New technology was introduced and teamworking was extended as a means of improving productivity. Both of these developments demanded an upgrading of workforce skills. In April 2006, Amicus received support from the Scottish Union Learning Fund, and some of the nine ULRs at Inchinnan undertook further training in lifelong learning developments and sought to renew the workplace learning agenda. Following a mapping exercise, ten further ULRs were trained so that every worker on site had access to a ULR. The workplace learning agenda was supported and facilitated by the company, who provided time off work for training of ULRs and invested in on-site training facilities and a learning resource centre.

### **How are training and skills discussed?**

A Learning Steering Group was established in April 2006. It is the principal forum for the discussion of training and learning activities and feeds into the Working Together joint management-union forum. It meets weekly and has seven

members, comprising three from the company side, three conveners from the union side (who are all ULRs) and a chairperson (the Amicus Learning Organiser). The ULRs act as a key conduit between the workforce and the committee. They raise issues for discussion in the Steering Group via a weekly 'pre-Steering Group' meeting on the union side and have a remit to report back to the workforce on any outcomes from the Steering Group. Similar activities occur on the company side, to ensure that effective dialogue on training occurs across the site.

A formal Learning Agreement was signed between the company and unions in April 2006. The key principles underpinning the agreement are a commitment on both sides to: meeting the obligations for time off and facilities for ULRs; encouraging and supporting employees to engage in lifelong learning; and, ensuring equal opportunity for all employees on site. The agreement signals the commitment of both management and unions to improving employees' skills. It has not had to be invoked as a means of driving the learning agenda forward, something which is seen by both management and unions as testament to the commitment of all parties to the agenda.

Learning Needs Surveys are a key means through which workforce skills needs are identified. The first survey was undertaken in June 2006 and highlighted a particular demand for basic computing training and language learning. Subsequent surveys have been distributed at annual open days (see below). The results from the surveys, which have been available to all workers at the site but which are voluntary to complete, have driven the agenda for learning activities. Basic computing, European Computer Driving Licence and Spanish language courses have been run on site, delivered by the University of Paisley and the Trade Union Studies Department at Stow College. Progression plans are being developed for staff approaching the end of their first courses. Staff are now able to undertake learning with the Open University, through their 'Openings' programme of short, introductory courses. This opportunity has arisen from the partnership agreement signed by the Scottish TUC and the Open University in June 2006 to give trade union members who are new to learning a 10 per cent discount on OU courses. The partnership was formally launched at the Inchinnan plant, providing further recognition of the company's status as an example of best practice in workplace dialogue over training. The next step of the learning agenda will be to introduce more family and community involvement.

Annual open days offer another key means through which dialogue occurs over training and learning. The Learning Needs Survey is now distributed during the open day and information about learning opportunities is made available. The achievements of the workforce are also celebrated at open days, through the presentation of end-of-course certificates.

### **What have been the benefits from dialogue on training and skills?**

- Learning opportunities have been opened up to the whole workforce, many of whom had not undertaken learning for 20 or 30 years.

- Over 300 workers (25 percent of the workforce) have been involved in learning courses since May 2006. The latest Learning Needs Survey in August 2007 elicited responses and interest in learning opportunities from 654 workers (over half of the workforce).
- All of the courses offered are accredited and have improved computing, numeracy, literacy and language skills. They have also improved confidence, particularly amongst workers who have not undertaken learning for many years. These courses have had tangible business benefits (see below) but are also seen as a way of making working lives more satisfying and rewarding.
- The dialogue has helped to identify a wide range of learning needs around numeracy and literacy, pensions and communication skills. The dialogue structures in place have helped to ensure that individual needs can be identified and addressed in a sensitive, and in some cases confidential, manner.
- The dialogue has had some direct benefits to the business effects. Many teamworking roles require the use of computer software, whilst changes to the human resource management function in Rolls Royce have meant that workers need to interact with a computer for personnel-related tasks, such as booking time off work.
- Whilst the direct business benefits of some of the courses may not always be apparent, management have been impressed with the commitment of the ULRs to the learning agenda and have bought into the notion that lifelong learning can deliver long-term 'mutual gains' for workers and the company.

### **Challenges and 'top tips'**

A key challenge related to how to put in place the building blocks for effective dialogue to take place. A learndirect learning centre which had been on site from 2004 was viewed in negative terms by many workers, who saw it as an isolated advice centre for those about to be laid off. When establishing the learning agenda both unions and management were keen to ensure that all the necessary elements were in place to underpin a strategic set of lifelong learning activities that could deliver benefits for workers and the company. Both trade union constitutions on site have been changed so that only shop stewards can take up the position of ULR and to ensure that all conveners are trained as ULRs. Learning has also been incorporated into the bargaining agenda. Courses were only offered once the workplace-wide network of ULRs, the Steering Group, the Learning Agreement and the Learning Needs Survey were all well-established.

A key challenge at Inchinnan has been delivering the goals of the learning agenda within the 3 and 4 shift system. Unions, training providers and the company have worked together to design a shift-friendly pattern of courses, in keeping with the 'no barriers to learning' principle underpinning the learning

agenda. 50 per cent of the time of the course is borne by the company and 50 per cent by the worker. In practice, this means that many of the courses are delivered in two hour blocks, beginning either one hour before a shift starts, or one hour before a shift ends. Workers also have access to a Learning Resource Centre, which is open and staffed at times which cover the main shift patterns on site.

