

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP  
20 Great Smith Street  
Westminster  
London  
SW1P 3BT

By email

19 November 2020

**Councillor Sue Cooper  
Leader of the Council**

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Dear Mr Williamson

On behalf of South Oxfordshire District Council, I am writing to you to ask you to safeguard the future of the Union Learning Fund which currently supports 250,000 workers. The Fund helps to deliver courses that support education and skill development of workers, improving Maths, English and digital skills, amongst others.

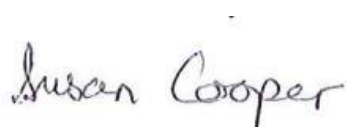
The plan to axe this important fund from March 2021 is incompatible with recovery from a global pandemic, when reskilling is set to be more important than ever.

In 2019, a survey of 38,000 UNISON members showed that more than 80% of respondents feel *“learning is important to my self-esteem”* and they were *“ready to learn new skills to remain employable in the future”*. Additionally, the Union Learning Fund is even more important for those who have no or few qualifications and disabled workers – two groups that are likely to be disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and the policy response to it.

Whilst it is welcome that the Government recently announced the launch of its Lifetime Skills Guarantee, the Union Learning Fund supports workplace learning projects that help to fulfil the government’s adult skills priorities and aspirations.

I urge you to rethink your decision to axe the Union Learning Fund, which has been essential for so many key workers across all areas of the public sector.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Sue Cooper  
Leader of the Council