

04 Offender Learning
10 Train to Gain
12 Questions answered by Skills Minister

> lsc

Leading learning and skills

the magazine

Meet the LSC's
East Midlands
management
team Page 8

July/August 2006

The magazine of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for partners and people interested in learning and skills issues in the East Midlands

Contents

July/August 2006

News

Reading and writing for fun	03
Offender learning landmark	04
News in brief	05
East Midlands winners at national awards	06
FE White Paper	07
Adult learners celebrate	14
Castle College goes live	14

Features

Meet the team	08
Train to Gain picks up the pace	10
Skills Minister's question time	12

Regular Features

Comment on the LSC's agenda for change from Sue Daley, Principal of Boston College in Lincolnshire and Asha Khemka from West Nottinghamshire College	15
Facts and figures	16
Contact details	16



Verity Bullough
Regional Director - LSC East Midlands

Welcome

Since the last issue of the magazine the LSC has been involved in a major restructuring exercise in line with our priority to strengthen the capacity of the LSC to lead change nationally, regionally and locally.

In this issue, I introduce my new regional management team. We will continue to keep you in touch with developments through the magazine and other communications channels.

Along with Sir Andrew Foster's report on the future of FE and Lord Leitch's report on skills and now the FE White Paper (see page 07), there is real momentum to carry forward the Post-16 learning and skills sector. We are delighted to bring you questions and answers with Phil Hope, Skills Minister and MP for Corby and East Northamptonshire covering the skills agenda in the East Midlands.

The LSC *agenda for change* is also making progress. I hosted a roadshow updating East Midlands college principals on this in June. Our columns come from two of our FE college principals and touch upon two of the themes of *agenda for change* - Reputation and Quality.

the magazine

Editorial

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If you require this magazine in an alternative format such as larger print or tape, please call 0116 228 1849, fax 0116 228 1801 or email lcs-magazine@lsc.gov.uk

Reading and writing for fun



Union learning representatives at the TUC's launch of its Unionlearn BBC RaW Book Swap programme at Bombardier Transportation in Derby, left to right Tracey Fearn, Danny White and Sheila Allen.

Reading a book, writing a letter or taking part in a quiz are enjoyable pastimes. Research shows that more than 12 million adults of working age are considered to be intermediate readers who, typically, view reading and writing as boring.

With a little inspiration, people can be persuaded to read more and to improve their writing so, with the help of television, radio, websites and publications, the BBC has launched a three year campaign, called RaW (Read and Write), to help individuals to gain confidence in their reading and writing.

The LSC has seized this opportunity to extend the enjoyment of reading and writing into the workplace. Working closely with Unionlearn - the education arm of the TUC - the LSC and the BBC in the

East Midlands have funded the purchase of some 1,500 Quick Read books. There are twenty four titles from which to choose and each has been written to ensure that individuals who are not regular readers will enjoy the experience. The authors include Joanna Trollope, Andy McNab, Hunter Davies, Richard Branson and John Francome.

Through its network of union learning representatives, the TUC is setting up book clubs, book swaps, library shelves and many other

activities within workplaces to promote reading and to encourage people to try different types of books. The joy of reading for fun can be translated into practical benefits from having the confidence to be able to read everyday instruction, manuals, application forms and warning notices to the thousands of pieces of information that we see in our daily lives.

For further information on the BBC Read and Write project please go to www.bbc.co.uk/raw

Offender learning landmark



Pictured: Martin Finney of Bardon Aggregates in Coalville, Leicestershire. The company is a member of Leicestershire Cares and participates in their Mentored Work Placement Scheme, which helps unemployed ex-offenders to gain valuable work experience and receive a reference to improve their chances of employment. Martin is a work placement mentor for the scheme.

The new Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) goes live in the East Midlands from the end of July 2006. From this date, the LSC is responsible for planning and funding education and training for offenders in custody and the community.

The end of March 2006 saw a landmark in this process, with the LSC East Midlands awarding lead provider status to three providers to deliver education and training provision to offenders in custody across the Criminal Justice Areas (CJAs) in the region. These are:

- City College Manchester - Derbyshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire and Rutland
- Lincoln College - Lincolnshire
- West Nottinghamshire College - Nottinghamshire

The LSC East Midlands has also been able to access European Social Funding of approximately £2.6 million to support and develop learning and skills work with offenders in the community until 2008. This funding will be used to support projects which complement and add value to the new OLASS.

The tender prospectus is available on all LSC websites in the East Midlands region (see back page) and the deadline for the submission of tenders is 22nd September 2006.

During the last year, in preparation for the launch of the new OLASS in this region, the LSC has been involved in prototype projects to reduce re-offending through improving the employability skills of offenders and engaging offenders in family learning projects. This links closely with the work of National Offender Management Service (NOMS), which has produced a Reducing Re-offending Action Plan (RRAP).

Engaging offenders in learning and supporting them into work is one of the most effective ways to reduce re-offending. The LSC works with a wide range of organisations

to deliver this aim; these include voluntary sector organisations such as Leicestershire Cares.

This organisation is committed to addressing the needs of the most disadvantaged in society, including offenders. It encourages employers to offer mentored work placements to offenders and provides mentor training for staff to ensure they are skilled in supporting offenders to develop their confidence and integrate into the workplace, thus increasing the possibility of them sustaining employment.

If you would like more information about the new OLASS, please contact the OLASS regional team on 01332 868604 or email emma.ormesher@lsc.gov.uk

News in brief

An invitation to inspire, hosted by television presenter Gaby Roslin - provided the basis of an employee training event held in the grounds of Kelmarsh Hall in Northamptonshire.

Many of the LSC's partners were on site for the day, providing a chance for hundreds of local business people to discover what type of employee training will best suit them. Olympic and world medal winning athlete, Roger Black plus round-the-world sailor Rona Cant, were on hand to show how individuals can be inspired to get the best out of themselves and their team.

Students from Leicester College have won prizes in a national competition to design a range of anti-racism posters.

Fourteen students from the College's BTEC National Diploma in Graphic Design course took part.

Adam Kirkham got first prize of £350 for his "Know Racism" poster. The runners up were Carly Clifford with "Have you Got the Balls to Kick Racism" and Chris Newton with his poster "We are all part of the same race".

Regional training provider NLT Training Services is working with the electrical trade in Derbyshire to help them meet new building regulations for electrical installations, by offering Part P courses in its purpose-built facility in Chesterfield. New legislation means that anyone without the new Part P accreditation is not authorised to carry out domestic electrical installations and is therefore operating illegally.

For further information visit www.nlt-training.co.uk

Grantham College's status as a Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) in Engineering has been officially recognised with the opening of specialist premises.

Last year the College was awarded full status as a CoVE for Multi-Skilling & Maintenance Engineering. The CoVE - named Engineering SkillSource (ESS) - has developed new engineering courses, responding to the training needs of local employers. It is situated in a purpose-built facility at the College and will play a major role in developing these links with local employers. The ESS Centre offers conference facilities, flexible customer training, rapid prototyping technology and a walk-in facility for local, small businesses to use advanced Computer Aided Design (CAD).

For further information about ESS call 01476 400204 or email info@esscove.co.uk

Young people in Nottinghamshire are among the first in the country to benefit from an online prospectus, which has been developed by specialists in learning and skills services NTP, in partnership with the Nottinghamshire Education Business Alliance (NEBA) and with the support of, and funding from, LSC Nottinghamshire.

The site uses cutting edge technology to create a comprehensive, interactive resource to help potential learners make informed choices about their future studies.

Searching for courses by location, college or category, visitors to www.learninnotts.co.uk can find out everything they need to know about the various courses available.

Carter & Carter Group plc has opened a new state-of-the-art training centre for the automotive industry in Nottingham.

The £4.5 million facility includes a brand new Volkswagen Group Apprentice Training Centre.

The new building has six large workshops and eight seminar rooms. All are equipped with the most up-to-date technology and latest brand specific vehicles and equipment.

Adjusting for better business

A campaign has been launched to encourage local businesses to make their premises more accessible to disabled customers and staff.

Called 'Adjusting for Better Business', the campaign will inform small businesses about their obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act and show them how they may only need to make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of disabled people.

For more information see www.dwp.gov.uk/dda.

The LSC is supporting Manage Discrimination - a new initiative which aims to promote the benefits of employing mature workers, ahead of government legislation which aims to eradicate age discrimination from the workplace.

Manage Discrimination is a campaign funded by East Midlands Development Agency (emda) and has been launched specifically to work with small and medium-sized employers in the East Midlands to ensure they are prepared for the regulations which come into effect on 1st October 2006.

For more information, visit www.managediscrimination.com

East Midlands winners at national awards

Young people and employers from the East Midlands brought home the prizes from this year's national Apprenticeship awards with two outright winners and four commendations.

Sarah Herrick (pictured right) from Kibworth Harcourt in Leicestershire who works as a chef at the Crown Inn in Tur Langton, won the coveted Apprentice of the Year award. Engineering firm, Slack & Parr, based in Kegworth, Leicestershire, was named medium sized Employer of the Year.

Four East Midlands entries were highly commended: Stacey Brown from Barrow-on-Soar in Leicestershire and Donna Trezona from Northamptonshire were both commended in the Personal Achiever 16-18 year old category.

Barrie Stephen Hair from Leicester was commended in the Employer of the Year Award for Small Businesses and Chesterfield Borough Council was commended in the Employer of the Year Award for Medium Businesses.

This third annual Apprenticeship Awards was hosted by TV stars Richard Hammond and Natasha Kaplinsky and held at the London Hilton on Park Lane.



Slack & Parr representatives, pictured at the National Apprenticeship Awards, left to right: Richard Hallsworth, Managing Director, Bryan Harrison, Training Manager, Richard Wilson, Business Development Manager.

The Awards recognised apprentices who are showing immense dedication, diligence and enthusiasm to better themselves and their companies, and employers who are successfully using Apprenticeships to improve their own business performance.

Sarah Herrick's boss, Ian Taylor says: "Sarah arrived at The Crown answering an advertisement for a pot washer. After working with Sarah for no more than three hours it was quite obvious there was a star in our midst."

Regional employer winner, Slack & Parr, has been employing apprentices for nearly 90 years. A finalist at last year's Apprenticeship Awards, the company's approach to on-the-job training has resulted in massive returns: "Not only have we managed to reduce the effect of the engineering skill shortage," says training manager, Bryan Harrison, "but the constant source of a progressive young workforce has enabled us to keep the company at the cutting edge of education and technology."

Slack & Parr's apprentices have a 100% completion rate this year, which is achieved through a dedicated training department and an "open door" policy.



For further information about Apprenticeships, please visit www.apprenticeships.org.uk
Employers, please call 08000 150 400 for a free information pack.
Young people, please call 080 800 13219 to speak to a Connexions Advisor.

The Government's Further Education Reform White Paper positions the further education sector as the backbone of England's economy and offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to challenge the traditional stereotype of vocational training being 'second best'.

White Paper sets out to transform FE sector

Published towards the end of March, Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances sets out to transform the FE sector into the powerhouse of economic growth and social mobility.

The White Paper's reforms aim to improve the nation's skills base, so that learners can acquire the high-quality skills needed for them to achieve productive, sustainable employment and personal fulfilment, and so that employers have a workforce equipped with the right skills for their business to succeed in today's increasingly competitive environment.

The FE White Paper outlines a series of initiatives that will transform the life chances of young people and dramatically improve the skills of the nation's workforce.

As the organisation that exists to make England better skilled and more competitive, the LSC will have an important role to play in driving forward the necessary reforms, not least because we are responsible for planning and funding high-quality vocational education and training for everyone.

Verity Bullough, Regional Director - LSC East Midlands says: "Vocational learning is critical to the success of individuals, businesses and communities across the country.



"This White Paper takes on board the principles of the LSC's *agenda for change* and heralds a real shift in the way FE is delivered. It provides a focus for the learning and skills sector as well as engagement with learners and employers. It will open up the market, allowing excellent provision to grow whilst eliminating provision that fails to reach high quality standards."

How some of the White Paper reforms will impact on the LSC:

- The LSC's planning and funding powers will encourage individual FE providers to develop areas of specialism
- As well as commissioning learning and skills, ensuring that high-quality provision is achieved across the board, the LSC will be given powers of intervention to tackle failing and mediocre provision within the FE sector
- The White Paper calls for the FE system to focus more on the needs of learners and employers, to reinforce the 'demand-led' approach to delivering skills
- New learning accounts are to be piloted by the LSC from autumn 2007 for Level 3 (equivalent to two A Levels) learners
- The LSC's annual Learner Satisfaction Survey will provide regular opportunities for learners to give feedback on their level of satisfaction so that, if needed, providers can take actions to improve.

The Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances document can be viewed or downloaded at: www.dfes.gov.uk

Meet the Team

Verity Bullough, Regional Director, LSC East Midlands introduces her new management team.

"I am pleased to introduce the senior management team that will work with me to deliver the learning and skills agenda across the East Midlands. Nationally, the LSC has just completed a major restructuring exercise, designed to make the organisation leaner

and more responsive. The 'new' LSC combines enhanced regional planning and support capacity with a network of smaller, externally focused local area teams that will work closely with partners and providers to align learning supply and demand.

I am confident that this structure will work well, and that we have the right people in place to ensure that individuals, communities and employers right across the region have the skills they need to succeed."

The Regional Team

Director of Learning, Planning and Performance

Paul Williamson

Paul has lead responsibility for ensuring that the LSC's planning process delivers the organisation's strategic priorities and that budgets are aligned accordingly. Provider quality improvement, equality and diversity, learner health and safety, 14-19 development and provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also come within his team's remit.



"My team will make the right links between policy and practice to ensure that new policy initiatives, such as the Further Education White Paper, are translated into plans and priorities that deliver for the region and locally. Our funding will be plan-led, and focused on the priority areas that we believe will make the greatest difference to the economic competitiveness of the East Midlands. I am looking forward to the challenge."

Director of Finance and Resources

Andrew Martin

Andrew is managing regional financial resources to support the regional senior management team in the achievement of LSC strategic objectives. He also leads strategic interventions in the provider network supporting performance improvement and the financial assessment of capital investments.



"In the East Midlands, the LSC's budget for 2006/2007 is £700 million. My priority is to make sure that the providers who deliver on our behalf maximise the return on our investment by aligning their learning offer with our priorities and ensuring that every possible penny of public funding is directed to high quality learning to support the needs of the regional economy."

Director of Skills

Karen Woodward

Karen will lead the LSC's engagement with employers, developing an approach to skills provision that focuses resources on priority sectors and is genuinely demand-led. Delivering the new Train to Gain service across the East Midlands is her immediate priority. Karen and her team will also lead the LSC's work on Skills for Life; Information, Advice and Guidance; Trade Union partnerships; strategic relationships with Jobcentre Plus and the voluntary and community sector; and the Offender Learning and Skills Service.



"I believe that the Train to Gain service has the potential to transform our offer to employers - not just to those organisations that already recognise the benefits of employee development but crucially to those that, historically, have not. We already have a strong track record of public agency partnership in the East Midlands and will build on this to develop a genuinely joined up approach."

The Local Area Teams

In the East Midlands there are five area directors, each responsible for developing and delivering a local annual plan that supports the delivery of national and regional strategic priorities in a way that meets local needs. Developing effective partnerships, and ensuring that learning and skills are embedded in the broader economic development agenda, are also key accountabilities of the area director posts.

Area Director, Derbyshire

Peter Brammall

"Local responsiveness lies at the heart of the new structure.



Working with

partners and providers to deliver change is not only crucial to the LSC achieving its goals, it also represents an enjoyable and challenging area of work. I'm confident that the mix of partnership working, with support from regional points of expertise, can help us to collectively 'raise the game' for the sector as a whole."

Area Director, Leicestershire

Mary Rogers

"I'm excited about this new challenge and the opportunity to



build and lead a team

which will work with local partners to address skills and learning needs in Leicester and Leicestershire."

There is more redevelopment work in Leicester than anywhere else in the country with £3 billion being spent over the next five years. The LSC will be involved in the skills and training aspects of the developments."

Area Director, Lincolnshire and Rutland

Nick Rashley

"Lincolnshire is a big patch predominantly, but not exclusively,



rural. One of my priorities is to build on our work to make connections that really make a difference - bringing together pre- and Post-16 providers on a range of innovative 14-19 developments, for example, to increase the range of options available to learners including vocational as well as academic progression pathways. We need to do more work such as this to break down barriers to learning and establish connected learning communities - virtual as well as physical - that enable more of our learners, and employers, to acquire the skills they need."

Area Director, (Interim) Northamptonshire

Julie Nugent

Julie is seconded to this post from her role as Director of Strategic Planning Research and Performance at LSC's national office.



"My background has given me extensive experience of the need to base decisions about investment on strong analysis and understanding of local issues. My secondment to LSC Northamptonshire is an excellent opportunity to combine this with 'sharp end' experience of translating policies and plans into real time learning solutions for the people and businesses of the county. With an excellent team already in place, I am looking forward to making a difference."

Area Director, Nottinghamshire

Mick Brown

"These are exciting times for Nottinghamshire.



The establishment of Castle College is an important milestone in our work to streamline the Post-16 offer in the Nottingham Conurbation and plans for a merger of Newark & Sherwood and Lincolnshire Colleges are progressing well. The recently published FE White Paper provides the policy context for our work moving forward and I am confident that we are in a strong position to deliver for individuals, businesses and communities across Nottinghamshire."

If you would like to contact one of the team, please refer to the regional and partnership office details on the back page of the magazine.

Train to Gain picks up the pace



Train to Gain has been on offer to employers in Derbyshire and Leicestershire since April. This new service is gathering pace and the LSC will be ready for a regional roll-out on 1st August 2006.

Train to Gain telemarketing has been targeting small businesses employing between 5 and 25 employees in the LSC's regional priority sectors, based in Derbyshire and Leicestershire since April.

The network of Specialist Skills Brokers are busy. To date, nearly 800 appointments with brokers have been generated.

The LSC's Train to Gain implementation team has held a series of provider briefings, culminating in an Invitation to

Tender Clarification event on 4th May, where over 300 learning provider representatives gathered to hear presentations and ask questions.

As a result, the LSC received 98 tender proposals. We have now announced the first 39 successful 'Fund B' Train to Gain provider organisations for the East Midlands. To see a full list of these providers, please visit one of the local LSC websites on the back page.

The LSC will be launching a summer Train to Gain awareness campaign, primarily in Nottinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire and Rutland, followed by sector specific marketing across the region.

The LSC plans to hold a Train to Gain road show for each sub-region, bringing together all of the Train to Gain service partners.

Visit: www.traintogain.gov.uk, call 0845 057 1817 or complete the enclosed faxback

BGB engineers Apprentice success

Engineering firm BGB Engineering operates in what many see as a decreasing sector, but has had the vision to invest in the skills of its workforce to forge its success. They were praised for their ongoing commitment to Apprenticeship training with the award of 'Lincolnshire and Rutland Employer of the Year 50 to 249 Employees' category at the regional Apprenticeships Awards earlier this year.

The Grantham based company employs 52 people, of which four are currently working towards an Apprenticeship in Engineering. BGB has an excellent record of investment in Apprenticeship



Bill Hemingway of BGB Engineering with Apprentice Mark Collin.

training which has seen a demonstrable return on its investment with all apprentices over the last five years staying on with the company.

Bill Hemingway, Quality Manager, BGB Engineering, says, "Apprentices within our workforce benefit from working alongside experienced, older members of staff who mentor the trainees so that they can

develop specialist skills. As a result, all of the Apprentices that we have employed over the last five years have achieved their programme and are still valued members of staff.

Rob Nixon, of training provider yes4business, adds, "BGB is more than familiar with Apprenticeships, it's become a way of doing business for them. The company's faith in its employees has been returned as BGB records exceptional staff retention figures which is hugely valuable in any business."



Yusef Patel, one of the employees at Ashfield UK who received training.

Market Driven Solutions

Train to Gain positions Skills Brokers even closer to businesses. In the Employer Training Pilots (ETPs), 51% of businesses surveyed in the ETPs' first year evaluation report* thought the help they received to link training with business needs was the most attractive element.

Market Driven Solutions (MDS), originally formed to help Asian businesses with IT, has been brokering and delivering training through the Leicestershire ETP. MDS has trained 940 employees at 46 Leicestershire companies in the past two years. They put their success down to providing skills brokerage support and tailored training.

Sarbjit Johal, Business Development Executive with MDS says, "We work to engage employers who would not normally train their employees. We actively seek to overcome barriers to training and education, be it time, family commitments, financial restraints, language barriers, or lack of formal education."

Ashfield (UK) Limited is a privately owned company based in Leicestershire. It established itself as a contract embroidery service to clothing manufacturers. In 2001 Ashfield decided to diversify by using its production facility to produce its own sourced embroidered and printed corporate casual wear and work wear. It currently employs 30 people. NVQ Level 2 qualifications in Performing Manufacturing Operations have been awarded to 16 embroidery machine operators and garment packers.

Simon Widdowson, Sales Director at Ashfield says, "As an organisation linked to the textile manufacturing industry, we realised the need

for change and necessity to learn new skills several years ago. In MDS, we have found a partner who understands the difficulties small businesses face if they don't implement new skills, staff training and better business practices."

Sam Bhula, Production Manager says, "The staff are happy, motivated and encouraged by the changes Ashfield has made to drive the business forward. It is reassuring to be part of an organisation that is committed to the welfare of its employees, especially in the textile manufacturing industry which has been suffering in recent years due to the huge impact of imported manufactured goods from the Far East."

*Institute for Employment Studies, 2003

Skills Minister's



Skills Minister and MP for Corby and East Northamptonshire, Phil Hope, answers our questions on Post-16 learning and skills

Q What do you see as the priorities for skills in the East Midlands?

A The Skills Strategy (as set out in two White Papers: 2003 and 2005) aims to tackle the long standing weaknesses in our national skills record. It also highlights the importance of the regional, local and sectoral dimension to meeting the skills challenge. Regional Skills Partnerships (RSP) were set up to bring together the key partners involved in skills, employment and business support to address priorities within each region. The East Midlands RSP, the Employment, Skills and Productivity Partnership, has identified six main priority areas for action. These are set out in their Action Plan available from their website: www.esppartnership.org.uk

Q How will Lord Leitch's recommendations on skills 'Skills in the UK: the long term challenge' make a difference?

A The Leitch Review will make a huge difference to the skills agenda. In his interim report, Leitch clearly set out the need for the UK to drive up productivity, to which skills contributes an important part, to better compete with countries in Europe and beyond. This ambition for the UK to have a world class skills profile must be shared across

Government and with all partners but it must be delivered by policy reforms that really bring about a shift in the way employers, individuals and the state work together and invest in skills.

Q We're making good progress towards achieving Skills for Life targets across the country. Where do the key challenges lie?

A You're right to point out the successes in Skills for Life - well over a million learners have achieved a first Skills for Life qualification and we're on track to meet the 2007 milestone of 1.5 million qualifications. The key challenges lie in making sure we maintain and extend this progress. We need to ensure we are offering high quality teaching and learning right across the board, delivered by skilled and qualified staff. We need to reach the hardest to reach and most disadvantaged learners, whilst at the same time enabling people to progress from Skills for Life on to broader and higher level qualifications. The interim report by Lord Leitch outlined how we need to up our game on skills in the UK. Meeting the challenges I've described here will mean we succeed in delivering the right skills for employability and economic competitiveness, and begin to address some of the issues Leitch raises.

Q Are employers doing enough to help themselves when it comes to training and skills? What more should be done to encourage employers to invest in skills?

A Employers are increasingly recognising the link between skills development and productivity. The Sector Skills Councils are working to develop Sector Skills Agreements (SSAs): a five stage process, from analysing skill needs; through to reaching an agreement with partners on how to fund sector training priorities. These SSAs give employers an action plan to secure the training needed to improve productivity in their industry. The bottom line benefits of a well trained workforce are self evident. And of course through Train to Gain, employers will have access to skills brokers to help them to secure appropriate training to meet the specific needs of their organisation.

Q The LSC has launched its Train to Gain service. How will this service reach the 'hard to reach' small and medium sized employers who have not heard the training message?

A Train to Gain aims to engage about 45,000 'hard to reach' employers in the next two years. Local LSCs will be planning their own ways to engage with these employers. The East Midlands area, for example, will be conducting a telemarketing campaign to target 'hard to reach' employers, who employ between 5-25

question time

employees across Derbyshire and Leicestershire. These counties ran very successful Employer Training Pilots. This activity will be supported by a summer awareness campaign and will be extended to include Lincolnshire and Rutland, Nottinghamshire, and Northamptonshire for an August regional roll out. To date, nearly 800 Specialist Skills Broker appointments have been secured within the East Midlands area.

Q The agenda for change, Foster report and the FE White Paper all refer to specialisation and to the development of a new standard for Centres of Vocational Excellence and employer responsiveness. What more should the sector do to become the provider of choice for employers?

A Many colleges are very effective at working with their local employers and supporting their training needs. We need all colleges to build on this successful activity, delivering high quality, flexible and responsive services. We have set out in our Skills and FE Reform Strategies a range of initiatives to help achieve greater responsiveness and raise quality, including giving employers more choice through Train to Gain, encouraging greater specialisation within colleges in specific industry areas so they develop real expertise in delivering vocational learning, and the development of National Skills Academies.

Q How do you see the new arrangements for offender learning helping to support offenders?

A We know that having sustained employment is key to leading a crime-free life. We also know that most offenders and ex-offenders have skill levels well below those of the general population and that they are much more likely to be unemployed. The statistics are stark:

- 75% of people in prison don't have a Level 2 qualification
- 70% of children whose parents don't have a Level 2 won't get one
- 50% of people without work don't have a Level 2 qualification.

People in prison and serving community sentences are a real burden on the taxpayer and the criminal justice services. Currently, released prisoners are in fact more likely to re-offend than they are to avoid crime - nearly one in five crimes is committed by a former prisoner.

The Government's Green Paper Reducing Re-Offending Through Skills and Employment supports the wider reducing re-offending strategy by setting out proposals for tackling poor skills and high unemployment among offenders.

Changes which are already benefiting the offender learning sector include:

- increases in funding for offender learning, from £57 million in 2001-02 to £151 million in 2005-06

- a new, integrated and higher quality offender learning and skills service delivered through the LSC and its providers in place from August 2006 in each English region
- very close working relationships between the LSC and the National Offender Management Service in commissioning the learning delivered
- offenders being, for the first time, a priority group in the plans of stakeholder bodies such as the new Quality Improvement Agency and the LSC.

But there is still a long way to go. The Green Paper sets out proposals for further improvement designed to directly address training and employment issues among offenders:

- a strong focus on jobs: new employer alliances targeting industrial sectors with labour shortages and involving employers in the design and delivery of training
- help for offenders to find work: interviews, help to search for jobs on the Internet, a new job placement scheme and incentives for jobcentres
- a new 'employability contract' to motivate offenders, with mentoring and other support to help offenders get work and keep it.

Adult learners celebrate

Adult learners from the East Midlands made it a night to remember in May when they gathered at the Walkers stadium in Leicester to receive awards to recognise their learning achievements.

The awards night was coordinated by Leicestershire and Leicester City Learning Partnership on behalf of NIACE (the National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education) and the Learning Partnerships in the East Midlands.

There were 26 awards given on the night to:

Individual NIACE Award Winners

- Stuart Bradley, Nottingham
- Sharon Dain, Derbyshire
- Krishna Devaliya, Leicester
- Maria Piroso, Derbyshire
- David Woods, Northamptonshire

NIACE Regional Senior Learner

- George Wilcockson, Nottinghamshire

Access to HE Learner of the Year Award, sponsored by Open College Network East Midlands Region

- Fatma Famau, Leicester

ESF Award

- Beverley Shaw, Derbyshire



NIACE regional adult learners' award winners, left to right David Woods, George Wilcockson, Krishna Davaliya, Stuart Bradley, Maria Piroso, Beverley Shaw (front) and Sharon Dain.

Learning for Work Awards, Sponsored by Skills for Enterprise

Award Winners

- Ivan Cawthorne, Nottingham
- Anna Haywood, Nottingham
- John Ley, Derbyshire

Learning Partnership Awards

Best Newcomers category:

- William Sutherland, Derbyshire
- William Ward, Leicestershire
- Charles Gubby, Lincolnshire
- Jackie Moore, Nottinghamshire
- Shirley Brownbill, Northamptonshire

Most Improved Learner category:

- Paula Burdis, Derbyshire
- Sally Bailey, Leicestershire
- Carole Overton, Lincolnshire
- Joanne Brough, Nottinghamshire
- Sheila Storey, Northamptonshire

Greatest Learning Journey category:

- Heidi Purkis, Derbyshire
- Katie Sherman, Leicestershire
- Jill Briginshaw, Lincolnshire
- Sarah Sturgeon, Nottinghamshire
- Ron Garside, Northamptonshire

Castle College goes live

Following approval from the Secretary of State, Castle College Nottingham went live on 1st June. Created as a result of the merger of Broxtowe and The People's College, Castle College has some 20,000 young people and adults in learning. The College currently operates from a number of premises in the centre and west side of Nottingham.

The creation of Castle College is the culmination of over three year's hard work by the LSC Nottinghamshire. As Executive Director Mick Brown explains, the Strategic Area Review (StAR) process identified the need for significant rationalisation of both curriculum and premises across the FE sector in the Nottingham conurbation:

"With four general FE colleges serving the relatively small area of the Nottingham conurbation, the StAR report identified significant

duplication in some curriculum areas, a lack of quality provision at Level 1 and inefficient use of property. The LSC explored a number of options to rationalise the FE infrastructure and concluded that the consensual merger of Broxtowe and The People's Colleges, initiated by the Colleges themselves, was achievable, and would deliver real improvements in the learning offer in the conurbation.

"With Castle College now established, we are working to develop a curriculum-led property

strategy that will include the other two FE colleges serving the conurbation and will also take account of the Building Schools for the Future investment and planned Academies development. We hope the outcome of this work will be an integrated curriculum offer, that will meet the skills needs of individuals, communities and businesses. I would like to thank the LSC Nottinghamshire team, including the local Council, for their hard work in support of the merger."



Sue Daley, Principal of Boston College, gives a FE perspective on the Quality theme of the LSC's *agenda for change*

There's a lot to agree with in the aims of *agenda for change's* Quality theme, though we might debate the most effective ways of achieving them. Much of what's proposed exists already in colleges: well-established self-assessment; use of clients' views in planning and improving; links between quality management and development planning. I support challenges to poor performance, if fair and accurate, and the new success measures could be useful tools for demonstrating comparative achievement in areas previously neglected by league-table-makers - as long as there is a clear understanding that the playing field is not level.

Personally, I welcome the LSC's proposed support in demonstrating the social and economic benefits of the sector and in helping us build staffing capacity. Promotion of 'diverse first-class leadership, management and workforce development' can't be argued with, though it does beg the question about where these staff will come from, when FE is still unable to compete for the best when we remain at the bottom of the financial pecking order.

And there's the rub, really - the success of the proposals depends on the external infrastructure being right and it's not yet. Apart from funding matters, how much value will be added for individual providers and their clients by the addition of the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) and new standards from Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) and Sector Skills Councils? I know I'm not alone in doubting the validity of current 'full' Inspections/Annual Assessment Visits as reliable assessment tools. The jury's still out on annual planning reviews and self-regulation.

I'm not cynical by nature nor remotely complacent. But we're already doing something right: national average success rates rise year-on-year - not by accident, but by planned efforts and a great deal of investment, which I fear will increase without any real discernible impact at the local provider level.



Asha Khemka, Principal and Chief Executive at West Nottinghamshire College, comments on the Reputation theme of the LSC's *agenda for change*.

The LSC's *agenda for change* and the recently published Further Education White Paper both emphasise the importance of enhancing the reputation of the FE sector.

I actively support this, provided that we in the sector and the LSC are absolutely clear about what reputation means and that we work together to develop our reputation in a systematic and sustainable way. Reputation is not what we think of ourselves, but how our customers - individuals, businesses and the broader communities in which we operate - view us. The reputation of the sector ultimately rests on delivering a learning offer that is relevant, responsive and results-driven.

Results from the LSC's recently published Learner Satisfaction Survey 2005 show that we are getting our offer right for individual learners. Nationally, 90% of learners surveyed within FE stated that they were satisfied with their overall learning experience, with the percentage of extremely satisfied learners up four percentage points from 2003/04 levels to 27%, the highest recorded level since the Survey began in 2001. Contrast this with the position in respect of employers where, according to the LSC's National Employer Skills Survey 2005, only 31% of employers in the East Midlands used FE to meet their skills needs and where there is, as yet, no nationally agreed model to benchmark the quality of the FE employer offer. We need to urgently address our penetration of the employer marketplace and, critically, ensure that we measure customer satisfaction against a range of indicators that accurately reflect employers' needs. If we get this right, we will be in a strong position to raise our reputation by demonstrating that the sector's contribution to economic competitiveness is not just about skills for individual learners but for employers too.

16 Facts and Figures

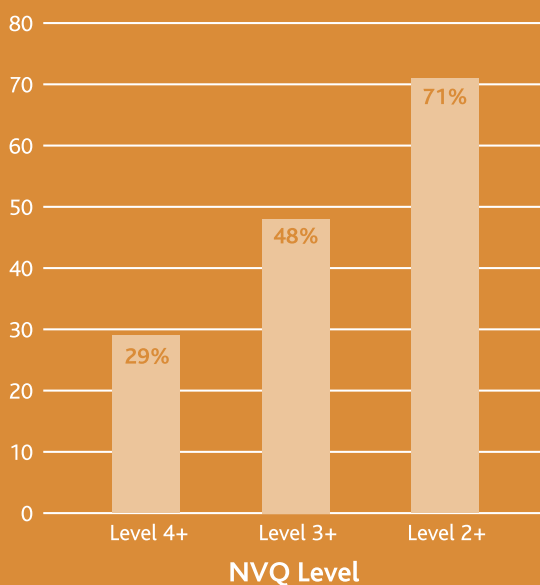
East Midlands Household Survey 2006

The East Midlands Household Survey 2006 is a major research project undertaken by the LSC East Midlands. In the spring of this year, over 13,000 adults were interviewed across the region, and asked about their skills, qualifications, participation in and attitudes to learning. The results will inform the LSC's planning cycle, as well as helping colleges and other providers develop provision to better meet their needs.

The first results are shown here - full reports should be available soon. For more information, please contact:
claire.parry@lsc.gov.uk

Highest Qualification of Economically Active

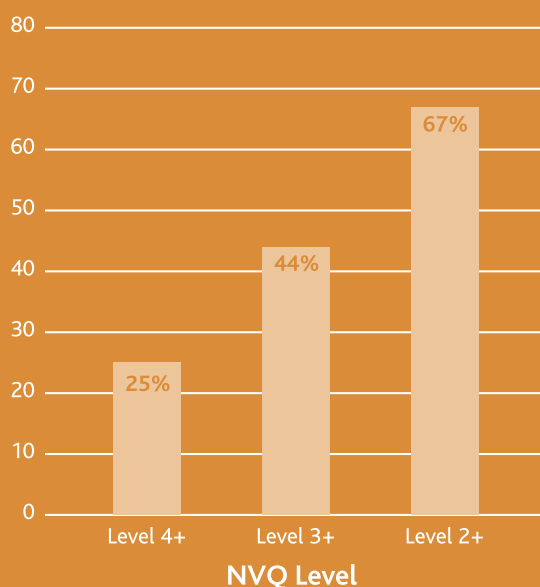
Base 10,699



Economically active - those that are aged 16 and over who are without a job, are available to start work or have been looking for work, whether they claim unemployment related benefits.

Highest NVQ Equivalent All Respondents (16-65)

Base 13,510



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*The East Midlands Regional Office is relocating to the LSC's Leicestershire office in Autumn 2006.

You can also find this document on all the above local websites.

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