

Learning and Skills Council to set out its vision for Suffolk

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The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) will tonight (Thursday, 8th November) reveal its ambitions to ensure everyone in Suffolk has the opportunity to gain a wide range of skills and qualifications.

Substantial investment in high quality courses and facilities coupled with an emphasis on making learning more accessible, appealing and relevant will be at the core of the LSC's strategy to move Suffolk into the top 25 per cent nationally and encourage all employers across the county to train their staff.

The county's achievements to date and how this can be built upon in the coming years will be the focus of the Suffolk Celebration of Learning and Skills event at Trinity Park tonight. Around 100 guests will attend, including Suffolk MPs, councillors, and education heads and governors, as well as the Chairman of the national LSC Chris Banks.

They will hear how Suffolk has enjoyed one of its best years ever in terms of learning success, with the opening of University Campus Suffolk, greater numbers of young people moving into further education and training after school than in any previous year and more students achieving at least five GCSEs at A* to C grade than ever before.

And they will be told that hundreds of millions of pounds of investment will be ploughed into Suffolk's education sector in the next five years, which will help deliver new facilities, courses and initiatives.

Judith Mobbs, Area Director of LSC Suffolk, said: "Everyone involved in learning in Suffolk has a right to be proud of the county's educational and training achievements. Suffolk faces some real challenges to meet the needs of its change in economy and providing the means for Suffolk's people to make the most of the opportunities on their doorstep is good for the individual and good for the success of the county."

One of the initiatives the LSC will roll out following the event tonight is the Government-backed Skills Pledge. This seeks the commitment of employers to ensure their staff undertake training relevant to their jobs to at least NVQ level 2 standard, equivalent to five GCSEs, and to support employees to develop their basic skills where needed, including literacy and numeracy. LSC Suffolk will ask all employers in the county to sign the Skills Pledge, and encourage them to see training as not only an investment in their staff but in their company.

Judith Mobbs said: "We know that ensuring Suffolk's workforce has the right skills will ensure the county's economy continues to grow and businesses will thrive, and we now need to ensure we get this message across to employers across Suffolk. Without the support of Suffolk's companies and organisations, we can only do so much, which is why the Skills Pledge is so much more than a signature on a piece of paper."

The Suffolk Celebration of Learning and Skills event will be hosted by Look East's Stewart White and many elements of the evening will be provided by students from Suffolk colleges. Catering will be provided by Suffolk New College, floral arrangements by Otley College, music upon arrival by a string quartet from King Edward School and there will be a stage performance by students from Lowestoft College.

Other information revealed tonight will include:

- The LSC will invest £43m in FE in Suffolk in 2007/08.
- At present, there are more than 20,000 learners in FE learning.
- There has been a 10 per cent increase in the number of 16 – 18 year-olds in college in the last year.

- There are currently more than 3,000 apprentices in Suffolk, with another 700 young people on entry-to-employment programmes leading into apprenticeships.
- £12.6m of funding for work-based training in Suffolk has been made available in 2007/08.
- Last year 6,869 adults in Suffolk gained literacy and numeracy skills and qualifications from adult learning programmes.

(Information on improvements to learning facilities across Suffolk can be found in Notes to Editors)

For more information on the Skills Pledge and to find out how you or your employer can sign up, visit www.traintogain.gov.uk/skillspledge or telephone 0800 015 55 45.

For more information on the Learning and Skills Council and any of its initiatives, visit www.lsc.gov.uk

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Notes to Editors

****Images from the event will follow on Friday morning****

The media are welcome to attend the event. If you would like to attend or require further information or an interview with an LSC spokesperson, please contact Susie Lockwood at Band & Brown Communications on 01603 417722 or email susie.lockwood@bbpr.com.

Facilities

- In 2009 **Suffolk New College** will relocate to a state-of-the-art campus.
- A £40m 16-19 centre, called the **SWISS Centre**, is planned to open in South West Ipswich in 2010. It will provide education for 2,000 young people in the area and offer an extensive range of A level subjects, the International Baccalaureate and vocational courses, as well as specialist facilities for those with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- Construction of further facilities at the new **University Campus Suffolk** will be completed over the next 8 – 10 years, with £180m of investment put into the project. The first phase will see a landmark waterfront building opening next year.

- At **West Suffolk** and **Lowestoft Colleges**, three quarters of the existing campuses will be renewed in the next five years.
- **West Suffolk College** also has a new £1m Arts and Science Centre.
- New technology centres have opened at **Otley** and **Lowestoft Colleges**, providing top quality modern facilities in construction and engineering technologies.
- The new £2m **North Suffolk Vocational Skills Centre** near Beccles is supporting young people aged 14 – 19 years to develop their skills in engineering, construction, hair and beauty, health and care professions, hospitality/catering and information technology.

LSC

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for planning and funding high-quality vocational education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world-class standards. Our vision is that by 2010, young people and adults in England have the knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. Established in 2001, we work nationally, regionally and locally from a network of offices across the country.