

Prospects set to get better for young people in Thetford

Date of issue	12 July 2007
Publication number	123
Embargo until	Immediate

Prospects for young people in Thetford to get good jobs with good pay are set to improve with the launch of a competition that will provide a wider choice of education and training in the town.

Local schools, sixth forms, colleges, training providers and private organisations have been invited by the Learning and Skills Council Norfolk (LSC Norfolk) to submit proposals to get a minimum of 200 more young people into education and training in the town by broadening the range and improving the overall quality of learning opportunities available locally.

Currently, it is believed that around 60 per cent of Thetford's 16 – 18-year-olds are taking part in some form of education or training, significantly lower than the average for Norfolk at 71 per cent. LSC Norfolk has ambitious plans to increase the Thetford and wider Norfolk average to 90 per cent by 2015.

Graham Brough, Area Director for LSC Norfolk, said: "Thetford has a tradition of its young people not staying in education or training after it is no longer compulsory and LSC Norfolk is determined to turn this around.

"Historically, there are probably a number of contributing factors to this low participation level in post-16 learning. A lot of work opportunities in Thetford tend to be in low paid industries which have not always in the past put an emphasis on skills and training. Also,

the range of courses on offer in the town is currently too limited, with some young people having to travel significant distances to study.

“The combination of these and other factors has seen Thetford lagging behind many other places in the county in terms of the numbers of young people staying on after 16 years of age and the skills and qualifications gained. However, I’m pleased to say that things are about to change for the better.”

Thetford has recently been designated as one of only three ‘growth points’ in the East of England by the Government. As such, it has the potential to become one of the fastest growing towns in the region, with plans for up to an additional 6,000 homes. There will also be substantial investment in diversifying the employment base through projects such as the Thetford Enterprise Park, resulting in the creation of between 4,000 and 6,000 new jobs.

Christopher Fraser, MP for South West Norfolk, said: “The regeneration of Thetford will offer hugely exciting opportunities for those with the right skills, as the economy grows. We need to ensure that young people locally are able to take full advantage of these opportunities by equipping them through appropriate high quality training and education if they leave school at 16. I have long campaigned on the principle that vocational training and practical skills, as well as academic qualifications, will equip young people to make their way in life.

“I warmly welcome LSC Norfolk’s plans to improve and extend the learning programmes available to young people in Thetford, particularly with the emphasis on the importance of vocation learning.”

LSC Norfolk has identified that a minimum of 200 additional educational places will need to be provided to enable post-16 learning to grow and meet the target of 90 per cent participation by 2015. The proposals submitted to the competition must also extend the

quality and breadth of learning available in the area, making it more attractive to study in the town and the courses on offer more relevant to the needs of employers.

LSC Norfolk's competition for Thetford will be launched at an event to be held at Center Parcs at Elveden on Wednesday, 18 July. Here, education and training providers can find out more about the opportunities the competition will present and discuss these with the organisers. They will then have until the end of January next year to submit their proposals.

For more information about the competition, email thetfordcompetition@lsc.gov.uk or contact Graham Brough on 01603 218858.

-ends-

Notes to editors

Please refer to the contents of the media pack for further information about the Thetford Competition.

For more information please contact Donna Barker or Susie Lockwood at Band & Brown Communications on 01603 417722 or email susie.lockwood@bbpr.com.

Anyone interested in attending the launch event should contact Barbara Long by email on barbara.long@lsc.gov.uk.

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.

In the east of England we have six offices, one in each county: Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. We work with our partners, local employers, training provides, schools and colleges to realise the vision of developing the region as one of the most successful knowledge-based economies in Europe.