



>LSC

Leading learning and skills

the magazine

July 2007

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

Awards event
celebrates
London's exceptional
apprentices

Centre pages

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Cover photo: television and radio personality Richard Bacon hosts the 2007 LSC London Regional Apprenticeship Awards ceremony

the magazine

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David Hughes

Comment

Welcome to our quarterly stakeholder publication. Featured in this issue is a range of strategic developments, activities and events from across our region, all of which aim to make London better skilled and more competitive.

The much-anticipated Skills Campaign, detailed opposite, aims to help people recognise the importance of gaining the skills they need to succeed. 'Our future. It's in our hands' is an overarching message that will flow through everything we do. All current LSC marketing and communication campaigns will be aligned under the Skills Campaign banner so that there is a consistent and concerted push towards changing the hearts and minds of learners and employers.

People with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are a very important group within our local communities and our economy (see pages 4 and 5). We must include them in everything we do. So when, for example, we say that we need all adults to gain qualifications at least at Level 2, this includes people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Their outcomes are no different from those of other learners, although the support needed in order to achieve them may be greater. This inclusive approach will enrich our region's communities and workplaces, as well as the London economy.

Our centre spread focuses on apprenticeships. The recent Regional Apprenticeship Awards event was a very uplifting experience. It's so important to celebrate achievement; I believe that this is something we don't do enough of in our society. It was great to see so many enthusiastic young people rewarded for excelling in their training.

Last but not least, WorldSkills 2011 is featured on page 11. I think there's a strong link between this competition and our Apprenticeships strategy. I'm hoping that we'll use the four years leading up to the event to show children, young people, parents and teachers just how fantastic vocational learning is. WorldSkills 2011 offers the perfect opportunity to involve employers in showcasing excellence and positioning vocational learning as an exciting and rewarding career pathway.

David Hughes
 LSC London Regional Director



EUROPEAN UNION
 European Social Fund

Our future. It's in our hands.

“Put simply, the Skills Campaign aims to create a belief that everyone has the capacity to learn better skills and, by doing so, to improve their working life, now and in the future.”

David Hughes,
LSC London Regional Director

Launched this month, the national Skills Campaign aims to transform the way people think, feel and act towards learning and skills. Here we look at the rationale behind the campaign and why the message is being rolled out now.

Last December Lord Leitch published his Review of Skills in the UK and set an ambitious challenge for our nation to become a world leader in skills by 2020.

Central to Lord Leitch's findings is that individuals and employers need to recognise the value of training and skills. The Skills Campaign aims to transform the way people think and feel about learning and skills. It will improve the demand for and investment in qualifications at all levels.

David Hughes, LSC London Regional Director, said: “One of the key ways that we can increase and focus the effort to meet these aims is to transform the way individuals and businesses value learning and skills.

“This is becoming ever more important in an environment where we aim to increase dramatically the level of demand for and investment in skills. We are also keen to balance this demand with the amount people and employers are prepared to pay and invest in their future learning.”

The LSC, the Department for Education and Skills, and the Sector Skills Development Agency are the driving force behind the Skills Campaign. They are supported by a

raft of national, regional and local partners, right across the learning and skills sector.

The campaign's ambition is to work with every organisation interested in promoting skills to ensure the message is heard by everyone in England.

The campaign will run for between three and five years, and use a variety of media, including a website and helpline. It focuses on reaching adults and employers who may not traditionally learn or train their staff, directing them to the relevant services, programmes, funding and support. It is designed to be a simple, effective and powerful way of promoting all the services delivered by the LSC and our partner organisations.

“We need to encourage people to take control of their future by gaining better skills. They can reach for success with the help of easily accessible services,” said David. “The onus is on the individual; they have to take the first step themselves.

“Put simply, the Skills Campaign aims to create a belief that everyone has the capacity to learn better skills and, by doing so, to improve their working life, now and in the future.”

Call 0800 011 30 30 or search online for “in our hands”.

Ground-breaking Skills Pledge

Here at the LSC, we have promised to persuade our suppliers to commit to the Skills Pledge. We were one of 150 employers to sign the pledge at the national launch of the scheme in London.

The pledge means these organisations have made a public commitment to support their employees in achieving basic literacy and numeracy and to work towards a full Level 2 qualification, equivalent to five GCSEs at grades A to C.

On the day of the launch alone, more than 1.7 million employees were assured they will get the help they need to compete in a skilled workforce.

For more information on the Skills Pledge, visit www.traintogain.gov.uk or call 0800 015 5545.

Strategy will support London difficulties and/or disabilities

The five goals

The *Learning for Living and Working in London* draft strategy proposes five broad goals.

1. Understand better what learners want, the services currently available and what changes need to be made.
2. Expand employment opportunities and improve progression routes into employment of different kinds.
3. Reshape the curriculum so as to support people in achieving their potential for independent living and employment.
4. Build networks, or 'campuses', of high-quality, accessible provision based around centres of excellence/expertise.
5. Provide people with better services through effective partnership working at local, regional and national levels.

The LSC is working with agencies and organisations across London to develop a strategy that will greatly improve opportunities for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities throughout the region.

The LSC has set itself a stretching target: by 2015 England will be an international exemplar for the provision of high-quality post-16 learning provision to learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. LSC London Region intends to play a major role in realising this ambition, which will require sustained effort and commitment from all those involved in planning, funding and delivering provision.

A chance to have your say

The *Learning for Living and Working in London* draft strategy was published in June by the LSC, supported by partners from a wide range of agencies and organisations. We urge you to read it and give us your views.

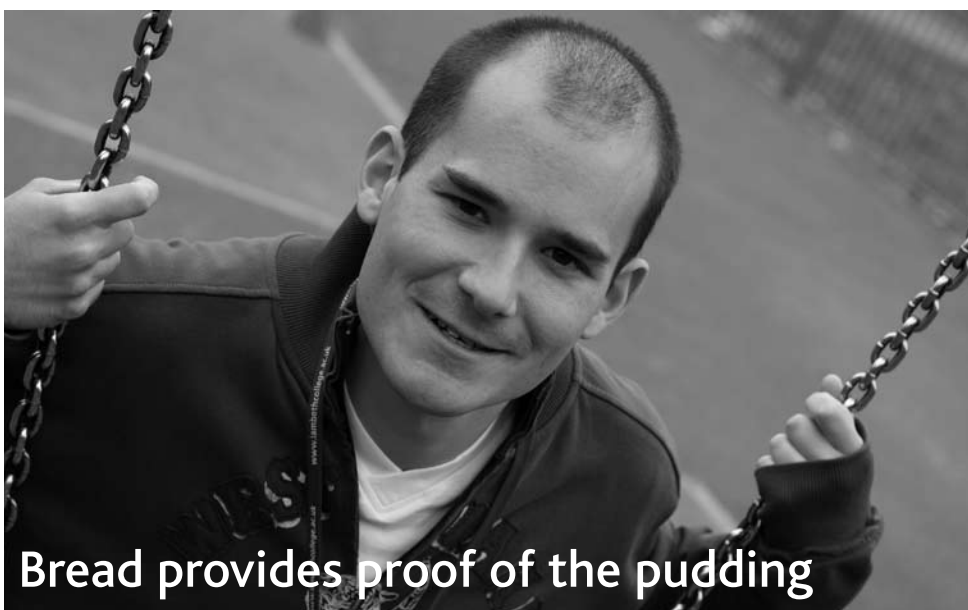
Elaine McWilliam is leading LSC London's work in this area. She said: "Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities need more and better provision, greater opportunities for their progression and support in achieving aspirations of independent living and employment."

Although some finance is available through the LSC's national Investment for Change fund to kick-start the changes that are needed, it's already clear that, in the longer term, no additional money will be provided. Implementing change across our region must therefore be based on a firm, multi-agency commitment to better prioritisation of existing levels of funding, which is the basis of the regional draft strategy.

We are keen to canvass opinion from all our stakeholders on this important subject. The *London-wide Review*, which was commissioned by the LSC to help develop the strategy, identified a strong groundswell of support, enthusiasm and commitment from delivery partners and other stakeholders for working together to achieve the changes proposed in the draft strategy. Prompted by this review, a number of developments and pilot projects are already well underway (see *Testing the water* article opposite).

Your views are important. Please ensure that you give us your feedback by 31 July, when the consultation phase comes to a close.

Visit www.livelearnwork.org to download the *Learning for Living and Working in London* draft strategy, which contains a response form. Completed responses should be sent by 31 July to slp@prospects.co.uk



Bread provides proof of the pudding

Lambeth College's LSC-funded Catering Work Project aims to help learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities into work by enabling them to be involved in running the Bread Dough Co, which is a successful bread-making business. Learner Robert Fandino (pictured) said: "Coming to college has taught me how to make bread and sell it to customers. I have lots of confidence in the teachers. I feel they understand my learning difficulties and give me encouragement."

ers with learning



Caroline Allen (left), pictured with a proud young achiever who stands to benefit from the new strategy

Creating a blueprint for regional change

Caroline Allen chairs the London Regional Strategy Group that helped formulate the *Learning for Living and Working in London* draft strategy.

She said: "Our starting point was a striking set of statistics highlighted in the National Employment Panel's report, *Able to Work*. This stated that 50 per cent of working-age disabled people are economically inactive, compared with just 15 per cent of non-disabled people, and that nearly 20 per cent of the working-age population are disabled. When you consider these figures in the context of our region, with the high economic activity levels in some boroughs, the scale of wasted opportunity is enormous."

The *Learning for Living and Working in London* draft strategy outlines a plan to transform and enrich learning provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It proposes five broad goals (see page 4), to be achieved over the next three years.

"Our draft strategy was informed by research findings from extensive

consultation with learners and other stakeholders, and we hope that many will respond to the consultation on the draft," said Caroline. "To enable us to plan effectively, we also incorporated data about young learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are coming through London's school system.

"For the benefit of our region, it's vital that we make the most of the skills and abilities of Londoners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. That's the bottom line. We must give them opportunities to maximise their employment potential and participate fully in the community. At present there are some barriers. It's our job to identify and remove them."

The London Regional Strategy Group includes senior representatives from a range of organisations, including the LSC, London colleges, Connexions, local authorities, the London Development Agency and the Quality Improvement Agency.

For more information about the National Employment Panel, visit www.nationalemploymentpanel.gov.uk

Testing the water

Much is already happening to start reshaping and transforming London's provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

A number of prototypes are up and running throughout the region, to test new ways of working and to help build capacity, including the following examples:

- many colleges have begun to offer specialist provision. Barnet College is focusing on mental health, the College of North West London is developing expertise in supporting visually impaired learners and those with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and Harrow College is supporting hearing impaired learners
- Carshalton College will be building a new Vocational Progression Unit for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including specialist support for learners with autistic spectrum disorders. The unit will be developed jointly by Orchard Hill College and Carshalton College
- Lambeth and Southwark colleges are working on a project that has three key themes: curriculum flexibility, employability and increased local capacity
- a number of London colleges are working to develop and deliver differentiated pathways for adult learners, including social enterprises
- led by Lewisham College, a mapping exercise is identifying offender learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- partnership working is high on the agenda in south London, with projects to raise awareness of the strategy for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities across the local provider base, and to improve transition planning in local boroughs.

64,000

people on LSC-funded programmes in London consider themselves to have a learning difficulty or disability, according to the report



Schools Minister Jim Knight (centre) visits a laboratory on the new site. Joining him are: Councillor George Meehan, Leader of Haringey Council; Sharon Shoosmith, Director of the Children and Young People's Service, Haringey Council; and sixth form applicants

New £28 million centre for Haringey students

This September, Haringey will be welcoming more than 500 sixth formers to its new state-of-the-art learning environment.

The main construction work at Haringey Sixth Form Centre was completed at the end of March. Included among the many top-notch facilities and services available at the wi-fi enabled campus are specialist science laboratories, industry-standard kitchens, dance and drama studios, an

outdoor amphitheatre, sports facilities and a theatre. When fully open, the centre will have a capacity of 1,200.

Funding for the £28 million project came from two sources. The bulk of the finance was provided by Haringey Council through Building Schools for the Future, a government programme that aims to rebuild or refurbish every secondary school in the country by 2015. LSC London Region also made a £10 million contribution.

Central London colleges share good practice

Four colleges in central London have set up a group to share best practice in addressing the needs of low-skilled and workless adults. The good practice group initiative is part of a £2.2 million Employability Demonstration pilot programme, which is centred on job outcomes and involves the colleges working in a new way. Over a two-year period, each college will trial a new approach:

- **City and Islington College** is offering mentoring and courses in employability skills to existing learners
- **Lambeth College** is focusing on the needs of residents in some of the borough's most deprived wards. They are working in close partnership with the Clapham Park New Deal for Communities
- **Southwark College** is developing a network of providers and a 'roll on, roll off' programme combining vocational learning with Skills for Life
- **South Thames College** is working with two local employers to help meet their recruitment needs by providing local people with employability skills training.

Regular meetings provide an invaluable opportunity for the colleges to share best practice ideas, discuss the best way to overcome barriers to progress, and access the expertise of Jobcentre Plus external relations managers.

For more information, contact Saskia Gretton on 020 7904 0739.

Conference promotes investment in learning and skills

Local business leaders flocked to the South London Employment and Skills Conference.

Staged at Crystal Palace Football Club, the event attracted more than 200 business leaders, many of whom were keen to contribute their ideas for enhancing the future economic development of the local area.

The central message of the event was that investing in learning and skills has a clear pay-off in terms of financial gain and business growth. With 47 exhibitors present, there was certainly ample opportunity for delegates to find out about working in partnership with local colleges and work-based learning providers in order to identify and meet their skills needs.

Delegates expressed great interest in the LSC's Train to Gain programme (see back page), which enables employers to steer skills development within their business. They also participated in a range of practical workshops and seized networking opportunities.

The conference was the brainchild of the South London Skills Alliance. It was organised by the South London Learning Partnership and funded by the LSC.

For more information, visit www.sllpskills.com



The conference provided an ideal networking opportunity

Winning trio from Bexley College

Three construction learners from Bexley College came out on top in London's Skillbuild Apprentice of the Year competition.

Skillbuild is the national competition for young people training in construction, and is endorsed by the Construction Industry Training Board, the DfES and UK Skills.

The regional competition was held at Bexley College and attracted entries from 94 craft trainees who are studying at colleges across London. The five main skills categories for the regional event were bricklaying, site carpentry, joinery, painting and decorating, and plastering.

The event proved to be a great success for Bexley College, whose trainees came away with three first prizes: Richard Curtis (painting and decorating), Ricky Chance (top new entrant in the bricklaying category) and Liam Dunphy (site carpentry). Liam will now be progressing to the national Skillbuild finals, to be held in Birmingham in October.

For more information about Skillbuild, visit www.skillbuild.org



Proud winner Ricky Chance is presented with a spirit level by Bexley College Principal Bridget Boreham

Harrow 14-19 Collegiate secures £25 million capital funding

The LSC has allocated nearly £25 million in capital funding for the expansion of post-16 education in Harrow, west London, thanks to a successful bid by the Harrow 14-19 Collegiate.

Described by Schools Minister Lord Andrew Adonis as providing "a model for the sector", the Collegiate brings together 10 schools, three colleges, two special schools, work-based learning providers and the Harrow Skills Centre. Its learner numbers are expected to increase sharply over the next few years, from 434 this year to just over 900 for 2007/08, and 1,200

the year after that. The funding will be used to deliver a fully integrated 14-19 curriculum that meets the needs of the Collegiate's learners and local employers alike.

Young people will have access to an unprecedented choice of provision in terms of subjects, levels and pathways.

The breadth of options available is sure to inspire those currently at risk of falling into the NEET (not in employment, education or training) category to engage in learning and fulfil their potential. Specialist vocational provision will also be provided, as will

progression opportunities through to higher education.

David Hughes, LSC Regional Director for London, said: "This is an exceptional example of what can be achieved by schools, colleges and work-based learning providers working together in partnership with the LSC and the Local Authority to maximise the quality and breadth of curriculum offered across the Borough."

The Collegiate is one of the consortia selected to pilot the new Diplomas from September 2008 (see page 12).

Apprentices shine at ceremony

The achievements of London's top-performing apprentices and employers were celebrated in style at a distinguished awards event.

The 2007 LSC London Regional Apprenticeship Awards event was a stylish occasion, with apprentices, employers and learning providers gathered for a celebration of success at the renowned Savoy Hotel on 30 May.

David Hughes, LSC London Regional Director, was highly impressed by the dedication and enterprise shown by the shortlisted apprentices. He also recognised the commitment to training and belief in the Apprenticeships programme shown by all the employers.

He said: "This event demonstrated just how fantastic apprenticeships are. The young people I spoke to have gained tremendously from their learning experience, and this sentiment was echoed by employers keen to continue growing their own skilled workforce. I hope many more people will be inspired to take up London's apprenticeships challenge in the future."



Host Richard Bacon announcing London's six award winners

The tension mounted among the 200-strong audience as the guest speaker, television and radio personality Richard Bacon, stepped up to the podium. He congratulated all the entrants for their exceptional achievements and went on to announce London's six award winners, detailed below.

National nominations

At the time of writing, the following London finalists are preparing for the National Apprenticeship Awards event, to be held at the Hilton, Park Lane:

- **Fiona Fay**
– Personal Achiever of the Year
- **Lucy Rouillon**
– Advanced Apprentice of the Year
- **Kesslers International**
– Medium Business
- **BT**
– Large Business
- **Heathrow Airport Ltd**
– Large Business.

Any winners from our region will be featured in the next issue of *the magazine*.

For more information about apprenticeships, visit www.apprenticeships.org.uk or www.employersforapprentices.gov.uk

Personal Achiever of the Year Winner: Ylber Neziraj

Ylber's is a tale of immense courage and determination. At 13 he was separated from his family in war-torn Albania. He made his way to England, where he lived in a children's home for four years. Despite being teased about his poor English he studied hard, finishing up with GCSEs and an NVQ Level 1 in Performing Engineering Operations. Now an apprentice at Lewisham Borough Council and training at Carshalton College, he said: "I hope I set a good example. You don't have to follow the same path as others; you can make your own opportunities."

Young Apprentice of the Year Winner: Perry Waters

Northwood School student Perry Waters' Young Apprenticeship at Rickmansworth Sports Cars has been a life-changing experience, as he readily admitted: "My attitude to school has improved, I know exactly where my life is going and I am now motivated to succeed in a way I never was before." He has learned about teamwork, responsibility and respect for others, while at the same time improving his technical skills, confidence and communication. Perry's troubleshooting ability has even earned him the nickname 'eagle eyes'! He intends to complete a full apprenticeship in the motor industry.

Apprentice of the Year Winner: Megan Parry

Megan is no stranger to success. While studying at Lewisham College, her painting and decorating skills won her a silver award in last year's regional Skillbuild competition and her strong work ethic has earned her two pay rises from her employer, A Woman's Touch. She finds mentoring her fellow apprentices particularly rewarding and said: "The Apprenticeships programme has not only given me practical skills, but has boosted my confidence when dealing with a wide range of people." After going on to complete an Advanced Apprenticeship, Megan plans to launch her own business.

prestigious awards



Celebrating success (left to right): Perry Waters; John Anderson, Chief Executive of Kesslers International; Adam Brown; Richard Bacon; George Kessler, Group Deputy Chairman of Kesslers International; David Hughes, LSC London Regional Director; Megan Parry; Christine Oliver, Apprentice Coordinator, Tube Lines; and Ylber Neziraj

Advanced Apprentice of the Year Winner: Adam Brown

Following A-levels and a brief stint as a 'tea boy', Adam was disillusioned, with no sense of direction and few career prospects. Then he joined the BT Apprenticeships scheme and the world looked far brighter: he loved working as a narrowband network designer and studying through Accenture. He went on to establish The Apprenticeship Network (TAN), which now provides support to all BT apprentices. Adam said: "This award gives me a platform to share my enthusiasm with potential apprentices and employers. Apprenticeships are no longer second-best to a university education, but a route into a long-lasting and successful career."

Employer of the Year (1-249 employees) Winner: Kesslers International

Kesslers views its apprentices as assets, both now and in the longer term. Apprentices comprise 5 per cent of the Kesslers workforce and take on highly skilled work at a very early stage.

An understanding of teamwork and their own role in the business motivates apprentices to develop a taste for responsibility, coupled with a maturity beyond their years. Kesslers also works with local schools to encourage students to take on vocational careers.

Employer of the Year (250+employees) Winner: Tube Lines

Tube Lines' commitment to training is beyond doubt. The organisation invested £10 million in a specialist Skills Training Centre in Stratford. It also delivers careers workshops in engineering and transportation to local schoolchildren.

Tube Lines actively supports and manages performance development, encouraging innovation and excellence among its apprentices, many of whom achieve personal objectives that exceed those of the Advanced Apprenticeship.

In my view: London's 2012 Games

The forthcoming 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games have acted as a catalyst for a host of innovative projects. Harvey Redgrave, LSC London Region's Director of Economic Development – Olympics, provides an overview.



Q: What skills and experience do you bring to the table?

I spent several years working in central government, both on the Home Office strategy team and in the Prime Minister's strategy unit. I joined the LSC because I felt that it would be a good opportunity for me to get nearer the coalface of delivery and gain more frontline experience. The skills I bring to the table are: the ability to think strategically, be analytical, see the bigger picture and solve problems.

Q: How do you see the LSC's role in relation to the 2012 Games?

It's our job to ensure that we commission excellent learning and skills provision in those sectors most likely to grow as a result of the Games, for example, construction and customer service. We have to ensure that the standard and volume of training taking place meet the demands of our region's employers so that Londoners are equipped with the right skills when jobs arise.

Q: Have Lord Leitch's recommendations had an impact on your plans?

Yes. Following publication of his December 2006 report, *Prosperity for all in the Global Economy: World Class Skills*, we have taken steps to ensure that the provision we fund on the Olympics will help push people into and through the labour market. We're also using the 2012 Games to help boost apprenticeship numbers and improve the learning and skills infrastructure.

Q: And do you have the budget to achieve all that?

Our budget for 2007-08 is £5 million, which is a significant amount. We are in the process of tendering contracts worth £4 million, to increase the volume and standard of work-based learning provision across four sectors that are considered key to the success of the Games: construction, media, customer service and sport. This will be one of our major outputs over the next few years.

Q: Any early wins to report?

As I see it, the biggest win at the moment is the multi-agency dialogue – between ourselves, the London Development Agency and Jobcentre Plus – that has been enabled as a result of our active membership in the London Employment and Skills Taskforce for 2012. We're all working together to ensure that the Games deliver a sustainable skills and employment legacy for Londoners, along with a social legacy for the wider UK population.

Q: How will you define success?

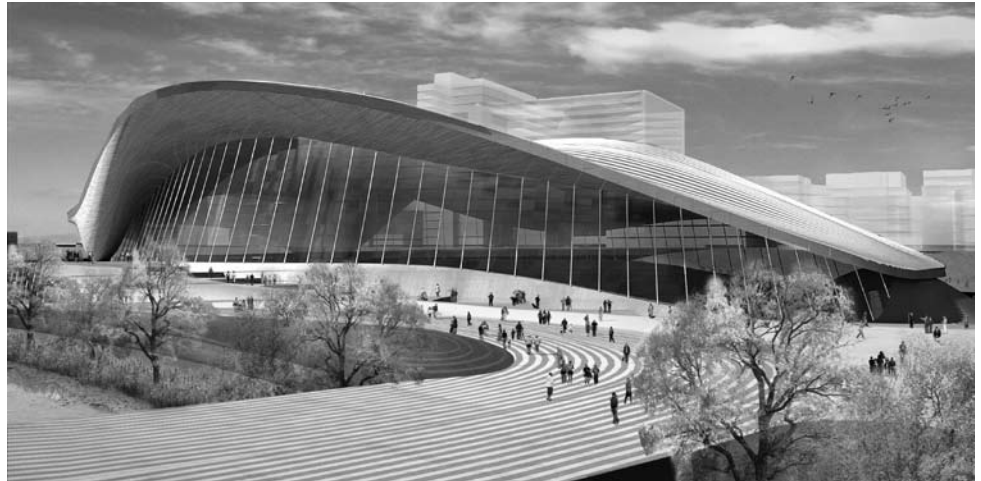
When people's aspirations are raised; when more people are able to enter employment and progress in their job; when we raise standards in the delivery of FE and work-based learning; and when all of that filters through to reduce worklessness and child poverty in our region, particularly in east London.

From planning to delivery...

An artist's impression of the Aquatics Centre in use after the Games

It's now two years since the announcement of London's success in winning the bid for the 2012 Games. Since then, a lot of work has gone into planning how best to invest time and resources in creating the ambitious legacy on which the bid was based. Over the last few months, however, LSC London Region has begun to deliver some of the promised legacy. Listed below are some of the many projects that are now underway.

- **Pre-Volunteer Programme** – pilot projects were launched across 11 London boroughs in March. The early indications are very good, with recruitment and retention rates averaging around 90 per cent. Negotiations are underway for the next phase of the roll-out, to be funded jointly by the LSC and the London Development Agency.
- **Employer Accord** – eight pilots are up and running with major employers across the region, including AEG, Westfield and Marks and Spencer. As part of a publicly declared agreement, the LSC and Jobcentre Plus are working together to create a wide pool of talent for employers to tap into: job-ready candidates who have received pre-employment support.



- **Olympic Co-ordination Unit** – funded jointly by LSC London Region and the Higher Education Funding Council for England, this new unit is providing leadership and strategic direction to HE institutions and FE colleges, to help them maximise the opportunities presented by the Games.
- **Apprenticeships** – we are committed to increasing the number of apprentices across our region, including the delivery of 4,000 apprenticeships within the public sector by 2012.
- **Sustainable procurement** – we are working with the Olympic Delivery Authority to ensure that learning and skills requirements are embedded within the thousands of contracts that will be issued over the next few years, along with a commitment to recruit and train local people.

Harvey Redgrave said: "Now that the early planning stages are complete, things are really starting to move forward on the delivery front. I've been hugely impressed by the enthusiasm and willingness of all partners involved. A major task ahead of us, however, is to keep our eyes firmly on the ball, to ensure that provision is aligned with identified priorities."

WorldSkills 2011

As well as hosting the 2012 Games, London has won the right to host the WorldSkills 2011 competition on behalf of the UK.

LSC London Region is working with the event organisers to capitalise on this perfect opportunity to raise the bar in skills provision and to raise people's aspirations to achieve more in our competitive labour market.

To find out more, visit www.ukskills.org.uk

Challenging times

Nobody would underestimate the challenges involved in maximising the 2012 opportunity to create an effective skills and employment legacy for London.

Harvey Redgrave believes that the LSC faces four key tasks.

1. Investing jointly with external partners so that funding initiatives complement each other, without overlap or duplication of effort.
2. Tapping into the knowledge banks of sector skills councils and employers to gain a 'watertight' understanding of the skills needs relating to the Games.
3. Demonstrating clearly how we are funding the legacy and how decisions are reached. We need to be 'whiter than white' in our processes and transparent in our allocation of resources.
4. As part of the overall regeneration of east London, ensuring that our Olympics-related investment is made to work for local residents.

London partnerships pass the Diploma test

A new, work-relevant qualification will be available from September next year and 21 pioneering partnerships in London have been given the green light to teach it.

The Diploma has been hailed as the most significant change to our country's education system since the replacement of O-levels and CSEs around two decades ago.

This brand new qualification was announced at the end of March by Alan Johnson, Education and Skills Secretary, and Jim Knight, Minister for Schools and 14-19 Learners. It includes a vital work experience element, enabling 'learning through doing' to be increasingly taken into the workplace.

In London the Diplomas will be initially delivered through 21 partnerships, each of which has successfully demonstrated that it has in place:

- high levels of collaboration with partners
- the necessary facilities
- an effective information, advice and guidance structure
- strong engagement with local employers.

Spoilt for choice

In September next year, Londoners aged between 14 and 19 will be among the first to choose the Diploma from five different lines of learning: construction, creative and media, engineering, information technology, and society, health and development.

In 2009, five more choices will be on the menu: land-based and environmental studies, manufacturing, hair and beauty, business administration and finance, and hospitality and catering.

By 2013 there will be 14 options available, including public services, sport and leisure, retail, and travel and tourism. Students will be able to learn in a range of environments, including schools, colleges and workplaces.



From September 2008, young Londoners will be able to enhance their performing arts skills through a new creative and media Diploma qualification

After gaining their Diploma qualification, students will be able to progress to further study, university or work.

Alan Johnson fully supports this new qualification. He said: "Diplomas will be an attractive and flexible option for young people in London. They are just one part of our plans to encourage more young people to stay on in education and training.

"With fewer low-skilled jobs, we need more high-skilled young people. Diplomas will provide the missing link, creating the mix of vocational and academic education which we've lacked for so long.

"Their introduction is one of the most radical educational developments taking place anywhere in the world and we are

putting funding, energy and commitment into making them a reality."

Jim Knight highlighted employer buy-in to the Diploma programme. He said: "Employers have been involved in the development of Diplomas from the start, so that the qualifications bring them what they need: young people with sound reading, writing, maths, and information, communication and technology (ICT) skills, who come equipped with an understanding of industry."

LSC London Region will have a key role to play in ensuring that the quality of the Diploma courses being delivered is consistently high among all providers, and that the training is relevant to and meets the needs of students and employers alike.

6,524

young people in London will be able to study for Diplomas alongside or instead of GCSEs and A-levels

Bringing offender learning practitioners together

The LSC has been fully responsible for offender learning since August last year. A pan-London conference organised by our region's Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) team gave practitioners an invaluable opportunity to share best practice across the sector.

It's widely accepted that offenders often have limited skills or qualifications and are often socially deprived. OLASS tackles this by delivering learning and qualifications that are geared to maximising individual offenders' chances of employment, the key to their social mobility. The OLASS team is also tasked with developing cross-departmental and cross-agency working to support the transition from custody to community.

London was the first region to hold a practitioner conference since the national launch of OLASS. The all-day event attracted more than 400 practitioners, including managers, lecturers and support staff. Key partners from the Prison Service, the Probation Service, the Youth Justice Board and the regional Offender Manager's Office were also well represented.

A morning schedule packed with themed workshops and networking opportunities enabled practitioners to work together to identify and record barriers and challenges



LSC London Regional Director David Hughes (second from left) with panel members

within OLASS. The delegates used their own personal experiences to propose practical ways in which to improve OLASS delivery.

The afternoon session followed the time-honoured *Question Time* format, with a panel of representatives from the London OLASS Strategic Board ready and willing to respond to a wide range of questions posed by delegates.

Post-event feedback confirms that practitioners appreciated the opportunity to meet with others from within their sector. Many suggested that the event should become a regular fixture on the regional OLASS calendar.

Academy launch

The National Skills Academy for Financial Services was launched at HM Treasury in May at an event attended by pilot-year students from Tower Hamlets College, training providers and leading financial services employers.

Skills Minister Phil Hope said that the Academy will "play a pivotal role in ensuring that people across this vitally important sector of the economy have the skills they need to maintain the UK's leading position in the field of financial services."

To find out more, see article on page 14 or visit www.nsafs.co.uk

LSEB seminar

Key players in London's business, learning and governance sectors joined LSC Regional Director David Hughes and leading researchers from Demos and the Institute of Education for a seminar to explore a possible new approach to funding.

Organised by the London Skills and Employment Board (LSEB), the seminar examined what the move to a demand-led system could mean for London in terms of the issues and challenges involved, governance arrangements and the principles needed to underpin a successful approach. The event included three keynote presentations and a broad discussion about next steps.



Raising Expectations

Gordon Brown and Alan Johnson are pictured above visiting Lewisham College in March to promote the Green Paper, *Raising Expectations: Staying in Education and Training Post-16*. This document sets out the Government's proposals that, from 2015, young people should continue to participate in some form of education or training until the age of 18. The consultation closed on 14 June.

To download the Green Paper, visit www.dfes.gov.uk

Five minutes with... Sylvia Perrins

The new National Skills Academy for Financial Services was launched in mid-May. We spoke to its National Director, Sylvia Perrins, to find out how this development will help close the skills gap and boost productivity within this vital sector.

Q: What's the purpose of the new Academy?

It will play a pivotal role in helping to close the skills gaps in the financial services sector. We will do this by working with employers to create centres of excellence for the delivery of skills training and development, which in turn will help attract new people to the sector and enhance the skills of the workforce.

Q: How does your work link in with that of the Financial Services Skills Council?

Our sector skills council (SSC) is an independent, employer-led organisation that provides strategic leadership for education, training and skills

development in the financial services industry. It's developing the new qualifications that the Skills Academy will deliver, in order to fill many of the gaps identified in the sector skills agreement.

Q: So is the Academy an employer-led organisation too?

Very much so. Through the SSC's research work, employers have given us a clear message about the nature of the skills shortages they face. Our new curriculum is being designed in response to employer needs. Day-to-day, local providers within the Skills Academy network will work with employers to deliver workforce training solutions. Employers will also have strong representation on our national

and regional boards, so will play a huge role in shaping the Academy's focus and direction as we move forward.

Q: Who will benefit from the Academy?

The Skills Academy brand gives employers a guarantee of high-quality, relevant and consistent training that will widen the pool of talent available to them. Learners will enhance their skills and knowledge, both through formal training provision and mentoring in the workplace. Providers will deliver training that's more flexible and responsive to employer demand, as recommended in last year's Leitch Report. In the longer term, this will increase the productivity of the sector.

Q: What about local people?

A key area of focus for us is to get local people into jobs in the City and Canary Wharf. For example, our new Level 2 qualification will combine financial services sector knowledge and a technical component with employability and core skills like numeracy and customer service. This will encourage adults back into learning while offering a progression route into a financial services career. We hope to launch the programme in autumn 2007.

Q: What targets have you been set by the LSC?

We have a challenging three-year business plan. Targets include increasing new learner numbers by 15,000 and raising employer involvement in the Academy, both through active participation and sponsorship in excess of £3.75 million.



Childcare: solving the quality/cost conundrum

Good-quality and affordable childcare is recognised as one of the best ways to lift children out of poverty, because it opens up greater work opportunities for parents. A new independent report recommends measures to improve London's childcare workforce.

Solving the quality/cost conundrum for London's childcare workforce was published in early May by the London Childcare Workforce Project. The project team included representatives from LSC London Region, London Councils, the London Development Agency and the Children's Workforce Development Council.

The report acknowledges that child poverty is a major issue in London and that, for many families in our region, childcare costs are a major barrier to employment. It also highlights the importance of ensuring that provision is of an excellent standard right across the childcare workforce, in order to give children the best possible start in life.

This will not happen overnight. The Government target is to equip every childcare worker with a relevant qualification at Level 3, but more than a third of workers have yet to achieve this. Recruitment is another thorny issue, with one London borough estimating that 400 new workers are needed to meet the growing demand for childcare places.

The report recommends a number of measures for our region, including:

- ensuring training and funding streams are appropriate and accessible to the entire childcare workforce
- identifying opportunities to improve training advice, capacity building and business support mechanisms in the childcare sector
- actively promoting the childcare sector through initiatives like Train to Gain
- raising the profile of childcare in London



- collating data about regeneration funding for childcare training on a regional basis, and sharing it with relevant local authorities
- setting up a forum to lobby for improvements in the financial viability of the childcare sector.

David Hughes, LSC Regional Director for London, said: "This report includes many ambitious recommendations for improving funding, training and development arrangements in relation to London's childcare workforce. Importantly, there are no plans to pass on the cost of these improvements to parents and carers."

For more information, contact Jessie Buscombe on 020 7904 0651. To download the report, along with related documents, visit www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/childcare

News in brief

Training teaching assistants

Redbridge Institute is breaking new ground by teaming up with local school, Mayfield, on a project to train teaching assistants. Both organisations have been involved in designing the content of the course, to ensure that it is practical, up-to-date and relevant for pupils and teachers alike.



Trainee Teaching Assistant Dympna Smith-Clark supports a Year 7 student in class

ESF Bidding Round

At the end of June, LSC London Region published a position paper for the 2007 to 2013 round of ESF funding. This document sets out the aims and intentions for the available funds during this time period, and can be downloaded from www.lsc.gov.uk. The national ESF programme will be launched by the Department for Work and Pensions in October at the QE2 Centre in Westminster.

Transatlantic Godspell collaboration

In the UK's first major theatrical collaboration between colleges based here and in the USA, drama students from Havering College and Hocking College, Ohio, staged a large-scale production of 70s rock musical, *Godspell*. The show went down a storm in the West End and at Havering College. The final performance will take place in Ohio.



Godspell cast members perform in front of a packed West End auditorium

Gallery space opens in Barnet

Funding from LSC London Region enabled Barnet College to launch a brand new gallery space, located at the North London Business Park. Students on Community Link, Broadening Horizons and Discover Your Potential courses proudly exhibited their artwork at the March opening of Gallery 89, which is open to the public and offers free entrance.

Take4

Train to Gain

Train to Gain helps businesses improve their productivity and competitiveness by ensuring that staff have the right skills to do the best job. Here we find out about the impact the programme has had on the Zoological Society of London (ZSL).

Karen Turnbull
HR Manager
ZSL

"It's vital that visitors to the Zoo receive a consistently high standard of customer service. Through Train to Gain, eight customer-facing staff members are now working towards an NVQ in Customer Service, which focuses on improving skills that are key to their job, like communication, time management and personal organisation. Six other staff are also now doing vocational training, to help improve specific work-related skills including team leading, business administration and retail.

"Although it's early days yet, I can see already that the training programme is giving us a structure for making business improvements. Feedback from staff has been very positive, too."

Charlotte Cowan
HR Administrative Secretary
ZSL

"I discussed my job with the Train to Gain assessor, who recommended an NVQ Level 3 in Business Administration. I chose six modules that would help me in various aspects of my job, including organising and running events, and typing notes from text.

"I did the training at work with Key Train. It came at just the right time for me and has definitely helped me do my job better: I have increased my typing speed, gained new skills and feel more confident."

Graham Baker
CEO
London Business Consortium

"Our Train to Gain skills broker worked with ZSL's HR Manager to identify skills gaps within the business and draw up a training programme based on the organisation's goals for the coming year.

"Learning at their own pace, office-based and customer-facing ZSL staff are now acquiring the knowledge and skills needed for them to do their jobs more effectively. In the longer term, it's expected that this targeted training will result in improved satisfaction levels among visitors and staff alike, along with increases in visitor numbers and profitability."

Suhaib Saeed
Skills Development Director
– Train to Gain
LSC London Region

"ZSL followed the standard Train to Gain path, by working closely with its skills broker to analyse organisational skills gaps, develop a training programme and find a training provider who could implement it successfully. The skills broker was also able to offer advice about the financial support available to help pay for the training.

"Train to Gain's free and impartial skills brokerage service is a vital tool in the Government's drive to improve business competitiveness. Employers of all sizes are tapping into the service, right across our region. I'd recommend all London businesses to follow their example and see how Train to Gain can help them."



Karen Turnbull



Charlotte Cowan



Graham Baker



Suhaib Saeed