

Choice FM helps
listeners explore
their options

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>LSC

Leading learning and skills

the magazine

January 2007

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

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Cover photo: Muna passed on valuable advice as part of the Choice FM campaign, which is sponsored by the LSC (see page 4)

the magazine

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David Hughes



Comment

Welcome to our first issue of *the magazine* for 2007. I hope it provides you with a useful insight into the latest developments within London's learning and skills sector.

As you will see, the learning and skills world in London is as exciting as ever. Our *London Learning and Skills Plan 2007/08* (see opposite page) is directly focused on meeting the unique skills needs of the capital's employers and learners. It was published while we were all considering the recent Leitch Report. It will be some time before we see the full impact of Leitch's recommendations, but we know that the challenge has been set for the next 15 years.

Another major strategic initiative we are just embarking upon is the newly formed London Skills and Employment Board (see centre pages), whose members are drawn from a range of industry sectors. The first Board meeting took place in December, kicking off the debate that's needed to ensure that London remains a competitive global city where people want to live and work.

I believe strongly that the key to the Board's future success lies in a really wide engagement on the development of the new adult skills strategy: it's vital that employers, learners, colleges, training providers, agencies and other stakeholders are given a chance to have their voices heard. Please do get involved in London's skills debate by informing us of your views.

Also included within this issue of *the magazine* is a selection of stories highlighting just some of the many initiatives which put London at the forefront of developments in our sector. These include a ground-breaking radio campaign, an impressive childcare project in Westminster, four new Centres of Vocational Excellence and the launch of the National Skills Academies programme.

As ever, I welcome any comments or suggestions about future issues of *the magazine*.

David Hughes
Regional Director



EUROPEAN UNION
European Social Fund

Setting the strategic context for learning and skills

The LSC has undergone a shift of focus to become the market-maker in learning and skills.

Over the coming year, the LSC's investment in learning and skills for London will be higher than ever before. The LSC has now established its five key priorities for 2007/08 (see below right), which consolidate the work carried out to date.

The priorities for London are carefully positioned within a wider strategic context, influenced by the following three developments.

- **Leitch Report** – in early December Lord Leitch published his final report, *Prosperity for all in the Global Economy: World Class Skills*. This important document examines the UK's long-term skills needs and recommends the urgent implementation of a far-reaching reform agenda in order to stave off a "lingering decline in competitiveness, diminishing economic growth and a bleaker future for all". To download the report, visit www.hm-treasury.gov.uk



“ Our natural resource is our people – and their potential is both untapped and vast. Skills are the key to unlocking that potential. The prize for our country will be enormous: higher productivity, the creation of wealth and social justice.”
Lord Leitch

- **London Skills and Employment Board** – a new Board responsible for developing an adult skills strategy for London (see centre pages).
- **Further Education and Training Bill** – currently going through Parliament, this Bill will have a major impact on the way the LSC operates: on the one hand it establishes the LSEB; while on the other it replaces London's five local non-executive learning and skills councils with a single regional council. This new arrangement will allow the LSC to be more flexible, by working strategically with key regional partners and at a local level in borough partnership teams.

David Hughes, LSC London Regional Director, said: "The Government wants the LSC to help achieve a world where employers and learners have more choice, and where colleges and training providers compete for public funding and seek employer investment and learner fees for their services. The LSC's role is to support that market and intervene only when it fails."

High five

The London Learning and Skills Plan 2007/08 sets out five priorities that will help maintain our region's competitiveness, both within this country and as a world city.

1. Improve educational achievements for all young people.
2. Tackle London's skills and employment gap.
3. Raise the effectiveness and performance of the learning and skills sector.
4. Integrate skills within economic development and local and regional regeneration.
5. Equip Londoners with the skills they need to benefit from investment in the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games.

The London Learning and Skills Plan 2007/08 will be available to download from www.lsc.gov.uk from mid-January. To request a hard copy of the publication, contact Alan Parnum on 020 7904 0638 (alan.parnum@lsc.gov.uk).

Targets for 2007/08

175,858 young people participating in learning

75% of young Londoners achieving a Level 2 qualification by age 19

6,114 people completing Apprenticeships

38,669 learners gaining a first Skills for Life qualification

36,200 adults undertaking full Level 2 qualifications

23,900 adults undertaking full Level 3 qualifications

Choice FM helps listeners explore their options

In September, Choice FM embarked on a 12-month campaign that highlights the range of post-16 education and training opportunities available throughout London.

Sooner or later, everyone has to make a choice about what they want to do with the rest of their life. People often don't realise the help,

guidance and advice available to support them in making these choices. An extensive, year-long campaign being aired by the Choice FM radio station from September 2006

aims to simplify the process by clarifying the education and training options that are available. The *Your Choice – your life changes* campaign includes a series of daily infomercials, advertisements, interviews and DJ talk time, and is supported by website content on the Choice FM and learndirect site.

Choice FM's 600,000 listeners are estimated to be predominantly between the ages of 15 and 34, with an almost even gender split and a large Black and Minority Ethnic following. The comprehensive campaign targets the various audience segments by focusing on a different campaign theme every two months, as shown on the right.

The LSC is the main sponsor of the campaign, which addresses a number of regional priorities outlined in *The London Learning and Skills Plan*. These include reaching out to

Black and Minority Ethnic listeners, raising the achievements of 14 to 19-year-olds, highlighting the variety of learning and training opportunities available at Level 2, and increasing awareness levels about information, advice and guidance channels in London.

“ I didn't finish school but I wouldn't advise you to do that. Take your GCSEs, do the best you can and don't rush deciding on the type of course you're going to take. Connexions helped me with some difficult choices. ”

George, aged 20, studying for a National Diploma in Music Technology at South Thames College

“ The advice I'd give to young girls who are pregnant is don't give up. It's not the end of the world and it does get easier. Since having my baby, I'm more motivated to actually go out there and do something, because it's not just me anymore, I have a child to look after. ”

Kemi, aged 18, studying for a BTEC National Diploma in health studies at a college in north London



Fellow sponsor organisations include the London Development Agency, learndirect, Connexions and Jobcentre Plus. The following colleges sit on the campaign's steering group: College of North East London, Greenwich Community College and South Thames College.

Campaign themes

1. **Choices at Year 9** – the importance of selecting the right GCSE options
2. **Young parents** – the support available to help young parents get back into learning or employment
3. **Routes to success** – what listeners can do to make themselves more employable
4. **Olympics** – how listeners can ensure they benefit from the opportunities presented by the Games
5. **Apprenticeships** – a chance for young people to earn while they learn
6. **Education Maintenance Allowance** – financial support for young people who stay on in learning

Trainee Giselle Casio greets Alan Johnson at the launch of the National Skills Academy for Construction



First three National Skills Academies are launched

England has embarked on an employer-led, world-class National Skills Academy programme designed to improve industry training standards, increase productivity and tackle skills shortages.

At the end of October Education and Skills Secretary Alan Johnson announced the launch of the first three National Skills Academies in Financial Services, Construction and Manufacturing. The event was hosted by London's Fashion Retail Academy, the model on which the programme was based.

Government investment of £90 million will be ploughed into the programme, which will be delivered by the LSC, working with employers and their Sector Skills Councils.

If all goes to plan, a total of 12 academies will be up and running by 2008. Following the second bidding round, London's hospitality and creative sectors are set to benefit as a result of being given the green light to develop business plans for their own National Skills Academies over the coming months. A third round is planned for early 2007.

Alan Johnson said: "Raising skills is essential to creating wealth and a society of opportunity for all. The National Skills

Academy programme will improve our capacity for learning by driving up standards and specialisation with the learning sector. This will be good for individuals and employers, and will give all parties a real chance to address the skills gap – and close it."

Each National Skills Academy will be established in a way that meets the skills needs of employers, as defined by their Sector Skills Council. This may involve physical sites, as is the case for financial services (including one in Tower Hamlets); or it may be a virtual arrangement, as is happening with construction, where onsite training on 'live' developments is often the most practical solution for employers.

Philippa Langton, LSC Regional Skills Director for London, commented: "The new National Skills Academy programme puts employers right at the heart of skills development. Its focus on the delivery of high-quality, relevant learning provision will transform the way skills are delivered, while at the same time providing an excellent opportunity for sharing good practice within the provider network."

A vital role for employers

The engagement of employers is vital to the development and ultimate effectiveness of the National Skills Academy programme.

Employers will help determine how the programme is run, including influencing the curriculum to ensure it reflects their needs, setting standards, determining the network of providers they want

to work with, getting involved on the management front, and shaping future direction.

Approximately half of the capital costs for each National Skills Academy will be financed through employer sponsorship, with around 35 per cent coming from the Government and the remainder from other sources, such as European funding.

Gearing up for 2012

The Action Plan of the London Employment and Skills Taskforce for 2012 (LEST 2012) was launched at Number 11 Downing Street in October.

The launch took place at a reception hosted for the London Child Poverty Commission by Chancellor Gordon Brown. Attendees at the high-profile event and signatories to the London Employer Accord included Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London; Tessa Jowell, Department for Culture, Media and Sport; Phil Hope, Department for Education and Skills; David Hughes, LSC London Region; Chris Hayes, Jobcentre Plus; Paul Deighton, London 2012; John Hutton, Department for Work and Pensions; David Higgins, Olympic Delivery Authority; Ian Barlow, London Business Board; and Mary Reilly, London Development Agency.

The event highlighted two important LEST 2012 initiatives that are already underway to help tackle workforce productivity and worklessness, one of the main causes of child poverty.



LSC Regional Director David Hughes signs the London Employer Accord

London Employer Accord

If the Games are to deliver real benefits for Londoners, partnership working between public sector employment and training agencies and employers will be absolutely essential. A joint private and public sector initiative, the London Employer Accord provides the framework within which the partnership will operate.

As with all effective partnerships, the secret of success lies in creating a win:win situation based on practical action. And that's certainly the case here:

- learners will be given opportunities to unlock their potential. The Accord will help many people overcome barriers to entering the job market, including women with children, people from Black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic groups, and those with low skills levels including Pre-Volunteer Programme (PVP) graduates
- employers will gain easy access to a local supply of job-ready Londoners and an appropriately skilled workforce, as well as being associated with the London Employer Accord brand
- employment and training agencies will achieve their targets for tackling worklessness while providing services that address the Skills for Life needs of London's most deprived communities and helping employers meet their skills requirements.

Pre-Volunteer Programme

One of the reasons London was successful in its bid to host the 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games was because of the emphasis placed on the social legacy that will result not just for Londoners but for the entire UK population.

The Games offer a truly unique opportunity to inspire workless and socially excluded individuals to gain new skills, engage in their communities, raise their aspirations and move a step closer to entering the job market. The PVP will achieve each of these objectives.

PVP is based on a tried-and-trusted formula, used successfully at the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester. Its format is simple, but highly effective: an accredited learning opportunity backed by a suite of support mechanisms like childcare or paid transport, volunteering opportunities in the local community or, in some cases, a job.

A pilot programme will run from January 2007 in the five east London host boroughs and other targeted areas across the capital. It will involve local PVP advisers using the excitement generated by the forthcoming Games as a catalyst to encourage some of the region's most socially excluded individuals to undertake a bespoke PVP learning experience. Running alongside this, specialist local support agencies will provide information, advice, guidance and bespoke services.

A new, nationally accredited qualification is to be created for PVP learners at NVQ Level 1 covering customer service, customer care, health and safety, equality and diversity, and the history and ideals of the Olympic and Paralympic movement. Should they wish to apply to become a Games-time volunteer, graduates of the programme will be guaranteed an interview.

To find out more about the London Employer Accord or the Pre-Volunteer Programme, contact Neill Scott on 0207 904 0664 (neill.scott@lsc.gov.uk).

Apprenticeships Awards 2007

The build-up to the LSC's prestigious National Apprenticeships Awards 2007 has begun.

The fourth annual National Apprenticeships Awards were launched in December at the headquarters of the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce, located in the heart of London's West End.

Stephen Gardner, the LSC's Director of Apprenticeships, said that today's apprentices are valued members of the workforce whose skills, effort and ideas are contributing directly to their employers' success. He added: "Apprenticeships are now viewed as a highly respected alternative route to a successful career by young people and employers alike."

This theme was echoed by Minister for Skills Phil Hope MP, who said: "Apprenticeships are a huge success story, with numbers up from around 80,000 in 1997 to more than 250,000 today. Apprentices are their own best advertisement and these Awards will continue to showcase brilliant examples of young people who have developed the skills they and their employers need."

John Vickery, who won last year's Advanced Apprentice of the Year Award, spoke at the launch event



All London entries submitted will be considered for a special regional award.

To find out more about the award categories and applications procedure, visit www.apprenticeships.org.uk/awards or call the Awards helpline on 0800 019 2081. The closing date for entries is 23 February 2007 and the award ceremony will be held on 20 June.

259,000

apprentices are employed in more than 130,000 organisations in England, spread across 80 industry sectors

A word from HM Treasury

Chancellor Gordon Brown is a strong supporter of Apprenticeships, as he made clear in his Pre-Budget Report statement to the House of Commons on 6 December.

Describing education as "the single most important investment we can make", he made a firm commitment to Apprenticeships, saying: "In 1997 there were around 80,000 apprentices. Today in England alone there are more than 250,000 – half of them now in manufacturing, construction and technology. I can announce that in the years to 2020, the number of apprenticeships will rise to 500,000."



Gordon Brown talks with a construction apprentice at Lewisham College

During a visit to Lewisham College, the Chancellor listened attentively to apprentices who told him about their courses and ambitions. He commented: "We cannot afford to waste the talents of any young people. That is why I want

every young person in the country to learn skills and a vocation. The quality of the students, the lecturers and the facilities I have seen here today in Lewisham is a real inspiration towards that goal."

Championing lea

The London Skills and Employment Board (LSEB) met for the first time in early December to decide how best to drive forward London's continuing economic growth.

The inaugural meeting of the LSEB, chaired by Mayor of London Ken Livingstone, marked the starting point in developing a new adult skills strategy for London. To ensure that all Board members had a shared understanding, an overview of the region's

current skills and employment challenges was presented, summarised below.

Challenge

The LSEB faces a huge challenge, but has a genuine opportunity to make a lasting difference. The Board has two major issues to address.

- **The high incidence of worklessness** – at 7.5 per cent, London has the highest unemployment rate in the country. Its employment rate (69 per cent) is 5 percentage points below the national average. For London to meet the national target of 80 per cent of the population being employed, more than 500,000 workless people would need to be helped into work.
- **Employer demand for higher skills levels** – the Leitch Review (see page 3) estimated that by 2014, two-thirds of jobs will require at least intermediate-level skills and that by 2020, more than 40 per cent of jobs could be filled by graduates. Improving high-level skills will have the biggest impact on productivity, but it also carries a higher cost.

The Board agreed to develop a strategy that, for the first time, considers the entire working age population, regardless of whether or not they are employed, ranging from those with no skills to those with high-level skills.

To achieve this, a more integrated approach to the work of the various agencies

31%

of London residents are qualified to degree level (national average: 26%)

involved is proposed, along with a greater alignment of their budgets, programmes and objectives. Employer engagement will be critical to the future success of the adult skills strategy.

Future

The research and recommendations outlined in the presentation were well received by the Board, which used them as the basis of its discussion about the formulation of an adult skills strategy for London.

While this massive undertaking is still in its very early stages, all those involved felt confident that this was a positive step for our region. Sub-groups are being established to progress the strategy, performance and funding aspects of the Board's remit. Newly appointed Director of the Secretariat Mario Abela is also now working with Board members and representatives from a range of agencies to help develop the strategy.

The second meeting of the LSEB will take place on 20 February 2007.

For more information, email jon.thorn@lsc.gov.uk or mario.abela@lsc.gov.uk

25%

of Londoners have qualifications below Level 2 (the equivalent of at least five good GCSEs)

14%

of Londoners have no qualifications whatsoever

Viewpoints

In presenting an overview to the LSEB, the LSC took into account the views of three important stakeholder groups.

Employers – evidence from a number of surveys points to the fact that skills are the number one concern for London employers. The latest London Annual Business Survey highlighted a growing shortage of employees with high-level skills, while in May this year the CBI London Business Survey reported that the greatest constraint to recruiting people is their lack of specific skills relevant to the job. Employers also believe that improving basic skills should be a top priority for government.

Employees – the TUC believes that vocational training has for too long been viewed as the 'poor relation' of the traditional academic route, and that this situation has to change. It also proposes that the adult skills strategy is 'employment led' rather than 'employer led'.

Skills providers – the Association of Colleges has called for more radical government measures to increase employer investment and raise standards of workforce training. The Association of Learning Providers believes that the skills agenda should be owned and led by employers. And the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education is concerned that prioritising 16 to 18-year-olds has adversely affected the overall level of investment in adult skills.

Learning and skills

“The new Board brings together a wealth of talent and expertise in the fields of business and education which will be vital to deliver world-class training and skills in London.

We need to work with London's employers to ensure Londoners receive the training they need to get jobs. This will ensure all Londoners can benefit from and make a real contribution to the capital's economic prosperity.”

Mayor Ken Livingstone
Chair of the LSEB



“This is a strong board which I believe has the capacity to have a significant impact on the shape of adult skills provision in London.

Our substantial employer engagement should enable us to focus meaningfully on ensuring that investment, both private and public, delivers skills that are relevant and valuable to employers and employees alike.”

Harvey McGrath
Vice Chair of the LSEB and
Chairman of Man Group plc

“The mood of the first LSEB meeting was very positive, with all members sharing the same determination to address London's long-standing issues of worklessness and skills shortages, and a firm commitment to achieving a sustainable impact for Londoners over the next 10 to 15 years.

There was a lot of agreement around the table on a number of key issues, including the need to simplify systems, and to adopt a bold, imaginative and creative approach. We're now starting in earnest on the development of the Board's strategy.”

David Hughes
LSC Regional Director



A pivotal role

London is a leading world city. However, given the emerging economies in China and India, if our region is to continue to thrive we need to drive up levels of productivity and knowledge, while at the same time tackling important issues such as exclusion and poverty.

The role of the LSEB is to create a statutory adult skills strategy and annual plan for London that will challenge employers to raise their engagement and investment in skills, and to ensure that spending on adult skills is closely aligned with regional priorities.

In order to address employer skills requirements, the strategy will build a strong link between training and employment. It will focus on training and skills for adults who are in the labour market or seeking to re-enter the labour market. The strategy will also create opportunities for workless people in London to be helped through training to gain access to sustainable, productive employment.

The LSEB now drives the adult spending decisions of the LSC in London. However, operational and executive issues, along with managing skills delivery arrangements, remain the responsibility of the LSC, which continues to work closely with Jobcentre Plus, the LDA and other partners.

Board members

The combined knowledge and experience of the 23 LSEB members will ensure that Londoners are equipped with the skills that our region's employers need.

To view the list of LSEB members, visit www.lda.gov.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.1717

In my view: the London eProspectus

Doug Norris is the LSC's Regional Director of Learning, Planning and Performance. Here he talks about London's ground-breaking eProspectus, to be launched in spring 2007.

Q: What is the London eProspectus?

The integrated eProspectus will be an online, London-wide guide to educational provision, containing a searchable, up-to-date directory of the courses and programmes that schools, colleges and other training providers are offering to young people.

Q: Who will access the information?

Young people aged between 14 and 19, as well as careers advisers and parents who want to find out more about what's on offer.

Q: This is the first regional eProspectus of its kind in the country – what difference has the LSC's involvement made?

We played the role of strategic catalyst by bringing together all 33 boroughs, and other regional partners, gaining their high-level commitment to the project. The boroughs pooled funds to support its development, supplemented by £200,000 from the LSC. We have also been liaising closely with local authorities and running focus groups with young people to ensure that the eProspectus meets learner needs.

Q: Will this online innovation replace the hard-copy prospectuses produced by individual institutions?

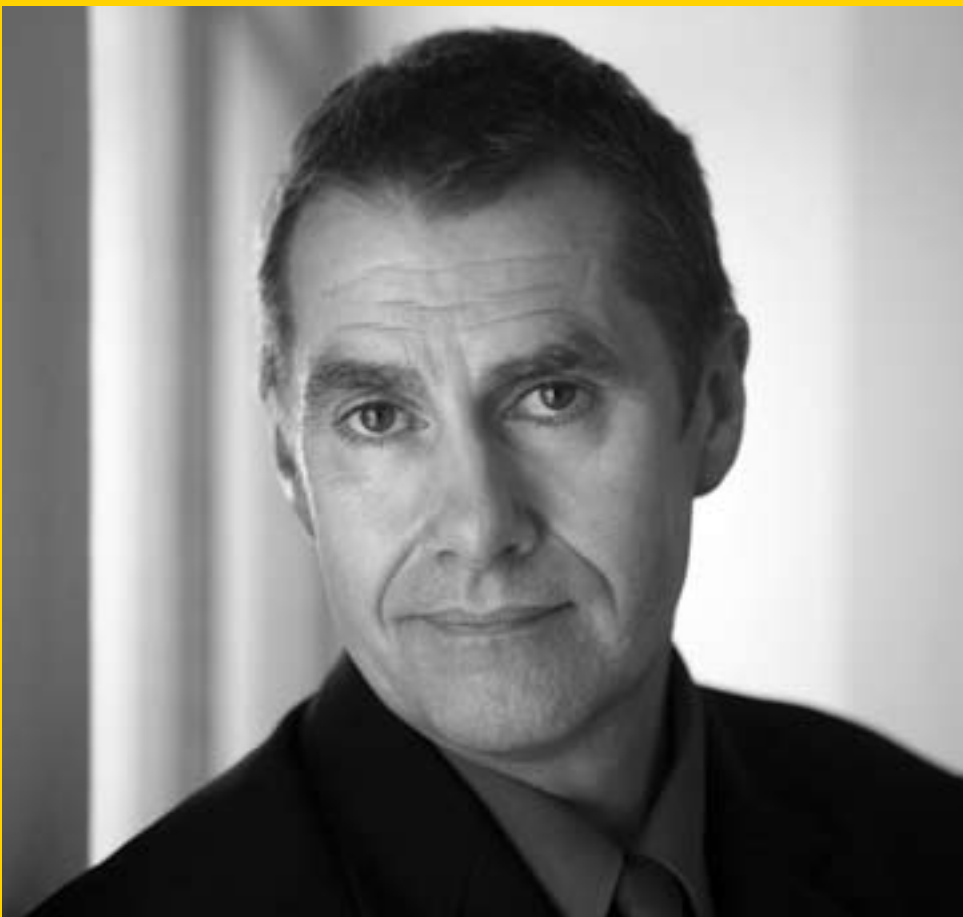
No. Institutions will still publish their own prospectuses and local authorities will continue with their own marketing efforts, so this should be seen as 'in addition to', rather than 'instead of'.

Q: About half of London's young people don't study in the borough where they live. Will the eProspectus simplify their decision-making process in this respect?

Definitely. Many young people travel to study, especially since the introduction of free transport arrangements. They're not interested in whether they're crossing borough boundaries; what matters to them is gaining access to the right kind of learning. The eProspectus will give them the details of all available courses in London and, to help them decide, it may be used in conjunction with a journey planner, located on another part of the 'Your London' portal.

Q: What is the timescale?

Our huge information-gathering and technical task kicked off in earnest at the start of October 2006. After launching the London eProspectus in spring 2007, our aim for year one is for it to work at a fairly basic level. From then on, we plan to evaluate and upgrade the site annually, as part of our cycle of continuous improvement.





In pursuit of quality

When it comes to learning provision, London has much to celebrate.

Judging by the latest inspection results, the standard of learning provision within our region is improving all the time. An overview is provided below.

Beacon status

Learning and Skills Beacon status is awarded to exceptional providers who have met very stringent requirements. London now has 14 providers with Beacon status.

Colleges

In the latest cycle of inspections no general further education colleges in London were deemed 'inadequate', which is a big improvement on the previous inspection result (22 per cent).

However, London colleges had a higher proportion (73 per cent) of 'satisfactory' ratings for overall effectiveness, compared with the other LSC regions (37 per cent).

Success rates for 16 to 18-year-olds rose from 53 per cent in 2001/02 to 70 per cent in 2005/06; and from 51 per cent to 74 per cent for adults over the same period.

Work-based learning

- **Leadership and management** – London's 'good' (and better) profile for leadership and management is significantly higher than in the other LSC regions.
- **Equal opportunities** – two-thirds of London providers inspected were judged to be particularly good at promoting equality of opportunity.
- **Quality improvement** – London's grades are above the national average, with some good approaches to the self-assessment process and accurate self-assessment reports from a significant proportion of providers.

Apprenticeships

Completion of apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship frameworks has improved significantly to 44 per cent and 48 per cent respectively (national: 54 per cent). However, to support the Olympic skills agenda London urgently needs to drive these rates up further, particularly in the construction, hospitality and retail sectors.

Adult and Community Learning (ACL)

The latest inspection result confirmed that London had no 'inadequate' ACL provision (national: 7 per cent).

LSC London Region's learning and quality team has been working closely with the Quality Improvement Agency over the past year and has secured support for some 60 providers. It is also collaborating with local partnership teams and colleges in developing appropriate support packages to improve the learner experience, success rates and overall performance.

The Regional Quality Improvement Partnership welcomes contributions from all those involved in the learning and skills arena. Representatives from colleges and work-based learning providers have attended Partnership meetings, where input from the inspectorates has helped identify areas for improvement.

For more information, contact Penny Allen on 020 7904 0774 (penny.allen@lsc.gov.uk)

Training opportunity for parents in Westminster

An 18-month training course in Children's Care, Learning and Development will raise the employment potential of 22 parent learners from some of Westminster's most deprived wards, while at the same time helping to alleviate skills shortages in London's childcare sector.

In November a number of Westminster mothers of children under the age of five came along to a coffee morning at a local community centre to find out about a training course in childcare. They also had an opportunity to talk to representatives from local SureStart childcare centres.

The Level 2 National Vocational Qualification in Children's Care, Learning and Development certainly proved an attractive prospect to the women, who are all from households without a regular income. The women were particularly impressed to discover that Basic Skills and



Assumpta Francis, from Sierra Leone, is delighted to take part in the childcare project

ESOL training would be made available, if needed, before the start of the course. Childcare provision is a common barrier to women who wish to enter the world of work, so attendees were also delighted to learn that their own childcare needs would be met as part of the training package.

Training will start in January. It will involve learners spending one day each week at college, and a further two to three days each week in a local childcare facility, where they will gain practical work experience.

The qualification will be financed by LSC London Central as part of its Local Initiative Development Funding Programme, which aims to tackle the adult skills gap among disadvantaged and ethnic minority groups. The project results from a partnership between the LSC, Jobcentre Plus, Westminster Surestart, Westminster Adult Education, Westminster Children's Society and Westminster County Council.

Bexley's teaching assistants shine

Ten teaching assistants from primary schools across Bexley have been awarded a Level 2 National Vocational Qualification tailored to their role. Their training was funded by LSC London East as part of the Employer Training Pilot.

Three of the teaching assistants work at Harenc School in Sidcup, three come from Lessneath Heath School in Belvedere, and four are based at Slade Green School in Erith. They all undertook their training at Bexley College and were presented with their certificates by Principal Bridget Boreham.



Susan Woodward (left), Headmistress of Harenc School, congratulates Julie Johnson

Julie Johnson, from Harenc School, was delighted to receive her certificate. She confirmed that the training had built her self-confidence in dealing with children and improved her ability to reinforce positive behaviour.

64%

is the employment rate for inner London (the average rate for the rest of the UK is 75%)

New London CoVEs

Four more London providers have successfully gained Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) status.

A national network of around 400 CoVEs is already up and running. The programme focuses on the delivery of vocational skills that meet particular sector and industry needs through the development and delivery of high-quality, specialist training. It continues to evolve in response to changing circumstances and priorities in the world of vocational training.

Four London CoVEs were recently unveiled in the following sectors.

Retail Solutions – Hawk Training's impressive new centre in Twickenham provides an excellent pathway for 16 to 18-year-olds to progress into a career in business administration. Learners spend four to six months developing a range of core skills and experiencing work placements before entering the world of work.

Construction and New Building Techniques

– Hackney Community College will use the CoVE funding to create new courses that respond to industry needs, to collaborate with other providers and to develop new partnerships and good practice with industry experts.

Financial Services – 16 to 18-year-old students undertaking full-time training at Orpington College, in partnership with Quantica Training, will have their own business mentor and a paid internship. Adult courses are also available in accountancy, insurance, banking and finance.

ICT and Business Network Support

– a range of training is being delivered at Southgate College, including a foundation degree in networks and ICT systems support, and courses for IT technicians, web developers and CAD operators. Essential IT skills courses are also available, from Start IT through to the Advanced European Computer Driving Licence.



Financial services students gaining an insight into life on the trading floor

The CoVE programme and the National Skills Academies are central to the LSC's aim of improving and developing employer skills to underpin business success and economic competitiveness. Whereas CoVEs focus mainly on regional and local skills needs, the new National Skills Academies (see article on page 5) are national centres. They will work together to create sector-based networks of specialist provision.

Making an impact

Pupils at nine London West special needs schools benefited from an exciting drama presentation that highlighted their further education options in a very memorable way.

LSC London West commissioned Impact Theatre to deliver a specially tailored drama presentation and workshop about further education to local special needs schools. As in 2005 the programme proved extremely popular and was fully subscribed.

Specialist actors from Impact used a combination of current pop music and impersonations of well-known comedy, television and film personalities to convey key messages in an exciting way. Their presentation helped special educational needs (SEN) pupils understand the benefits of staying on in learning, daily preparations and routine, being independent, the options available after Year 11 and how and where they can obtain additional help and guidance.

The performance was followed by a workshop, tailored to meet the needs of the audience, where pupils discussed these areas in greater detail, as well as other issues such as bullying and the challenges of coping in a new environment.

Headteacher Juanita Dicks, of Marjory Kinnon School in Bedfont, was impressed. She said: "We used the Impact Theatre programme because it gave us a drama-based opportunity to reinforce post-16 options to our pupils. A lot of the pupils have remembered more of the options that are available to them because of the dramatisation and the many opportunities they had to join in."



Seizing a dramatic opportunity: Clare Arnold, Area Director London West, with pupils and cast members

Connexions advisors and teachers were also on hand to offer guidance and support, along with local colleges that provide special support for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities.

SEN advisers are available at Connexions Direct on 0808 001 3219. A general SEN guide can be obtained from the DfES – call 0870 000 2288 for a hard copy or download it online at www.teachernet.gov.uk

Five minutes with... Anthony Massouras

An unshakeable belief in the value of training is what drives Anthony Massouras, both in his work as Chief Executive of Mimosa Healthcare Group Ltd and in his role as a member of the Apprenticeship Ambassadors Network.



Q: Why is training embedded so firmly in your organisation's culture?

I see the people who join the organisation as the raw material. They might be youngsters who have left school without any qualifications, reading or writing skills, or they might be people who have been out of the job market for some time. As their employer, I view it as my responsibility to help them learn basic skills as well as the skills they will need to provide the quality of care that's expected when looking after older people.

Q: I hear you put your money where your mouth is?

Definitely. For us, funding for training is often hard to come by because it's only guaranteed for 16 to 18-year-olds and excludes people who already have a Level 2 or Level 3 qualification. Despite this, since Mimosa Healthcare was founded in 2000 we have invested between 20 per cent and 35 per cent of net profit each year in training.

Q: But do the benefits outweigh the costs?

Yes, and by a long way. The quality of care we provide is heightened, because the people who are carrying out that care are better skilled, more confident and know what is required of them. Also, our reputation as a decent employer is growing all the time, which aids recruitment and retention: nationally, the care sector has a turnover of around 33 per cent; Mimosa has a workforce of around 1,400 and a turnover of just 19 per cent.

Q: What is the Apprenticeship Ambassadors Network?

It's an employer-led body established by the Secretary of State for Education to promote the benefits of Apprenticeships to employers.

Q: Why did you become involved?

Because it's an extension of what I do in my own business. Apprenticeships are becoming very popular once again and at Mimosa we currently have 86 underway. They are a very good avenue to follow for people who want to acquire practical skills and build their self-confidence. Employers are key to this; I firmly believe that employers should champion and promote training throughout all sectors of industry, commerce and services, so I do all I can to help convert this vision into reality.

For more information visit www.employersforapprentices.gov.uk
The Apprenticeship Ambassadors Network is hosting a series of events in early 2007 to promote Apprenticeships to employers – to register, contact anne.mccaffrey@centrica.com

News from across the region

There have been many developments within London's learning and skills sector in recent months. A selection of highlights is shown below.

ESF London achievements on DVD

A brand new DVD celebrates the achievements of the Pan London European Social Fund (ESF) programme and highlights the diversity of its beneficiaries.

The DVD provides an informative snapshot of five different European Social Fund projects taking place across London, ranging from a musical theatre course at Greenwich University to a one-stop drop-in service at Learning Curves in Croydon.

Fascinating viewing, it follows the progress of five beneficiaries over a six-month period as they acquire new skills and qualifications, growing in confidence and motivation all the time as they move towards or into employment. The DVD will be used to increase understanding about the Pan London ESF programme and the value it adds to mainstream learning.

To obtain a copy of the DVD, email ryan.ansah@lsc.gov.uk

Beacon trio for London

Three London providers were awarded Learning and Skills Beacon status at the end of November: St Dominic's Sixth Form College, St Francis Xavier Sixth Form College and work-based learning provider Reynolds Group. England now has a total of 99 Learning and Skills Beacons, including 14 in London.

Learning and Skills Beacon status recognises and celebrates learning providers in the post-16 education sector that deliver high-quality and innovative teaching and are well-led and managed. Beacon status covers general FE, tertiary and sixth form colleges, work-based learning providers and adult community learning providers.

Date for your diary – networking event

The Young People's Workforce Network is proving highly popular with frontline workers from a broad spectrum of voluntary and community sector organisations across central London that provide support and training to disadvantaged young people. The network offers an excellent opportunity to make connections with other colleagues within the sector, as well as to share experiences, receive support and develop new ideas. New and old faces are all very welcome.

The next networking event will be held on 24 January 2007 at the LSC's offices in Centre Point, from 1pm to 4.30pm. For more information contact annabel.rosenhead@rbkc.gov.uk

Business Alumni

Members of the LSC's Business Alumni employers group and Sector Skills Council representatives met in November to find out about the new London Skills and Employment Board (see centre pages) and their future roles in influencing and improving adult skills across the capital.

Stephen Studd, Chief Executive of Skills Active and member of the London 2012 Employment and Skills Taskforce (LEST), also updated the audience on some of the key elements of the LEST Plan, which seeks to improve the skills of Londoners in advance of the 2012 Games.

New, improved LSC website

The LSC's website has been given a makeover to make it more relevant, user-friendly and easier to navigate.

Back in 2005, the e-Government Unit was commissioned by the Prime Minister to prepare a strategy that would ensure the public sector kept up with the private sector in delivering good, efficient services driven by information technology.

Launched in mid-November 2006, the new LSC site is part of this strategy. It now offers a wealth of corporate information about the LSC's mission, its values and its structure. From the home page, users can also access the nine regional sites, including London.

Head of E-Communications Alexis Castillo-Soto said: "Many of the changes result from a vast consultation exercise we carried out with users. We listened to what people told us and made radical changes. We now have a site that has achieved the W3C accessibility standard 'AA' and is much more suitable for use by people with a visual impairment and disabilities."

The infrastructure of the new website allows for the hosting of multiple sites, which will reduce the LSC's costs while at the same time increasing control and efficiency. The 'web alert' system is a great new feature that will enable users to sign up for LSC news updates at national and/or regional level.

Alexis concluded: "The mid-November launch was just the start. We will keep developing and updating the site, with input from users, so that it continues to meet their needs."



The LSC website address is www.lsc.gov.uk

Take4

Train to Gain

Following an extensive refurbishment and an upgrade to a four-star luxury rating, the Mandeville Hotel has embarked on a comprehensive Train to Gain programme that's set to transform the business.

Emese Szanti

HR Manager

The Mandeville Hotel

"There's been something for everyone in our Train to Gain package: heads of department have undergone Level 3 Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) training; managers, assistant managers and supervisors have been participating in Level 2 ILM training; employees at all levels and from all departments have embarked on NVQ customer service training; and more than 40 people have signed up for a course in English as a second language.

"It's resulting in improvements right across the business, from motivation and commitment through to profitability. I would definitely recommend it to other employers."

Manuela Sammatrice

Receptionist

The Mandeville Hotel

"I decided to put myself forward for the NVQ Level 2 customer service course because I wanted to learn more so that I can progress in my role. As a receptionist, keeping guests happy is definitely at the top of my list: not just assigning rooms but also helping them solve their problems. The course has taught me to apply a very logical approach to problem solving, which in turn has boosted my self-confidence no end!

"There are quite a few of us from the Mandeville Hotel who are doing the course together. This is really good, because it means we can exchange ideas and learn about other departments, their work and the approaches they use."

Ian Grainger

Head Concierge

The Mandeville Hotel

"Training is so important. I can't get enough of it! I'm learning from my ILM course all the time, becoming more confident in my own abilities and those of my team. I'm now delegating regularly, which is freeing me up to work on other things while at the same time giving other people a chance to learn new skills and make the most of their talent. We're also having weekly meetings, which are helping to keep us all in the loop.

"I'd recommend anyone to take up this training. Three of my team are going to be doing the NVQ Level 2 customer service course next year. This will be very beneficial for the guests. It's also worth mentioning that the course is really enjoyable and often great fun. Our tutor knows the hotel industry inside out and frequently supplies anecdotes from his time as a hotel owner. We really couldn't have asked for anyone better to deliver our training."

Christine Wakeman

Skills Broker

London Brokerage Consortium

"In my view, Train to Gain works so well because it's an employer-driven service, and so it allows us to concentrate on meeting employer needs.

"Through Train to Gain we were able to signpost various skills solutions and good training providers to the Mandeville Hotel. This service has significantly widened the training opportunities available to the over-25s and employees from all departments have benefited. A new focus on teamwork is helping to drive up standards throughout the hotel."



Emese Szanti



Manuela Sammatrice



Ian Grainger



Christine Wakeman