



>LSC

Leading learning and skills

the magazine

Personal Best
for every
London borough
page 13

January 2009

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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the magazine

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David
Hughes

Comment

Who would have thought, a year ago, that we would be starting 2009 in the midst of a global economic downturn?

Businesses across our region – as elsewhere in the UK – are fighting to keep afloat, and many are realising that now is a critical time to invest in training their workforce. They know it makes sense. And so does Skills Secretary John Denham, who highlighted that companies that don't train are actually 2.5 times more likely to fail than companies that do. That's an impressive statistic.

Here at LSC London Region, we are grappling with our own set of challenges. The current economic climate has resulted in an expectation – from Government, the Mayor's Office and the London Skills and Employment Board – that we and our providers respond flexibly and quickly to these new conditions.

So on the one hand, we have to be able to respond appropriately to the needs of Londoners and our region's employers, who are facing more difficult times because of the economic downturn. Yet on the other, we've still got to keep a close eye on the importance of achieving the stretching, longer-term targets that Lord Leitch set for the next 10 to 15 years. That's quite a balancing act, by anyone's standards.

But it's not all doom and gloom – far from it, in fact. We're continuing to work closely with London's local authorities, building working relationships with key people there, helping them to understand our systems and enabling them to build capacity, so that they are ready to take over the reins for the 14-19 part of our work in 2010. And on the adult side we are building a strong partnership approach with Jobcentre Plus and the London Development Agency under the direction of the London Skills and Employment Board.

Judging by the progress I've seen to date, I'm confident that these relationships and the increased responsiveness to Londoners and employers will be developed quickly and effectively. And to continue on a positive note, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish all our stakeholders a happy, successful and prosperous new year.

David Hughes
 LSC London Regional Director



European Union
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Sir Alan to front new Apprenticeships drive

Sir Alan Sugar will lead a new TV advertising campaign designed to drive up Apprenticeship numbers across England.

As a self-made business leader and the star of reality TV show *The Apprentice*, Sir Alan is the perfect choice to front the new Apprenticeships advertising campaign, which will be aired from February.

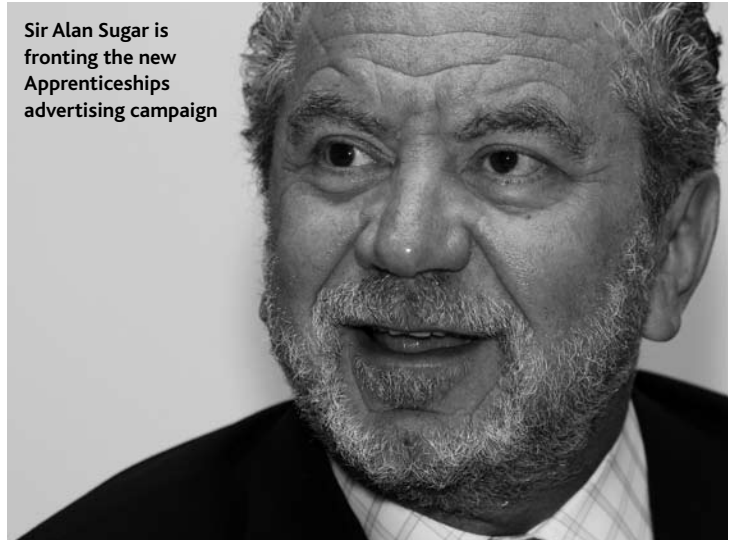
"The fact is that some people learn better on the job or by seeing how their learning applies to the real world – that's why I'm backing Apprenticeships," said Sir Alan. "It's important that employers take Apprenticeships seriously – apprentices make things happen and can help a business to grow and thrive."

The timing of the campaign is perfect: in December, the Education and Skills Bill became law, meaning that from 2015 all young people will stay in education or training until the age of 18, and that more adults across England will be given

the legal right to free training. This landmark legislation has been welcomed by high-profile employers, charities, trade unions and professional associations.

Ministers hope to bring forward new legislation to strengthen, improve and massively increase the number of Apprenticeships on offer, driving the figures up to around 400,000 in England by 2020, which equates to one in five young people (the current statistic is one in 15). More adult Apprenticeship opportunities will also arise as a result of the new law.

Sir Alan Sugar is fronting the new Apprenticeships advertising campaign



John Denham, Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, said: "Ensuring people have the chance to obtain a wide range of skills, whether by doing an Apprenticeship or a vocational course, is the most effective way to boost the life chances of those with very poor skills and to support social justice."

Unlocking talent

Skills London 2008 was the year's biggest careers attraction for young people. Held at ExCeL London, the three-day November event attracted more than 54,000 visitors and more than 200 exhibitors. It was sponsored by the LSC and the London Development Agency.

The event helped young people link learning with skills, by encouraging them to think more clearly about how their learning will provide a route to future employment. It also raised awareness of and provided information, advice and guidance about Apprenticeships, Diplomas and the various career options available.

As usual, visitors were spoilt for choice, with 12 distinct zones focused on areas including advice and guidance, hospitality, transport and construction.

The LSC was represented through the *myCHOICE*London brand, with a central stand in the advice and guidance zone and six interactive "pods" strategically positioned in other zones, all supported by Connexions advisers. Over the summer, KISS FM had teamed up with the LSC to generate a buzz about *myCHOICE*London (a one-stop web resource for 14-19 course and career information in London) through a radio campaign; at the event, its street team helped direct young people to the LSC's stand and gave away merchandise.

Mayor of London Boris Johnson, who was reportedly "mobbed like a pop star" during the event, said: "I would advise young people as far as possible to get the maths



Mayor Boris Johnson described Skills London 2008 as "a wonderful event"

right, get the reading and writing right, and then other things will just flow on from there."

For more information on *myCHOICE*London, log on to www.mychoicelondon.co.uk and for video footage of Skills London 2008, visit www.skillslondon2008.co.uk

State-of-the-art buildings London's FE sector

A long-overdue makeover is equipping many of our region's FE colleges with the iconic buildings and the stunning study and recreational spaces required for them to deliver a 21st-century education.

The Government's *Building Colleges for the Future* programme is about far more than replacing dilapidated classrooms, draughty corridors and dingy workshops.

England's FE sector has never seen anything like it. With an investment of £2.3 billion spread over the next three years, this is its largest-ever building programme. And if early signs are anything to go by, it seems that this much-needed capital injection will succeed in inspiring more people to participate in FE and in raising achievement in every community.



Artist's impression of Lambeth College's stunning redevelopment

Stunning architecture creates the "wow factor"

Investing in the FE estate is not a short-term solution; it is part of a long-term plan to improve learning and rejuvenate local economies. Creating a "wow factor" is going to have a huge impact on London's FE college infrastructure.

City and Islington College is a forerunner. By the end of 2005, it had completed the UK's most ambitious FE investment programme at that time. The College's

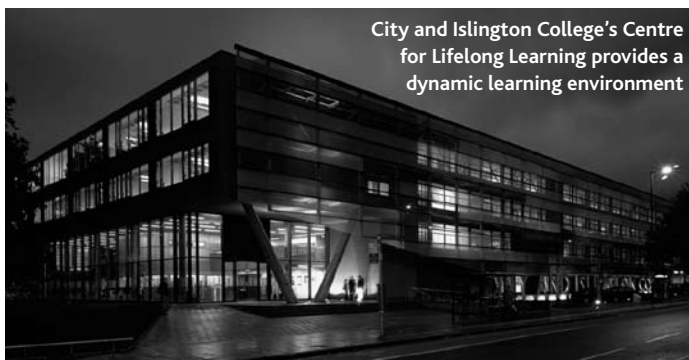
five new centres are designed to provide stunning study and recreational spaces that are fully accessible to people with disabilities. It has all the latest ICT equipment for teaching and learning, its students have free email and internet access, and there are also on-site childcare facilities.

One of the five new centres is the superb Sixth Form College at Angel, which opened at the start of the 2003 autumn term and was designed with A-level students in mind. Its Director, Keren Abse, said: "Teachers and technicians were involved in the planning process with the architects van Heyningen and Haward.

"The building provides excellent facilities and a real community of learning. Students comment very favourably on the facilities and say one of the reasons they chose to come to City and Islington is the quality of the building."

The Centre for Lifelong Learning is another of the five centres to have been completed in 2003. Director Mila Caley said: "We have been located at the Centre for Lifelong Learning for five years and it is still very exciting to come to work in such a dynamic environment.

"The combination of keeping the best of the old building and wrapping the new around it has led to a variety of great learning spaces with the fabulous atrium at the centre, which we use for events, and the stylish terraced café. It is very good for students' self-esteem to be taught in such a lovely building."



City and Islington College's Centre for Lifelong Learning provides a dynamic learning environment

set to transform



City of Westminster College's rebuild is scheduled for completion in summer 2010

Environmental sustainability is a key target

The *Building Colleges for the Future* programme sets out new requirements for all capital works projects to be environmentally sustainable. By 2016

all new colleges will be zero carbon – to achieve this, they will have to balance their carbon emissions (as a result of burning fossil fuels) and their generation of renewable energy.

For example, City of Westminster College is undergoing a £102 million rebuild of its Paddington Green campus, scheduled for completion in summer 2010.

The new building, designed by architects schmidt hammer lassen, incorporates a wide range of innovative sustainability features. These include sloped frontages and sunscreening systems, internal exposed concrete to assist with natural cooling, and a large atrium ventilated by air drawn through an underground labyrinth.

Local environmental considerations are also a priority. The campus overlooks the green spaces of a conservation area and is surrounded by high-density social housing.

To increase community involvement and contribute positively to the area, the building contains public access spaces, including a café with terrace, a theatre and a nursery with places for children of local residents.

David Pigden, Deputy Principal and College Lead on the project, said: "This is a landmark building that will deliver a rich variety of learning opportunities and will be a huge asset to our local and wider communities."



Westminister Kingsway College's £53.5 million redevelopment

An investment of £53.5 million, with 55 per cent provided by the LSC, is enabling the redevelopment of Westminster Kingsway College's King's Cross Centre. Principal Andy Wilson said: "Learning, both formal and informal, is at the heart of the design. By integrating social spaces with informal study areas and a large Learning Centre, students will be encouraged to make the most of every minute they are in the College."

Lambeth College's new Clapham Sixth Form Centre will cost in excess of £20 million, a quarter of which is to be provided by the LSC. Principal Richard Chambers said: "Our aim is simple: we want to help young people in Lambeth meet their potential. That means giving them a College they can feel proud of, and which they want to attend."

Capital injection will result in higher achievements

The funding available through the *Building Colleges for the Future* programme is filtering through to the capital's FE estate.

Since April 2008, LSC London Region has approved 12 detailed projects with project costs totalling £327 million, and has approved in principle a further nine capital projects with total project costs of £350 million. If all 21 projects go ahead, the LSC's contribution will be £518 million, by way of capital grant support.

LSC London Regional Director David Hughes said: "For the last couple of years we have been accelerating the approval of big capital schemes in colleges across London. We want the colleges in London to be good to look at, good to learn in and offering modern facilities and kit. That's what today's learners demand: exciting, modern, aspirational environments with cutting-edge facilities and carefully designed learning and social spaces.

"When it comes to attracting students to an FE college, the building's condition is an important factor in their decision-making process. But it's not just about engaging more learners in FE. There's a strong association between new buildings and high achievement. It's not rocket science: attracting more learners and improving the student experience drives up achievement.

"So we intend to use the money available through the *Building Colleges for the Future* programme to create a world-class FE estate capable of inspiring world-class performances from staff and students alike, to meet the skills needs of our region's employers, and to create new opportunities for the local community."



M2 Training's MD, Richard Henson MBE, celebrates with successful learners from BTS

NVQ success for BTS

With its fleet of 85 minibuses and 30 delivery vans, Brent Transport Services (BTS) provides a wide variety of services to the local community, including school transport for 700 children with special educational needs and ferrying 400 Adult Social Care clients to and from day centres. Including subcontractors, the company employs 100 drivers and 150 passenger assistants.

BTS Transport Manager Alan Sinclair said: "Our drivers and passenger assistants require a wide variety of organisational and communication skills, and the ability to support some of the most vulnerable members of our community. On paper they are regarded as unskilled workers, but nothing could be further from the truth. That's why we decided to give them all the opportunity to gain professional accreditation with a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ)."

The learning programme was fully funded by the LSC and delivered by M2 Training Ltd, who developed an NVQ programme that would add value for BTS and deliver new skills to the workforce. "A few of our staff have reading difficulties and, for many of them, English is not their first language," said BTS Operations Manager David Shelley.

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"To avoid embarrassment in front of their colleagues they would often say 'no thanks' to free training.

"So we ran induction courses to explain the process and M2 Training gave everyone a DVD, which explains how people with language difficulties are given extra support."

In all, 250 BTS drivers and passenger assistants accepted the challenge.

"Many had no formal qualifications," said David, "but now they see themselves as true professionals, which has been great for morale. I think the picture says it all; a lot of those NVQ certificates will be framed, I'm sure."

Circa celebrates 25th anniversary

Over the past 25 years, Lewisham-based Circa Ltd has trained more than 4,000 students. The company marked this milestone by hosting a celebratory event, which was attended by guests, staff and learners (past and present).

Circa provides training and recruitment services, and works with employers and young people from south east and central London.

An Investors in People organisation since 1997, Circa specialises in Business Administration Apprenticeships and has a strong track record: last year 86 per cent of its learners achieved a qualification.

Managing Director Norman Well said: "High standards of quality, staff development and customer service are key drivers for all our business activities. We are proud to have serviced the local community for the past 25 years."

The company has been delivering government-funded, work-based learning for many years. Richard Livingstone, Partnership Director – London East, believes that Circa's continued success is testament to the high standards it maintains. He said: "By working in the communities it serves, Circa helps local residents develop sustainable skills so they can reach their full potential."

Celebrity chef inspires south London's hospitality sector

Two south London colleges joined forces to host a free event for the London Borough of Bromley's hospitality sector.

Top of the bill was celebrity chef Gary Rhodes, who shared the secrets of his success with the audience. He emphasised the importance of training in keeping people motivated and inspired, and said that his staff were more valuable to him than his Michelin stars. And his biggest business tips? "Listen to your customers, always take a positive from a negative and treat everyone with respect."

Presentations were also delivered by representatives of numerous other organisations connected to the hospitality sector, including Connexions Cuisine, Bromley Council's Food Safety team, and cost and purchase management specialist Auditel.

The event was co-hosted by the business development teams from Business Focus and Futures. These teams offer a range of



Celebrity chef Gary Rhodes shared his business advice with the local community at a hospitality and catering event

vocational training solutions at Bromley and Orpington Colleges respectively. Simon Norton, Principal and Chief Executive of Orpington College, said: "All the employers I spoke to found the sessions useful and informative. I was particularly impressed with how effectively our two colleges worked together to deliver the event and to raise the profile of FE with this important business sector."

TQS awarded to Westminster Kingsway College

Westminster Kingsway College is one of the first FE colleges in our region to have been awarded the new Training Quality Standard (TQS).

Established by the LSC, TQS is a new assessment framework and certification process designed to recognise and celebrate the best organisations delivering training and development solutions to employers.

Westminster Kingsway College delivers business development activities through Employer Training Solutions, which offers customised, work-based training and professional development programmes for employers of all sizes and across all sectors. Workforce training solutions delivered include professional development and management programmes, Apprenticeships, Skills for



Delighted to receive the College's TQS award: Nicole Barber, Head of Employer Training; Andy Wilson (centre); and Paul Lewis, Director, Business Development

Life and Train to Gain programmes, as well as bespoke and non-accredited training. The TQS national mark certifies that the training and support being provided is of a high standard.

Principal Andy Wilson said: "The TQS award recognises the College's

commitment to providing the very best training and support to employers and learners in the workplace. Through the hard work and commitment of our Employer Training Solutions team, we have grown this area of work while ensuring a high-quality and individualised offer for our clients."

London's learning priorities for the coming year

The current economic downturn means that our investment in FE skills and training for young people and adults has never been more important. Here LSC London Regional Director David Hughes talks about his priorities for 2009/10.

Last year was a pretty successful one for learning across our region (see statistics opposite). Education and skills remain a key part of the Government's response to the economic challenges ahead, but this year there are three strategic drivers, instead of two.

London's first driver relates to the long-term objective, set by Lord Leitch, of getting our country's skills levels up to a world-class standard by 2020 – so no major changes for us there.

The second is about big public sector investment programmes like Crossrail, the 2012 Games and the Thames Gateway

regeneration plan. It's important for us to continue responding to employers' skills needs, which are channelled through to us by the London Skills and Employment Board and the Sector Skills Councils. Leading by example, the Greater London Authority family of organisations has committed to take on 2,000 apprentices, young and old.

We have introduced a third driver this year, in response to the new economic climate. The Government sees the FE sector as critical in helping to mitigate the impact of the downturn and – importantly – in equipping people with the skills they will need when the upturn comes.

Balancing act

So we have to cope with a difficult balancing act: retaining our focus on the long term by getting more people skilled to higher levels; while helping London's businesses and individuals to gain the skills they need to succeed in the short term.

Thankfully the Government has relaxed the regime we work within, to allow the LSC, colleges and training providers greater flexibility. This is good news. It means that the push we've been making in London over the past few years – towards skills that are really relevant for today and for tomorrow – will continue.

We will help London's businesses and individuals to gain the skills they need to succeed





Young Londoners will be provided with a broader offer that has a strong emphasis on making Diplomas, Apprenticeships and vocational courses really attractive options

In practice, this flexibility will mean that colleges and training providers will face the challenge of having to work even more creatively.

So new approaches, like flexible start dates and shorter courses, will start to become more common – I see it as the development of a "roll on, roll off" training pattern that's focused entirely on the skills employers want and need, when and how they need them.

Driving up adult learning in London (2007/08)

37,000 Level 2 Train to Gain starts (49,000 starts overall, making London the best-performing region by volume and doubling our 2006/07 performance)

32,000 adult Full Level 2 learners (an increase of 33% on 2006/7)

22,700 adult Full Level 3 starts (target: 23,100)

8,000 adult Apprenticeship starts (4,500 more than in 2006/07 – the number of completions is also likely to increase by 1,000)

Targeted support

For young people, our priorities are broadly the same as last year: high participation rates and better achievements by age 19, especially at Level 2 and Level 3. We must also ensure that we provide young Londoners with a broader offer that includes not just GCSEs and A-levels, but also a strong emphasis on making Diplomas, Apprenticeships and vocational courses really attractive options.

We will also provide targeted support to three important groups of adult learners. Firstly, people who have been unemployed for some time and may need considerable support to get back into work. Secondly, people who are in work but at risk of redundancy – Train to Gain can equip them with skills that may help them to retain their job or, if things don't work out, to find a new one. And thirdly, those who have been made redundant – we will support them through retraining, so that they can compete effectively in the labour market.

I firmly believe that training is one of the best ways for businesses to make themselves more resilient and competitive. Of course, some companies will say that there are tough times ahead, so let's "batten down the hatches" and put training on the shelf for now. But others will respond to the downturn by using training

Record participation levels for young Londoners (2007/08)

89% participation for young people aged 16 to 17 (the highest rate among the English regions)

3.1% increase in 16-18 participation (national average: 2.4%)

74.1% of students achieve Level 2 by 19 (national average: 73.9%)

50.5% achieve Level 3 by 19 (London is the second-highest region)

5,850 Apprenticeship starts for young people aged 16 to 18 (London had over 1,000 more completions and participants than in 2006/07)

to make existing staff more efficient and able to take on additional responsibilities. Training can also help companies develop new markets, products and services that are likely to be in demand once we get through this difficult economic period.

Naturally, in the real world, things are not quite that simple; we'll all need to be very astute to get it right.

In my view: Vic Grimes

According to the Prime Minister, Apprenticeship numbers must increase to around 400,000 in England by 2020. We spoke to LSC London Region's Director of Apprenticeships, Vic Grimes, to find out what the LSC is doing to help meet these targets.

Q: Why is the new National Apprenticeships Service (NAS) being introduced?

Employers were finding the existing system very confusing, not least because so many different organisations were involved. So the Government decided to create a single, national organisation that would take full, end-to-end responsibility for the entire Apprenticeships programme. The new NAS will become operational from April 2009.

Q: So will it be a standalone service?

No, many others, like skills brokers, Connexions, Jobcentre Plus and training providers, will still be heavily involved in supporting the ambitions of the programme, but the NAS will retain overall responsibility.

Q: What is the immediate priority of the NAS?

It's the Vacancy Matching System (VMS), which provides a seamless, web-based location for information about Apprenticeships. Employers started uploading their Apprenticeship vacancies at the end of last year and the system was opened up to potential apprentices this month. We developed the VMS with the support of our stakeholders and partners – they are very enthused by it and we're heavily reliant on their continued involvement for it to succeed in the long term.

Q: How will the VMS benefit employers and learners?

Employers will use this free service to spell out their requirements in a very clear way; and learners will be able to access detailed information about local, regional and national Apprenticeship vacancies, including eligibility criteria and a description of the apprentice role. The NAS is setting up a field force to support employers throughout the process, from the initial interview to the completion of the Apprenticeship and, in many cases, progression to higher education.



Q: Given the current economic climate, do you think you'll succeed in bringing employers on board?

There's no other option. We've got to persuade them that apprentices do contribute to the bottom line and that now is precisely the right time to invest in the programme. Out of all the English regions, London has delivered the lowest volume of Apprenticeship starts in the last year, so the London Regional Apprenticeships Taskforce was established to address this and to drive up participation.

Q: How does the Taskforce plan to increase London's Apprenticeship numbers?

The Taskforce is taking a four-pronged approach. It will boost employer take-up, through advertising campaigns and by trialling new approaches. It will focus on improving quality, and working with Sector Skills Councils to establish Apprenticeship frameworks in sectors where none exist. To support the increased activity, the LSC will fund the training of up to 1,000 workplace assessors over the next two years. It will ensure that Apprenticeships are widely viewed as a viable post-16 option, and as a good route into higher education. And it will address inequalities by piloting Apprenticeship support and mentoring programmes for under-represented groups.

Ford apprentices put their skills to the test

Ten of Ford's top apprentices from across the UK put their skills to the test at the company's annual Apprentice of the Year competition, held at Ford's national training centre in Loughborough.

The apprentices each tackled eight 30-minute tasks designed to demonstrate their knowledge of diagnostic techniques, vehicle inspection and customer handling. Vic Grimes, LSC London Region's Director of Apprenticeships, was impressed. He said: "It was fantastic. All the competitors demonstrated outstanding skills across the board. They should be very proud of what they have achieved, as should their employer, whose commitment to learning and development is reflected in the calibre of its apprentices."

London Region was represented by Nick Duna, 20, who works at Dagenham Motors and was selected from 290 apprentices in their final year on the



Preparing to battle it out: the contenders for Ford's prestigious Apprenticeship title

Ford Masters Apprenticeship Programme. Nick was chosen for his performance in the workshop and during training at Croydon College.



Andy Barratt, Director of Ford's Customer Service division, presents Aberdeen Apprentice Martin Milne with his Apprentice of the Year award

Ad campaign signposts skills training for businesses

To underline the importance of training, particularly during tougher economic times, in November the Government ran a high-profile Train to Gain advertising campaign.

The £2.4 million advertising push included peak-time radio and television adverts reminding people that, thanks to the Train to Gain service, it is now quicker and far easier for companies to get the training they need to keep their businesses moving.

The key elements of the new Train to Gain package for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are:

- funding for "bite-sized chunks" – small units or modules of qualifications in subjects known to be important to SMEs, including business management, teamworking, customer service and risk management

An image from the stylish new Train to Gain ad campaign



- extending the leadership and management programme so that more SMEs are eligible to take part
- relaxing the rules to allow workers to get relevant training at GCSE level (Level 2), even if they have a previous qualification at this level
- more funding for training to Level 3 (equivalent to two A-levels).

For more information about Train to Gain, visit www.traintogain.gov.uk

Skills for London Awards 2009 – apply now!

Applications for the second Skills for London Awards competition are now available. The deadline for completed applications is 27 February.

The competition celebrates the achievements of apprentices, employers, training providers and learners across our region, and this year there will be 14 awards up for grabs. The winners will be announced at an awards ceremony at the Natural History Museum on 4 June. As usual, the Apprenticeship category winners will be entered into the National Awards, to be held in July.

For more information, visit www.skillsforlondon.org/index.html

77% of company directors believe it is important to invest in staff training in the current economic climate (Source: Association of Colleges research, October 2008)

Colleges demonstrate positive impact

When it comes to unlocking talent within communities and transforming learners' lives, colleges play a vital role. The first-ever national Colleges Week was held in November, to recognise and celebrate their contribution. The themes explored were individual skills, delivering excellence, economic impact, helping businesses succeed, transforming lives and skills challenges.



Westminster Kingsway students show off their impressive sugar structures

London's colleges and students got into the spirit of the occasion. They hosted a range of events including business breakfasts (College of North East London and Croydon College), the launch of an economic impact report (South Thames College), a construction skills demonstration (Lewisham College), a three-day sugar structure challenge (Westminster Kingsway College) and puddings for 220 local pupils (Hackney Community College).

Colleges Week was led by the DIUS and the Association of Colleges, in partnership with the LSC.



Trainee chefs from Hackney Community College watch pupils tucking in to their desserts



Business guru Allan Leighton's gala dinner helped raise the profile of Train to Gain's new Leadership and Management Advisory Service

Gala dinner serves up leadership advice

Allan Leighton's *On Leadership* gala dinner, held in November, provided food for thought about how skills and leadership development can increase the resilience of business organisations.

The event was initiated by leadership guru and best-selling author Allan as part of his personal pledge to raise £1 million for Breast Cancer Care. It was organised by the charity and supported by LSC London Region.

Allan hosted the evening and shared his wealth of management expertise and insights with attendees. He was joined on stage by two dynamic guest speakers: Sir Stuart Rose, who is frequently referred to as the architect of Marks and Spencer's revival, and Val Gooding CBE, the former CEO of BUPA. Jon Snow was compere for the evening and led the lively debate.

LSC London Region had invited many local small to medium-sized businesses to attend the dinner. The event provided a perfect opportunity to promote the LSC's new Leadership and Management Advisory Service, which funds access to support, training and networking activities for managers, and is part of the Train to Gain service. Many people signed up for Leadership and Management training after speaking to skills brokers at the event.

The event raised £85,000 for Breast Cancer Care. The importance of skills to business success was underlined by the charity signing up to the Skills Pledge that evening.

Awards celebrate local business success

The 11th annual Thames Gateway Business Awards ceremony in November was a perfect opportunity to recognise many thriving local businesses. LSC London Region sponsored two categories: Apprentice of the Year, which was won by Jenna Weston, from British Gas; and the Training and Development Award (Train to Gain), which was won by Paul Cunningham and Jamie Derry of AJC Wilson Bodyshop.



Celebrity chef James Martin hosted the awards ceremony: (photo on left) LSC Project Director, National Apprenticeship Service – Project Team, Jonathan Thorn with award winner Jenna Weston; (photo above) LSC London Regional Press Officer Lynn McSweeney with award winners Paul Cunningham (left) and Jamie Derry

Personal Best for every London borough

Around 7,000 Londoners will be helped to gain their first qualification through a training programme linked to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Run by the LSC and the London Development Agency (LDA), the Personal Best programme uses the appeal of London 2012 to reach out to communities and engage disadvantaged people in learning. It is being rolled out between November and April to every London borough.

Personal Best has already been trialled in 11 London boroughs. The early signs look very promising: most of the 875 learners taking part finished their programme in the autumn; 14.5 per cent have moved into either full- or part-time employment; and 23.5 per cent are undertaking further learning.

Congratulating the learners on achieving their qualification, Mayor of London Boris Johnson said it would be "an added bonus" to see Personal Best graduates helping out as volunteers at the London Games. Seb Coe, Chair of the London 2012 Organising

Mary Conneely, LSC Regional Director for Regeneration in London, Seb Coe and Tom Russell, Group Director for Olympic Legacy at the LDA, celebrate with Personal Best graduates at Wembley



King of the triple jump Jonathan Edwards congratulates Personal Best achievers at Wembley

Committee, added: "As the 2008 Beijing Games proved, volunteers make the difference between a good Games and a great Games for athletes and spectators

alike. Personal Best provides relevant skills training to ensure as many Londoners as possible have an opportunity to be part of this once-in-a-lifetime experience."

£28 million boost for NSA

The National Skills Academy (NSA) for Sport and Active Leisure launched in November with the support of £28 million from employers and from funding agencies. The LSC provided a significant contribution, to help the academy work towards becoming self-sustainable within three years.

Florence Orban, Interim Chief Executive of the skills academy for Sport and Active Leisure, said: "The skills academy will bring clarity to a confused training picture. Currently learners have to choose from around 490 existing qualifications specific to our sector and these have historically been delivered through an uncoordinated mix of providers."

Located at Crystal Palace, the skills academy aims to address the current skills gap in the

sport and active leisure industry by providing a single approach to training.

By 2013, the academy will be training 85,000 new entrants, existing staff and volunteers each year, and will be offering employers within the sector better-quality training and improved access to government funding.

Each skills academy puts employers at the heart of skills training for their sector: taking control of the design and delivery of learning in their industry, and working in partnership with government and top training providers, from both the public



Pictured at the launch event at Lord's Cricket Ground are: (from left) Stephen Studd, SkillsActive Group CEO; Lord Young, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Skills and Apprenticeships; and Florence Orban

and private sectors. Some of the biggest names in the sport and active leisure sector came along to the launch, including the England and Wales Cricket Board, PGL, Leisure Connection, DC Leisure and Sheffield United.

Five minutes with... Boris Johnson

Mayor of London Boris Johnson chairs the London Skills and Employment Board (LSEB), which is tasked with providing leadership in improving adult skills and employment in London. Here he shares his views on these important topics.

Q: Why does London need a Skills and Employment Board?

The LSEB brings together a variety of agencies and organisations, all working together to provide training and employment opportunities for Londoners. It works closely with experienced business leaders who bring common sense solutions and ideas to tackling the difficult challenges that London faces, particularly lack of skills and unemployment.

Q: The LSEB recently published its strategy – what do you want the Board to achieve?

I want the LSEB to deliver the skills and training that London's employers have told us they need in order to compete in the global market place. In addition, we will be investing £600 million in training, to give Londoners the skills they need to find and stay in work.

Q: As Mayor, what additional measures have you put in place to help London and Londoners during these challenging economic times?

I'm confident that my Economic Recovery Action Plan will help the London economy and Londoners to weather the storm, as well as prepare London for the eventual



upturn. Although we might be in for a bumpy ride, if we handle this right, we can come out of the slump in a stronger position than before. London is the world's greatest city, and I am determined it will remain so.

Q: But will London be ready to respond, when the economy starts to pick up?

I am fully focused on ensuring London pulls through the current economic downturn, emerging stronger than ever and retaining its position as a leading world city. To achieve this, we must ensure that London's employers have access to the skills they need, which is particularly important in more challenging economic times. We will be spending wisely, to ensure that training and skills programmes continue, so that Londoners and the City are equipped for the eventual economic upturn.

Q: What impact will the 2012 Games have on skills in London?

Over the next decade the Games, along with the trans-London rail link Crossrail, will provide thousands of Londoners with the chance to transform their lives by developing their existing skills base, and learning new skills that will give them employment opportunities for years to come.

Q: You mentioned Crossrail, which is Europe's largest construction project – what impact will it have on the London economy?

Crossrail is the largest addition to the transport network in the South East for 50 years. It is vital to London and the UK, providing an enormous boost to the economy and creating thousands of jobs linked to its construction.

Skills are set to play a vital role in our region's future prosperity

The capital's learning landscape is evolving all the time. LSC London Region's report, *Delivering Learning and Skills*, will inform plans to meet the future skills needs of the workforce.

LSC London Region's 2008 strategic analysis highlights performance improvements across many different areas. However, it also makes it clear that more work needs to be done, to maximise Londoners' potential.

The good news is that London is succeeding in engaging its young people in education – in fact, we have the highest participation rates in England. School sixth forms are becoming an increasingly attractive option for this age group, so for 2008/09 we have funded more than 6,000 additional places to meet this demand. The knock-on effects are that success rates for Full Level 2 and 3 are rising, while NEET numbers (young people not in education, employment or training) are falling.

London has made good progress in engaging and working with employers. Ours is the best-performing region for Train to Gain Level 2 starts and Skills for Life participation is also strong.

However, despite these successes, it's vital to keep our eye on the ball. London's Planning and Performance Director Alan Parnum said: "Our region has made some really significant improvements in performance over the last 12 months, but there's no room for complacency. From now on, the focus must be on increasing the flow of achievements resulting from training.

"Apprenticeship numbers are showing an overall increase, but we need to engage with a wider range of sectors; the quality of E2E provision has to improve; success rates and volume of achievements within Train to Gain must rise; although we are very successful at delivering entry-level provision, we need to enable more Skills for Life learners to progress in employment;



93% of London's 16-year-olds and 85 per cent of 17-year-olds are in education

49,000 Train to Gain Level 2 starts make London the best-performing region in England in 2007/08

6,500 Train to Gain Skills for Life starts were delivered in 2007/08 (2006/07 figure was 2,640 starts)

and, last but not least, in view of the current economic climate, along with our training providers we must retain the flexibility to respond effectively to London's changing needs."

To download the report, visit http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/London/London_Strategic_Analysis_2008.pdf

News in brief

Adult learning in Tower Hamlets

More than 400 Tower Hamlets residents attended an Adult Learner Day to find out about the many learning opportunities available. The event was held at three venues and was organised by the Tower Hamlets Partnership, with the support of partners including the LSC. It emphasised that it's never too late to learn – many attendees signed up for courses.

Hackney meets a sweet challenge

In the space of just 220 minutes, second-year students from Hackney Community College's hospitality and catering department made 22 loaves of bread and 220 bread-and-butter puddings costing 22p each for 220 pupils at a local primary school. The puddings were healthy too, each one containing under 2.2 grams of saturated fat!

10,000th rail sector NVQ

The 10,000th rail sector NVQ was celebrated by a House of Commons event attended by Gordon Marsden MP, Four Counties Training (FCT), rail representatives and learners. FCT's Rail Competence Centre, a one-stop shop for competence assurance in the rail industry, has enabled FCT to become the only certified Training Quality Standard provider in England to specialise in rail. Lara Newson, FCT's Managing Director, said: "The rail industry was criticised for poor NVQ achievement less than 10 years ago but we've now passed 10,000 awards in 21 companies."

Redbridge teaching assistants gain NVQ

The Deputy Mayor of Redbridge presented NVQ Teaching Assistants City & Guilds certificates to more than 60 students, who actively support teaching in the borough's schools. For the NVQ, students had to develop a portfolio of their work, and were observed while supporting students with special educational needs. The achievement rate for the course was 96 per cent – the highest in the country.



More than 60 successful NVQ students gathered at Redbridge Institute of Adult Education to receive their certificates

Take4

Train to Gain

At the last count, Train to Gain has inspired 49,000 Londoners to engage in learning. We spoke to four people from our region, to find out what difference the service has made to them.

Martin McDonough
Health and Safety Manager
Galldris Construction Ltd

"The training was very effective and very little production time was lost, as all the training was delivered by the assessors on site. Everyone has benefited from the training – even the most experienced plant operatives have found it refreshing to be reminded about the safest way to do things. Some have also taken advantage of the literacy and numeracy support available through the programme.

"Morale and teamwork are at an all-time high with site operatives taking a keener, more active role in health and safety issues and training requirements. Safety-related incidents on site fell by around 20 per cent in six months."

Toby Fosh
Lettings Manager
One Stop Estates

"In our line of business, you need a good reputation to succeed in the longer term. I knew it would benefit the company if I could learn how to resolve customer complaints in the right way. Before the course I tended to freeze, not say anything and hand the problem over to my manager. But now I'm much calmer and more effective in those situations because I follow a set process: listen, empathise, apologise and then decide what action to take.

"Gaining the qualification has really boosted my self-esteem, too. I feel good about myself and I feel in control at work, which means that I'm more productive – and happier!"

Christine East
Training Manager
Chatsworth Care

"The NVQ covered all aspects of the carer's job role, including mandatory elements such as health and safety, emergency first aid, food hygiene and safeguarding of vulnerable adults, as well as more specialised units that focused on areas such as dealing appropriately with autism. I was very impressed.

"As a small private company, we think Train to Gain is invaluable. It has raised the profile of training across the organisation and it has saved us a small fortune, so we've been able to divert our training budget to more specialist areas, such as the Makaton language programme and dealing with challenging behaviour."

Penny Robinson
Union Learning Representative
London Borough of Barking
and Dagenham

"Our manual workers are delighted to possess a nationally recognised certification of competence. They are more confident too: staff meetings are now always a two-way discussion; some of the learners even chair service improvement groups; and they are much more proactive in meeting customer needs.

"The training has inspired many people to achieve more and diversify. I can think of several examples: a dustman who is now an area manager; a caretaker who has become a supervisor; a street cleaner who is now a pest control officer; and frontline employees who willingly provide office cover if their manager is off sick or on annual leave."



Martin McDonough



Toby Fosh



Christine East



Penny Robinson