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>lsc

Leading learning and skills

nw news

The newsletter for stakeholders
of the LSC in the North West

autumn 07

Leitch
Implementation Plan
page 03

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Welcome

Welcome to the second LSC North West stakeholder newsletter. In the first newsletter in May I commented that it was a time of enormous change - even judged by the standards of the learning and skills sector. Since then the sector has seen even more major announcements with the changes in the Machinery of Government introduced by Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

It is therefore important that I take this opportunity to emphasise how the LSC will be carrying forward our business following the creation of the new Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS).

As ever our primary concern is to serve the interests of learners and employers. We have an ambitious agenda for young people, adults and skills for employers and we will be working closely with the two new Departments, with partners across the FE system, and with Local Government to continue delivering this agenda.

Our Ministers estimate that we will not be able to give effect to the full legislative changes until the academic year 2010-11. In the time between now and then, the LSC will retain the responsibility for securing and funding all forms of post-16 education and training outside higher education. In particular, we will retain the duty to secure the proper facilities for young people aged 16 to 19.

So it is very much 'business as usual', although we will also be working with Government and our partners on the design of future arrangements and to ensure they are carefully planned and smoothly effected.

The July launch of the Leitch Implementation Plan, much of which we had already foreseen and initiated work on, emphasises the importance of driving forward our introduction of demand-led funding. So we will continue to build our Train to Gain service and the wide range of other learning and skills activities we are responsible for, to better meet the needs of adults and employers.

Our newly launched Skills Campaign, covered in detail within this newsletter, will support this by helping to increase awareness of the benefits of skills and stimulating greater demand for learning from individuals and employers.

So I and the rest of the LSC North West team look forward to continuing to work with you to drive forward the transformation of the further education system which we have seen over the last few years.

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Leitch Implementation Plan unveils new skills ambitions

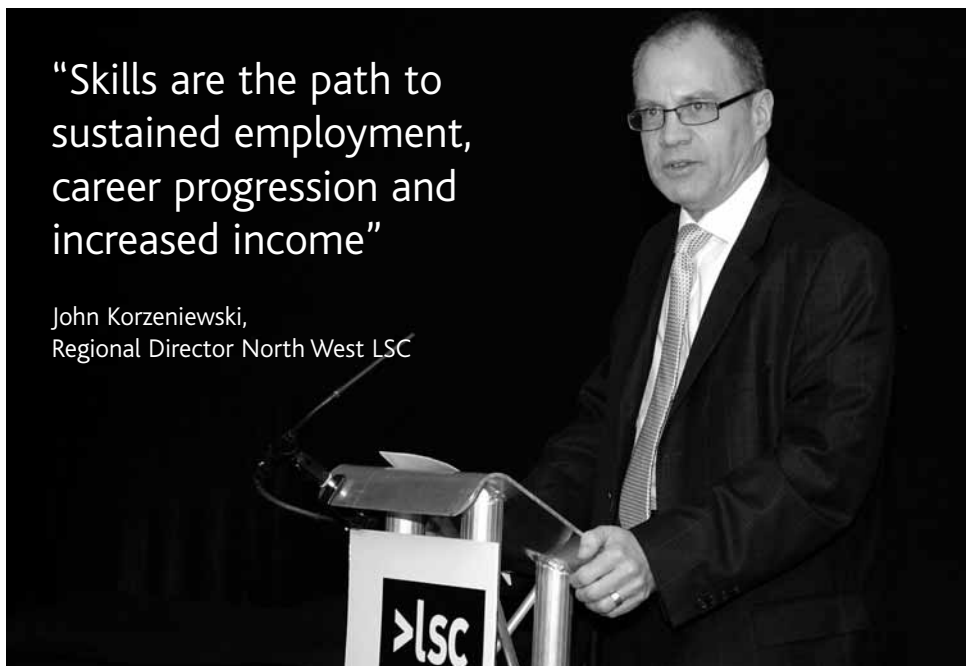
The Government has published its response to the Leitch Review of Skills revealing major plans to help over four million adults to learn new skills and improve existing ones.

The response, entitled World Class Skills, outlines the Government's proposals to make the nation a world leader in skills by 2020 and sets out how it plans to lead the country into a 'skills revolution'.

The LSC has welcomed the news and John Korzeniewski, Regional Director North West LSC comments, "Skills are the path to sustained employment, career progression and increased income. We need to boost the employability of millions of adults and the LSC lies at the heart of making the Leitch Implementation Plan a reality. We will build on our successes to date in meeting the needs of employers and individuals, communities and the economy."

"Skills are the path to sustained employment, career progression and increased income"

John Korzeniewski,
Regional Director North West LSC



Did You Know . . .

Success rates for adults in FE have risen by 15% to 76% since 2001

Source: FE Success rates 2005/06

For employers key announcements within the plan include the creation of a new UK Commission for Employment and Skills which will strengthen the employer voice at the heart of the employment and skills system.

In addition employers will be given a leading role in the reform and development of vocational qualifications for their sector and reformed Sector Skills Councils will give employers the opportunity to exert real leverage over both the content and delivery of skills programmes.

As Paul Holme explains in his 'Viewpoint' article on page 13, Train to Gain will also be expanded to help employers to invest in their business by improving the skills of their employees. And better employer

engagement will be achieved through the introduction of the Skills Pledge and the development of a New Standard for employer responsive training provision.

Moving on to individuals, the Implementation Plan will create Skills Accounts to give greater ownership and choice over learning and benefit claimants will be able to access training to support their return to work.

A new adult careers service will also be developed to deliver tailored employment and skills support to meet the needs of low-skilled and unemployed adults.

Concluded John Korzeniewski, "This is the right approach to one of the most pressing issues facing our country. We now have an



ideal opportunity to secure a prosperous future for businesses, individuals and families and LSC North West is fully behind the drive to create World Class Skills."

Who's who in . . .

The Skills for Employability Team

The team's role within the Skills Directorate is to support the needs of disadvantaged individuals and help them to access sustainable employment through services such as; Skills for Life and Employability, Offender Learning and Skills (OLASS) and University for Industry (UFI) Learndirect provision.

In response to recent policy papers such as Leitch and the Department of Work and Pension's 'Work Better Off', the employability agenda has risen up the priority list in government policy, placing a stronger emphasis on the importance of individuals acquiring the right skills to find and sustain employment.

By working with key partners, including Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and Criminal Justice agencies, the team ensures strategic alignment and effective deployment of LSC funding towards this goal.



Front row l-r:
Graham McKendrick,
Pauline Heron, Tim Jarvis

Back row l-r:
Gail Ross, Leah Maltby,
Anne Gornall, Christine Hosie,
Ruth Randle

Anne Gornall Skills Development Director

As the leader of the Skills for Employability team, Anne ensures the LSC in the North West is well positioned to fully contribute to an integrated skills and employment service in the region.

Anne believes that maximising the potential of individuals, groups and communities through learning and skills development is the route to achieving economic success and social inclusion.

Pauline Heron Skills Support Adviser for Skills for Life

Pauline supports partnership teams, partners and stakeholders to implement activities that impact on the North West Skills for Life Strategy. She works closely with partner organisations to ensure that a whole organisation approach to Skills for Life is adopted by different sectors and that appropriate professional development opportunities are available for the delivery of Skills for Life.

Christine Hosie Skills Development Manager for Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS)

Christine is responsible for developing learning and skills in the North West so that offenders have access to suitable provision to enable them to develop the necessary skills to access employment. This involves working on the Government's reducing re-offending agenda with a range of partners in the criminal justice sector as well as Jobcentre Plus, Connexions and OLASS providers.

Tim Jarvis Skills Support Adviser for Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS)

Tim is the Skills Support Adviser for OLASS. He supports Christine in developing learning and skills in the North West and has particular responsibility for performance management of the OLASS contracts, working with the sector team on employer engagement, young offenders and project management of ESF 'EQUAL'.

Leah Maltby Skills Development Manager for Skills for Life

Leah is responsible for developing and implementing the North West Skills for Life Strategy that aims to; support the achievement of the Public Service Agreement (PSA) target, establish Skills for Life within employer engagement and engage with target groups, such as families, offenders and those in receipt of benefit.

Graham McKendrick Skills Development Manager for Welfare to Workforce

Graham leads the joint Welfare to Workforce agenda with Jobcentre Plus (JCP) in developing the integration of the Skills and Employability agendas including the development of Skills for Jobs. He liaises closely with JCP regional colleagues and supports local area partnership teams to ensure effective response by providers to the Employability Skills agenda.

Ruth Randle Skills for Employability Team Administrator

Ruth used to reside in the Economic Development team in LSC Greater Manchester before taking up her post as team administrator. She supports all the team by maintaining organisational processes, managing data and keeping the team on track with effective systems.

Gail Ross Skills Support Adviser for Welfare to Workforce

Gail is the Skills Support Adviser working with Graham and supporting the Welfare to Workforce agenda with Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and local office colleagues. She has taken the lead in developing and implementing a series of capacity building events aimed at JCP adviser service managers and in developing a data monitoring return in particular for the JCP Skills for Life Transfer programme; working with local office and JCP colleagues.

Adult Learning Grant goes national

The LSC is investing £35m in the national roll-out of the Adult Learning Grant (ALG). The news follows a successful pilot programme spanning 25 areas of England, including Lancashire, where 1,137 people have received the ALG in 2006/7.

ALG is a weekly grant designed to help adults studying full-time with the costs of learning. The grant pays up to £30 per week for full-time learners aged 19 and over who are studying for certain qualifications.

Developed as part of the drive to improve the levels of both vocational and academic skills in the UK, ALG is intended to be a helping hand for adults who want to learn more skills, but have financial constraints.

Ian Haworth, LSC's Director of Area for Lancashire said, "We found that many

people felt held back in their careers by a lack of skills, but often financial problems stopped them from learning. In pilot areas, ALG has already started to help people cross this barrier. It's been great to see that 95% of people involved in the pilots have applied for courses that teach job-related skills that will help them progress in their careers."

The pilot, which has been running in Lancashire for four years, has been a success in improving retention, with 93% of ALG learners completing their courses, above the average of 85%.

Ian Haworth continues, "ALG offers learners a helping hand to get back into education – it can be used to help with anything from the cost of books and materials through to childcare costs."

To find out about eligibility, potential ALG candidates should visit Student Services at their local college, call 0800 100 900 or visit the website www.direct.gov.uk/alg

ALG

ADULT LEARNING GRANT



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Mum follows her dream thanks to the Adult Learning Grant

A Lancashire mother who left school at 16 with very few qualifications is on course to pursue her dream career as a social worker, with help from the Adult Learning Grant (ALG).

Susan Hindle, a single parent from Rishton in Lancashire, made the decision to return to college to build a better life for her seven-year-old son. She juggled her studies with childcare and a part-time job as a home carer, helping to make ends meet by paying half of her mortgage with her £30 a week ALG.

Susan, 32, said: "I see education as my chance to build a better life for me and my son. I am determined to reach my goal of becoming a social worker. The first time around, I left school at the age of 16 and was more interested in dopping around than in education. As I've got older I've realised how important it is, and how it can build a better life for my family.

"The Adult Learning Grant has made a big difference – the money has paid for half of my mortgage. If I hadn't received that money I would have found another way of carrying on, but £30 a week is not to be sniffed at."

Susan decided to undertake a BTEC National Diploma in Early Years at Blackburn College after working as a local authority home carer for several years for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council.

She added: "Studying has been a real challenge, there have been some tears trying to balance everything, but my family and friends have been brilliant. It was very hard to go back into an educational establishment and get used to the rules and regulations, but I had some lovely tutors and it was great to walk out of the doors on the last day knowing what I had achieved."



Merseyside prison leads the way on learning

Maghull based HMP Kennet, which officially opened on 25 June, is set to lead the way in reducing re-offending in Merseyside by implementing the LSC's new integrated Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS).

The service aims to break the cycle of failure and drive down re-offending by providing skills for employability, giving better access to employment on release. OLASS also aims to integrate offender education within mainstream academic and vocational provision to ensure offenders experience seamless provision in both custodial and community settings.

HMP Kennet is a male category C prison, accommodating 350 prisoners. All inmates are expected to benefit from OLASS, which will cover areas such as construction skills, media, catering, IT, numeracy and literacy.

Merseyside based training provider Mercia Partnership (UK) Ltd has been awarded the contract by the LSC in the North West to deliver learning and skills services to the prison.

Mercia Partnership's Managing Director, Andrew Taylor said, "Access to quality

training dramatically impacts on the quality of life and the chances of employment offenders can look forward to when they leave prison and also on their rehabilitation. We are pleased to be able to deliver what will be a very specialist high quality provision of learning that will make a real difference to a great many people."

Helen France, LSC Director of Area for Greater Merseyside comments, "Since August 2006 the LSC has been responsible for offender learning and skills across England and Wales. In line with government targets the service aims to help reduce the re-offending rate by ten per cent by 2010. The North West was one of the first regions to deliver OLASS and Merseyside will be at the forefront of this innovative new service."

The Governor of HMP Kennet, Steve Lawrence, said "This is the first public sector prison to open since 1996. I am looking forward to working in partnership with the LSC and Mercia Partnership (UK) Ltd. The regime at the prison is built around training and education facilities for offenders. If we get this right we should meet our targets for reducing re-offending."

New framework for sustainable employment: skills for jobs

With skills firmly at the centre of the current agenda, the LSC is working with Jobcentre Plus to develop a new framework aimed at providing an integrated skills and employment service.

The new framework will respond to the needs of unemployed and economically inactive individuals.

Comments Anne Gornall, Skills Development Director North West LSC, "The aim is to reduce the numbers of individuals not in employment through more effective engagement in learning and by moving individuals into sustainable jobs through support, skills development, learning progression and the achievement of qualifications."

The draft framework details a very individual approach, providing the skills people need for employability through a demand led client centred response.

In the North West this will be achieved through existing and emerging local partnerships with employer engagement critical to the success of the framework.

Through this individualised and employer focused approach it is hoped that 33% of participants should move into sustainable employment.

Anne Gornall continues, "This framework will utilise the many and varied existing programmes and support systems already available and provide further support for individual journeys from economic inactivity to sustained employment. Support will not end there though and a key part of this framework will be to ensure mechanisms are in place to enable participants to move through to Train to Gain funded provision or Apprenticeships as appropriate and continue their learning journey."

Partnerships plan provision for Personal and Community Development Learning

Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL) Partnerships have recently been formed across the North West, tasked to map PCDL provision at borough/county level in order to inform a local planning process and to report findings to national colleagues as part of an ongoing review of PCDL.

Led locally, the multi-agency partnerships work towards a broad vision for PCDL, taking into account activities beyond those funded by the LSC including those provided by public bodies, by the private sector and by the voluntary and community sector. PCDL partnerships are also ensuring that the voice of the learner is represented and able to influence the planning process.

The mapping and planning exercise will provide the opportunity to ensure that there is an equitable and representative spread of provision both geographically and demographically and that there is a broad offer of different types of learning opportunities that respond to learner demand. Mapping and planning will incorporate a targeted funding offer from the LSC, directed at people that will have benefited least from other learning opportunities.

Jane Cowell, Regional Director of Learning, Planning and Performance North West LSC comments, "These partnerships provide a great opportunity for all those in a local area to draw their work together and present to the community an exciting, accessible and relevant range of community learning opportunities. The mapping and planning work will enable duplication to be removed and gaps to be filled. It will also help the LSC and its delivery partners to focus our funding to support learners and programmes in a way that fits with and enhances the local offer in each area. I am particularly delighted to hear that so many of the partnerships are involving learners and potential learners in their planning activity. This is really useful in developing the provision that local communities want and deserve."

Local offices on the move

Two of LSC North West's local offices have moved in recent months.

In May the Lancashire office relocated from Taylor House to new premises at City Gate in Preston.

The move was marked with a celebration event attended by Regional Director North West LSC, John Korzeniewski, who was on hand to cut the ribbon and officially open the offices, alongside Ian Haworth, Director of Area for the LSC in Lancashire.

Ian Haworth commented, "We are thrilled to be in new premises, where our priorities as a local team remain focused on our plan to build a skilled and competitive workforce in Lancashire. We want everyone to be given the chance to get into learning to fulfil their potential and we are committed to providing high quality demand-led training for individuals and employers across Lancashire."

This sentiment was echoed a few weeks later when Helen France, Director of Area for the LSC in Greater Merseyside, and her team made the move to new offices in the Plaza development on Old Hall Street in June.

Formerly based at Tithebarn House, the move was celebrated by Roger Hoyle, Chairman of the local Council, and members of the Greater Merseyside team.

Speaking at the opening Helen France said, "Our new premises put us at the heart of

the action in Merseyside at a very important time for the area. With Liverpool set to be the European Capital of Culture in 2008, we are working with partners right across the area to provide opportunities for everyone to learn new skills and grasp new opportunities to develop. By doing so, we will create a world class workforce for the area and drive forward the future prosperity of the entire region."

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Did You Know . . .

In 2006/7 the LSC invested £1.2 billion in learning in the region



Ian Haworth and John Korzeniewski officially open the Lancashire office



Roger Hoyle and Helen France and the spectacular view from LSC Merseyside's new offices



Wendy Wright - Principal Macclesfield College, Mike Southworth - Principal Priestley College and Meredydd David - Principal Reaseheath College

Cheshire colleges are 'beacons' of success

It's official! Cheshire and Warrington colleges have one of the best records of achievement anywhere in the country.

The news follows the announcement that a further three Cheshire and Warrington colleges have been awarded 'Learning and Skills Beacon Status' by the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA).

Macclesfield College, Reaseheath College and Priestley College are the three most recent recipients, having delivered outstanding teaching and learning, to meet the stringent standards of excellence required for Beacon Status.

They join Sir John Deane's College and South Cheshire College, which had already achieved this impressive accolade.

In addition all five 'Beacon' colleges also achieved 'outstanding' inspections by Ofsted – a record which outshines every other area in England.

Welcoming the news Liz Davis, the LSC Director of Area for Cheshire and Warrington said, "I'm delighted that Cheshire and Warrington's colleges are leading the way. To have five out of our eight colleges held up as examples of excellence illustrates that local learners have unprecedented access to some of the best teaching and learning resources in the country."

Our future. It's in our hands.

The much anticipated Skills Campaign, with the ambition of 'transforming the way people think, feel and act towards learning and skills', was launched on 9 July.

It is the most ambitious marketing and communications campaign of its kind, driven by the LSC and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS). Over a three to five year period it aims to bring about the cultural change needed to improve the attitudes and aspirations of employers and individuals to learning and skills across England.

Last December Lord Leitch published his Review of Skills in the UK and set ambitious challenges for the UK to become a world leader in all levels of skills. His report states that, if the challenge is met, the UK will increase its position in the global economy, and on the journey, far exceed many of its current targets and aspirations with a key milestone being the year 2020.

According to research commissioned by the LSC over half of adults in England (53 per cent) believe they could achieve more out of life, and of these, almost two thirds (60 per cent) think improving their skills through training and education is the best way to do so.

With more than half the country convinced that change is possible, the new Skills Campaign – *Our future. It's in our hands* – calls on individuals and employers to take control of their future with better skills.

Speaking at the launch of the Skills Campaign, held at the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) in London, LSC Chairman, Chris Banks said, "The big

message today is, don't get left behind. We want it to be as easy as possible for people to access information and understand what is available to them to get the skills needed to get on in life and business. There's never been a better time for people to grab the training opportunities on offer with both hands and take control."

The advertising campaign – *Our future. It's in our hands* – commenced on 9 July, with coverage across national and regional television channels as well as across print, radio, outdoor and online media. A dedicated phone line 0800 011 30 30 and website lsc.gov.uk/inourhands will ensure that people have easy access to relevant information about how to get better skills through different training opportunities available for young people, adults and employers.

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

John Korzeniewski, Regional Director North West LSC comments, "The Skills Campaign message, '*Our future. It's in our hands*' is an overarching message that will flow through everything we do. All current LSC marketing and communications campaigns will be aligned under the Skills Campaign banner so that there is a consistent and concerted push towards changing the hearts and minds of learners and employers in the UK.

"We must all work together to make people sit up and listen, make people realise that if they want to succeed in life, everything is in place to help them, they just have to reach for it. Put simply, the Skills Campaign aims to create a belief in people that they have

the capacity to learn better skills and by doing so, improve their working life, now and in the future."

This campaign is intended to become a rallying call for the entire learning and skills sector. It is supported by hundreds of colleges and training providers as well as employer and education associations and the LSC would like all their partners to join them by using elements of the campaign in their own marketing activities.

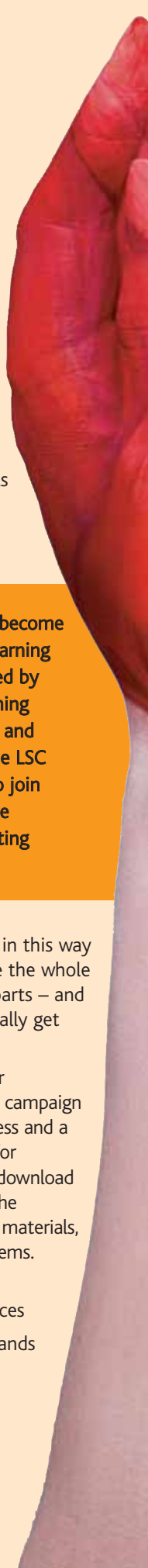
The impact that will be created in this way will create true synergy – where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts – and in this way the messages will really get across.

To find out more about how your organisation could get involved a campaign resources website, an email address and a campaign line have been set up for stakeholders to get information, download the images from the campaign, the advertising, the communications materials, key messages, and many other items.

Campaign resources:
www.lsc.gov.uk/campaignresources
Website: www.lsc.gov.uk/inourhands

Campaign line for stakeholders:
020 7413 3400

Email address for stakeholders:
skillscampaign@lsc.gov.uk



North West employers sign up to the Skills Pledge

Merseytravel, Merseyside's Passenger Transport Authority, is one of the first of 150 private and public sector organisations across England to make a public 'Skills Pledge' to improve the skills of its staff.

Merseytravel joins the LSC, the Northwest Regional Development Agency and businesses from across the region, including Taylor's Fish Ltd of Stockport, in pledging to support the Government to increase the nation's skills levels. This follows on from the recommendations made by Lord Leitch in his report on skills which found that England lagged behind its competitors in terms of education and training.

Through the Skills Pledge, employers will commit to continuing to support their employees and new recruits to improve their skills and become better qualified. As a minimum, that means supporting all employees to work towards achieving their first full Level 2 qualification.

Signing the Pledge, Chief Executive and Director General of Merseytravel, Neil Scales said, "We're proud to make the Skills Pledge and we pledge to continue to develop new ways of training our staff. We recognise that by involving employees and boosting their skills through training we can encourage greater levels of motivation and staff retention and offer better service to our customers. We've signed this Pledge to underline our continuing commitment to investing in skills."

Welcoming the launch of the Skills Pledge, John Korzeniewski, Regional Director North West LSC said, "The LSC is wholeheartedly committed to the training and development of all its staff, and signing the Skills Pledge is a further reflection of this. In an organisation such as the LSC, where the majority of our staff already have a Level 2, the Pledge is also about higher level skills and ensuring our people achieve their potential.

"It's vital that employers get on board with the Skills Pledge and start investing in the training and development of their staff. The LSC's Train to Gain service will provide employers with a bridge between identifying their skills gaps and providing them with a cost effective solution."

For more information on the Skills Pledge visit www.traintogain.gov.uk.



Neil Scales, Chief Executive and Director General of Merseytravel, signing the Skills Pledge

Dan driving on to WorldSkills 2007



Daniel Glover - part of the UK team for WorldSkills

North West learner Daniel Glover, from Ashton-under-Lyne in Greater Manchester, is celebrating after making it to the UK team for WorldSkills 2007 – set to be held in Shizuoka in Japan.

Daniel beat off stiff competition to become one of just 19 members of the UK team that will travel to Japan from 15 –18 November, where he will represent the Automobile Technology sector.

Daniel, employed by Pennine Honda and a member of the team at the Ashton-under-Lyne branch, trained at The Honda Institute and completed his Apprenticeship in February 2007.

When asked what he hoped to achieve from taking part in WorldSkills, Daniel said, "I hope to improve my career prospects and have enough experience and credentials to follow my dream of being a race team mechanic or owning my own garage."

WorldSkills is the biggest skills competition in the world and is held every two years in one of the 48 member countries. Over four days young people from member nations test themselves against tough international standards to win gold, silver and bronze medals.

The 2007 competition is a crucial milestone on the road to WorldSkills 2011, when the event will be held in the UK.

UK Skills, the organisation behind the UK entry to WorldSkills, is now encouraging employers and learning providers across the country to think about the competition, training their learners to WorldSkills standards in preparation for the 2011 event to ensure the UK delivers award-winning performances in 2011.

In the North West there are a wealth of skills events across the region that providers and employers can enter to benchmark their learners. LSC North West is backing the call for much needed support of these regional skills events so that the North West region leads the way in developing world class learners.

Paul Holme, Regional Director of Skills for North West LSC comments, "We are fully behind UK Skills' work to champion learning through World Skills. The LSC's vision is to create a skilled world class workforce that can compete with the world's best. Working together with partners and providers, it is our hope that by 2011 the UK is leading the way on this international stage – with our young people demonstrating their world beating vocational skills."

Adult Learner Accounts – trials launched

Trials of new look Learner Accounts will get underway in September in parts of the South East and East Midlands.

Up to 4,000 accounts will be available to help learners over 19 to gain full Level 3 qualifications.

The accounts build on the commitments outlined in last year's FE White Paper and the Leitch Review of Skills to make learning truly demand-led.

The trials will be evaluated as they progress and will be expanded in scale during 2008/09.

Did You Know . . .

In 2006, four North West colleges achieved outstanding inspection results

Did You Know . . .

81% of 16 and 17 year olds are in learning, that's over 153,000 – the highest ever figure

Source: 2005 figures released by DfES on 26th June 2007

North West triumphs at National Apprenticeship Awards

The winners of the 2007 National Apprenticeship Awards were recently announced, with England's top apprentices and apprentice employers receiving recognition at a glittering ceremony in London, hosted by TV presenter Nick Knowles.

The North West shone through on the night with two winners; Jonathon Pearson from Preston and Blue Flame Engineering Ltd, based in Stockport.

Jonathon Pearson, 22, an apprentice at Lancashire based Schwan's Consumer Brands, was honoured with the Apprentice of the Year title. Jonathon joined the company in 2001 and enrolled on an Apprenticeship in Food and Drink Manufacturing Operations. Due to his quick grasp of the role, Jonathon was promoted to deputy team leader within five months of completing his Apprenticeship - a massive accomplishment for someone of his age.

Commenting on his win, Jonathon said on the night, "It's brilliant. I never thought I would win. My Apprenticeship has given me so much - confidence, success, leadership, everything - and my company has supported me all the way."

Stuart Eakins from Blue Flame Engineering Ltd started the company as a small one-man semi retirement business two years ago, and hired an apprentice to benefit from his engineering experience. Since then the business has enjoyed stunning growth; three of his five-man team are apprentices with a stake in the business.

Commenting on his win he said, "It's terrific to have won the Micro Employer of the Year Award. We really believe that training apprentices is putting us on the right course. Our children are the future of society, and Apprenticeships are the future of business."

Paul Holme, Regional Director of Skills North West LSC said, "It's fantastic to have two winners from the North West who have been recognised at national level for their dedication to the Apprenticeship programme."



above
Stuart Eakins of Blue Flame Engineering, Micro Employer of the Year, with Nick Knowles



below
Jonathon Pearson, Apprentice of the Year, with Nick Knowles

Spotlight on Manchester's top learners

Greater Manchester learners celebrated their achievements at the 2007 Greater Manchester Learner Awards. The winners were presented with their prizes, an exclusively designed trophy and a cheque for £500, by Michelle Dewberry, last year's winner of the television series 'The Apprentice'.

The awards took place at Manchester Town Hall and recognised exceptional learners, and employers that have shown commitment and enthusiasm to training and development.

The winners, revealed on the night were;

- Further Education Award (Academic), Soraya Mafi from Bury
- Further Education Award (Vocational), Maxine Perritt from Oldham
- Personal Achiever of the Year Award, Katy Wilson from Stockport
- Apprentice of the Year Award, Christopher Taylor from Rochdale
- Advanced Apprentice of the Year, Angela Rose from Oldham

MBDA Systems of Bolton was handed the Employer of the Year Award in acknowledgement of the commitment it has shown to developing its workforce through Apprenticeships. The defence engineering company has Apprenticeship programmes that form part of its wider strategy geared to develop its next generation of employees.

Elaine Bowker, LSC Director of Area for Greater Manchester commented, "The calibre of entries has been outstanding. We celebrate the commitment and success of all our winners and nominees and I congratulate each and every one on their achievements."



The award nominees on stage

North West Further Education Capital Investments

The LSC, working in partnership with a range of agencies, is committed to creating world class buildings in the North West to provide learners with modern, efficient and flexible learning environments.

Since the inception of the LSC in April 2001 up until April 2007 capital projects worth some £450 million have been instigated in the region, of which the LSC has contributed over £275 million.

A capital plan for the North West has been developed covering 2007-2011 which sets out our aim of continuing Further Education estate renewal across the region – this plan is now being finalised and will be published later this year.

The plan estimates a further total investment of over £1 billion in the region up until April 2011 of which the LSC will contribute up to £746 million. This means a total investment in the region since April 2001 of some £1.4 billion.

Within this North West Capital Plan guiding principles have been identified that provide a framework for discussing and assessing individual projects. These principles encapsulate the ways of working we want to encourage as we move towards achieving a world class FE estate and can be summarised as follows:

Flexibility and Responsiveness

To meet the demands of employers, individuals and the economy, flexibility and responsiveness must be 'built in' to capital projects, as future demand cannot be predicted or planned for.

Partnership

Partnership working is the key to success for capital projects. The LSC welcomes providers working in this way with key partners (North West Regional Development Agency, Local Authorities etc). Working in this way supports the LSC's wider priority of aligning resources to contribute to the total development of an area.

Improving Quality and Specialist Provision

In improving choice and increasing participation and quality through refurbishment and rebuilds, investment must also offer value for money. However good projects must not be blocked purely on a cost basis.

Sustainability

Addressing individuals' needs also benefits the wider economy, creating a self sustaining impact as further growth of the economy is stimulated.

Current developments in the region which will be part-funded by the LSC include a total of £52.751 million of projects with detailed approvals as follows:

Blackpool Sixth Form College

A £15.3 million scheme to construct a 6,163 sq m new build and complete a 1,985 sq m refurbishment at the existing campus.

Bolton Sixth Form College

A £12.9 million investment to create a 5,730 sq m new build at the Farnworth site.

Newall Green School

A £3.9 million investment into a new sixth form.

South Sefton Sixth Form

£11.8 million investment into a new sixth form.

St Helens College

£3.851 million invested to provide a new 1,711 sq m Vocational Skills Centre.

Wellacre Technology College

A £5 million investment in a new sixth form.

In addition a further £202.6 million of projects have been approved in principle as follows:

Aquinas College

An investment of approximately £38.6 million to provide a new campus.

Burnley College

A £54 million scheme, developing a 20,476 sq m new college campus on Princess Way. A detailed application has now been received for an £83 million scheme, including £10 million for Higher Education.

Carmel Sixth Form College

A first phase new build project of 8,444 sq m with £16.9 million investment.

Kendal College

An £11.7 million scheme incorporating a 2,562 sq m new build and a 5,066 sq m refurbishment.

South Cheshire College

A £59 million investment for a 25,869 sq m new campus development.

South Trafford College

A £22.4 million scheme incorporating a 8,078 sq m new build and a 1,585 sq m refurbishment.

State of the art sixth form gets the go-ahead in Rochdale

Learners in Rochdale are looking forward to studying in a new state of the art sixth form college from September 2010.

The new college is part of ambitious proposals to transform learning across the borough and comes as the result of a competition held by the LSC that enabled local partnerships to set out a vision for how young people aged 16 to 19 would receive the best possible education to meet their needs and aspirations.

Following the competition, which began in September 2006, proposals to transform education for 16 to 19 year-olds in the borough, including the building of the new college close to the centre of Rochdale, have been given the go-ahead.

Plans for the college were put forward by the Rochdale Education Partnership, comprising Rochdale Council and Hopwood Hall College. The partnership will now work with the LSC to turn the plans into reality, with the new college expected to be open by 2010.

Elaine Bowker, LSC Director of Area for Greater Manchester, said "The reform of post-16 education and training is critical to the success and prosperity of Rochdale borough. We are committed to ensuring that Rochdale has sufficient and high quality education and training in place to be able to meet the needs of all local young learners, and the approval of this bid will provide significant impetus to allow the Partnership to achieve the same."

North West college mergers underway

In a review of further education in Manchester, consultation took place around the merger of City College Manchester and Manchester College of Arts and Technology. The response to the consultation has been very positive, with all respondents being in favour of the creation of a single institution, which will provide an increasingly co-ordinated approach to further education in the city.

Following an extensive post-16 education and training review in Trafford, commissioned by the LSC in Greater Manchester, North and South Trafford Colleges have merged to create a new institution, Trafford College. The merged college will be pivotal in the delivery of 14-19 learning and supporting economic development in Trafford. Both colleges have a superb record in supporting employers and, with five Centres of Vocational Excellence, it will be a critical player in the development of skills across Greater Manchester and beyond.

In another college merger, two colleges 160 miles apart have come together in what is thought to be the first long-distance merger in further education. Skelmersdale College, in West Lancashire, merged with Newcastle College on 1 August 2007. Newcastle is the North East's biggest FE institution, with over 40,000 students, 1,000 staff and a £75m budget.

John Korzeniewski, Regional Director North West LSC said, "Learners in the North West are already very fortunate in the quality and range of education and training available to them; these mergers will capitalise on the strengths of the colleges to create even more quality learning opportunities."



Paul Holme, Regional Director of Skills North West LSC

Meeting the skills needs of the North West - a demand led approach to learning for employers

The term 'demand led' has been very much in vogue over recent years but what does this actually mean for the LSC and the learners it serves?

Comments Paul Holme, Regional Director of Skills North West LSC, "I believe that demand led is, first and foremost, about putting the customer first, and achieving this through a combination of choice and responsiveness. For the LSC this means providing a choice of relevant and high quality learning in response to the skills demands and needs of individuals and employers."

The prize for matching the supply with demand for skills in this way is an increasingly competitive North West where employers gain a more skilled and productive workforce and individuals realise their potential through better skills and economically valuable qualifications.

The North West LSC has already made considerable progress towards creating such a system. Working closely with its partners and providers we have created over 50 Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) and Academies and recently introduced an approach to funding adult skills which increasingly rewards those providers that are able to respond best to employer skills demand.

This approach is very much in line with the latest Government policy, as recently proposed by the new Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) when it unveiled its response to the Leitch Review of Skills*. This outlines an implementation plan for the coming years, at the heart of which, for employers, is a further expansion of Train to Gain, the demand led flagship service of the LSC.

Train to Gain was launched last summer in the North West providing a skills brokerage service for employers, to assist them to access the training most relevant to their business. The Leitch implementation plan reinforces and expands the service with a doubling of the budget by 2010/2011.

It also promotes better employer engagement through the introduction of a Skills Pledge and the development of a New Standard for employer responsive provision. Companies will also be offered greater opportunity to get involved in designing and influencing the skills that really matter to their industry, particularly through newly created employer-led Employment and Skills Boards.

Paul Holme continues, "I am delighted to say that we in the North West are particularly well placed to respond to the new challenge laid down by Leitch. We have been leading the way nationally in delivering Train to Gain, with nearly 25,000 employees already starting learning, making this region the single biggest contributor to national performance. To date almost 4,300 learners have achieved a full Level 2 or 3 qualification through Train to Gain.

"Working closely with our partners and providers the LSC has made great strides in revolutionising the way it funds skills training for employers. Increasingly, employer focused provision is being procured through competitive tendering against the skills requirements of the North West as highlighted in the LSC Regional Commissioning Plan.

"The response so far from all those in the further education sector has been very encouraging and, working together, I am convinced that the North West has the talent and experience to ensure our region delivers fully on the demand led agenda."

**If you want to find out more about the about the Leitch Implementation Plan this can be found at <http://www.dius.gov.uk/publications>*

Did You Know . . .

Success rates for young people in further education have increased by 18% to 78% since 2001

Source: FE Success rates 2005/06

A real taste of real careers

The North West's biggest skills event is set to return to Manchester on 13–15 November 2007. Held at Manchester Central (formerly known as GMEX) Skills Northwest is open to all young people in years 10, 11, 12 and 13 as well as university students and is a must for young people looking to discover more about the career options available to them.

This well-established, annual event introduces the best possible range of opportunities to students, by bringing together employers from a range of industries alongside exhibitors from colleges, universities, training providers, charities and sector skills councils.

To give students a true feel for what's out there, exhibitors are on hand to provide interactive demonstrations to inspire and motivate. The event provides a real chance for students to try their hand at work-essential skills and to talk to people with true industry experience. An array of key industry sectors will be represented from

environmental industries to hair and beauty, engineering, sport and fitness and much, much more. There really is something to give everyone food for thought.

The event will demonstrate the skills required for work and will showcase education and training at its best, allowing students to make better informed choices and open their eyes to career paths they might never have considered! Schools and colleges in the North West are able to book groups of students to attend on any of the three days and can also apply for a travel bursary.

Skills Northwest is a great opportunity for proactive organisations looking to meet young people making crucial decisions about their future. If you want to make your mark on the North West's future workforce, make sure you don't miss out on THE skills event of the year.

Thousands of people attend Skills Northwest each year, so this year make sure you are part of what promises to be the best regional skills event yet.

Further information is available at: www.skillsnw.co.uk



Interactive activities at Skills Northwest

£24m of ESF funding provides new opportunities

LSC North West has recently approved over £24m of European Social Fund (ESF) bids across the region following the latest rounds of tendering.

The funding has been split between 70 projects and will provide opportunities for thousands of individuals to develop new skills, get back to work or embark on training opportunities that would otherwise

be unavailable by bringing innovative projects into local areas.

Greater Merseyside has benefited from over £11 million of Objective 1 ESF funding as well as over £7 million of additional ESF co-financing support.

As an Objective 1 area, Merseyside benefits from additional European Union money, which is used to help the most deprived areas of Europe. During the 2007–13 ESF funding round, Merseyside's funding will undergo a phasing in process to gradually align it with the rest of the North West.

The current funding on Merseyside has been awarded to projects that will tackle the area's specific skills shortages and provide training, both to those in employment and those seeking to enter the workplace.

A further £1.6m has been approved in Cheshire and Warrington where funding will be allocated to provide support to young people that are NEET (not in education,

employment or training) and also to assist disadvantaged groups to get back to work.

In Greater Manchester over £1.6m has been identified to help priority groups to overcome learning barriers, whilst in Cumbria a range of learning and skills based projects will benefit from £1.4m of funding. Finally in Lancashire almost £1.4 m will be spent encouraging lifelong learning, enabling individuals to return to the workplace.

Over £250,000 has also been approved for regional projects.

A further ESF programme will be introduced later this year.

Further information will be available at: www.lsc.gov.uk/regions/northwest/tendering



EUROPEAN UNION
European Social Fund

Events calendar

OLASS North West Region Developing Prospectus Event

2 October 2007

Aimed at: LSC Staff, the LSC's criminal justice partners and existing and mainstream providers for offender learning.

Organiser: LSC OLASS Team

Venue: City of Manchester Stadium

Contact: Christine Hosie, North West Skills Development Manager (OLASS) christine.hosie@lsc.gov.uk
or Tim Jarvis, Skills Support Adviser (OLASS) tim.jarvis@lsc.gov.uk – 0161 261 0478

Regional Roadshow for Colleges and Providers.

26 October 2007

Led by Mark Haysom, LSC Chief Executive and John Korzeniewski, LSC North West Regional Director

Aimed at: LSC briefing for college and provider senior management. Covering the machinery of government changes and the implications for the learning and skills sector, together with a strategic briefing on the LSC's Annual Statement of Priorities and what it means for the region.

Organiser: LSC North West

Venue: To be confirmed

Contact: Ted Noone/Nicky Martin - 0161 261 0426 (attendance by invitation)

Skills Northwest

13-15 November 2007

Aimed at: Young People in the North West who want to explore their career options.

Organisers: Skills Northwest is a partnership between Recex and Prospects Events.

Venue: Manchester Central (formerly GMex Centre)

Contact: Andrew Coates at Prospects Events - 01278 422301 or email andrew.coates@prospects.co.uk

North West Regional Learning Providers Conference

21-22 November 2007

Aimed at: Work based learning providers in the North West

Organiser: North West Provider Network

Venue: Reebok Stadium, Bolton

Contact: Gail Power on 07813 339037 or email gm.power@ntlworld.com

Two day conference aimed at enabling North West criminal justice agencies to share best practice

27 & 28 November 2007

Aimed at: All agencies and partners working for offender learning.

Organiser: Merseyside Probation Service

Venue: Midland Hotel, Manchester

Contact: Dave.Christian@merseyside.probaton.gsi.gov.uk

Stockport's Bridge College scoops national award

Democracy is thriving at the specialist Bridge College in Stockport, after its student council was named Representative Organisation of the Year at the prestigious Leading the Learner Voice Awards recently.

A glittering ceremony to recognise individuals and further education organisations for their work in ensuring learners' views are listened to and acted upon took place on 4 July. Bill Rammell, Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education, was on hand to present the students with their award.

The eight students that make up Bridge College Student Council have successfully communicated with the governors and the Principal to give a

direct voice to the seventy five students they represent. This will be strengthened in September when it affiliates with the National Union of Students (NUS) having successfully presented its case for financial support directly to the governing body.

Andy Haines, Chief Executive of the Together Trust said, "This is a perfect example of what our students are capable of achieving. At Bridge College students learn a range of independence and vocational skills. It's great to see these skills put into practice and students winning national awards."

Christine Troughton, Partnership Director at the LSC in Greater Manchester commented, "I am delighted that Bridge College have scooped this prestigious award which is so richly deserved. The enthusiasm of the students is infectious and a credit to the dedication of the staff at the college."

ARTSfest07

Lancaster based Beaumont College, leading providers of arts education for mixed ability students, held its second annual Arts Festival between 1-13 July.

Linked to the 30th anniversary of the college's foundation, professional artists and performers, as well as local residents, were invited to enjoy a range of events across the city that showcased the students' work.

The performances ranged from visual to performance work and many featured collaborations with local schools and guest artists from industry professionals such as Gravity Dance from Berlin to Morecambe's More Music.

The LSC funds a number of places for learners at the college, which is an independent residential specialist college owned by Scope. The college offers both residential and day placements to young people between the ages of 16-25 years with learning difficulties and or disabilities. In recent years the college has attracted an increasing number of learners with significant and complex needs.

Procuring learning provision through E-Tendering

The LSC, along with sixty other public sector bodies including the NHS and DWP, will increasingly utilise an E-Tendering solution to procure learning provision.

The process, which will be aligned with the LSC business cycle, will typically be in two stages; Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) which tests a provider's capability in the key areas of Health and Safety, Finance, Equality and Diversity and Quality, and Invitation to Tender (ITT) which tests a provider's capability and capacity to deliver in a specific geography/sector or programme.

Only providers successful at PQQ will be invited to tender at the ITT stage.

As you read this, the next significant procurement for the LSC will be underway.

The new European Social Fund (ESF) 2007-13 programme was launched with a briefing session for all interested organisations at the end of August. The PQQ for ESF opened shortly after the briefing session and will close at the end of September 2007. The precise timetable is available at www.lsc.gov.uk.

Any provider that has been successful at previous PQQ exercises has the opportunity to update their existing PQQ for the ESF exercise including details of the provision they would be able to offer.

The second stage (ITT) will launch in mid November 2007 with all contracts expected to be let by February 2008.

For further information please contact John Myers, Contracts Director North West LSC or Gary Ferguson, Procurement Manager North West LSC at: procurementnorthwest@lsc.gov.uk



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