

NEWS

Brighter future for the
region's young people
page 05

09 Single Manchester college gets green light
11 First class delivery for Mr Brown!
13 Viewpoint - Kirsty Evans

The newsletter for stakeholders
of the LSC in the North West

spring 08

Contents

Spring 2008

Pledging to make a difference	3
Greater Manchester authorities pledge to invest in skills for the future	3
North West local authorities 'get in' on the action	3
Who's Who	4
A brighter future for the region's young people	5
Feed the mind to fatten the wallet	6
Demonstrating the value of learning	6
£1.4 billion investment planned	7
Reviewing Salford's learning provision	7
Refurbishment contributes to regeneration	8
North West colleges recognised for excellence	8
LSC funding results in new college for South Sefton	8
Bolton colleges, a step closer to new facilities . . . and each other	9
Single Manchester college gets green light	9
Merseyside apprentices get involved in Capital of Culture	10
Big broadcasting break	10
First class delivery for Mr Brown!	11
North West Learner Awards	11
Roll up for WorldSkills expert classes!	12
Viewpoint - Kirsty Evans	13
European Funding Boosts Employment Prospects for the People of the North West	14
Events calendar	15
Return of the region's biggest skills event	16



Welcome

In our pre-Christmas newsletter last year I said that 2007 had been a time of great change in the learning and skills sector – and 2008 promises even more. This year we have already seen a number of key documents published by the Government, including *Apprenticeships: Unlocking Talent, Building Skills for All*.

This sets out a wide range of steps to improve and expand the Apprenticeships programme, stretching our existing aspirations. This will be championed by a new National Apprenticeship Service, within the LSC, to be launched in April 2009.

Implementing this and other developments, together with the LSC's continued drive to transform the wider FE system, takes place against the backdrop of the Machinery of Government changes announced in the summer of 2007.

The LSC national office has therefore re-shaped to reflect this new landscape, configuring teams in line with the two new departments' structures – DCSF and DIUS:

- The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) will work closely with colleagues in DIUS to ensure that the NAS is fully established within the LSC in advance of the appointment of a permanent Director.
- A new Young People's Learning and Skills Group will work closely with DIUS and DCSF on the transition to the new arrangements transferring 14-19 funding to Local Authorities.
- The post-19 agenda will be managed by a new Group for Adult Learning, Skills and Employment. This group will focus on expanding delivery of Train to Gain, accelerating our work on integrating employment and skills and driving forward our other adult learning responsibilities.

In the region, at the delivery end, we will continue working with our partners and stakeholders to achieve our joint goals.

Finally, I am delighted to welcome two new Regional Management Team members to the North West. John Temple has joined us from his position at LSC West of England to become Area Director for Greater Manchester, and Emer Clarke has joined us from her position at LSC South Yorkshire to become Area Director for Cumbria.

In welcoming John we also have to say goodbye to Elaine Bowker who has been an excellent leader of the Greater Manchester team for over two years now, and I wish her well in her new position at Manchester City Council. Emer takes over from Ruth Bullen who will also be greatly missed from her role as Area Director for Cumbria, but our loss is the LSC gain as Ruth has taken on new national 14-19 responsibilities.

John Korzeniewski
Regional Director North West

North West Regional Office
9th Floor
Arndale House
Arndale Centre
Manchester M4 3AQ

Tel: 0845 019 4142
Email: grmanchesterinfo@lsc.gov.uk

If you require this magazine in an alternative format, please call 0845 019 4142, or email grmanchesterinfo@lsc.gov.uk

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Pledging to make a difference

Six months after the first 150 private and public sector organisations signed up to the Skills Pledge, it's already making a big difference to all kinds of companies – large and small.

The Skills Pledge encourages organisations to make a public commitment to support all their employees to develop themselves and work towards a relevant, valuable qualification to at least NVQ Level 2 – the equivalent of five GCSEs at A – C grade, including basic skills such as numeracy and literacy.

Employers can gain support to deliver on their Skills Pledge via Train to Gain, a service managed and funded by the LSC that helps businesses find the training they need for their employees and provides funding towards the cost of training. For companies with a younger workforce, Apprenticeships offer industry-related training for existing employees and new recruits.

"The Skills Pledge is proving that employers can improve staff motivation and increase profitability," explains Paul Holme, Regional Director of Skills, LSC North West. "Simply by committing to upskilling their team and creating a clear plan for staff development, businesses are not only helping to increase the nation's skill levels but are securing their long term commercial health."

To find out how your business can get involved visit www.traintogain.gov.uk/skillspledge

Greater Manchester authorities pledge to invest in skills for the future

Manchester and Salford Councils led the way putting pen to paper and signing the 'Skills Pledge' in November last year, with the remaining eight Greater Manchester authorities confirming their commitment to developing the skills of their workforce in December.

Local governments in the North West employ 308,000 people and improving the skills of the workforce will help transform and improve the services the authorities deliver and develop a committed workforce with increased capacity for the future.

Lord Peter Smith, Leader of the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities commented, "This commitment is more than a public service pledge, but a representation of our collective role as large employers to upskill Manchester's population for the benefit of the wider economy. Greater Manchester is coming of age, we want to take our place as a world-class city and have solid plans to achieve this."

Liz McQue Chief Executive Designate at North West Employers, the employers' organisation for Local Authorities in the North West, said, "We now have 13 authorities that have signed the Skills Pledge and it is a real symbol that the North West is making a commitment to improving the skills and economy of the region."

North West local authorities 'get in' on the action

Four local authorities have been recognised for their commitment to improving the numeracy and literacy skills of their staff at the 'Get On North West' Local Government Skills for Life Awards. The awards are part of a regional strategy to encourage local authorities to take a more proactive approach to Skills for Life.

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council, Blackpool Borough Council, Merseytravel and Carlisle City Council were presented with their awards and recognised as local authorities that have excelled in meeting the basic skills needs of their workforce.

Paul Holme Regional Director of Skills, LSC North West comments "Improving the skills of the public sector workforce is one of the LSC's top priorities, not least because it employs a quarter of the UK's workforce.

"These awards are for those local authorities that have recognised the important part that Skills for Life plays within their workforce development strategies. We hope it will also encourage other employers to follow their example and embed Skills for Life into their organisations in a sustainable way."



The Merseytravel team celebrating their award

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Skills Pledge is just the ticket

Ticketmaster is the world's leading ticketing organisation and employs 700 staff in the UK, with a state-of-the-art contact centre in Manchester. The company is an accredited City and Guilds, British Safety Council and British Computer Society Test Centre and works in partnership with The Oldham College in the North West to deliver Apprenticeships in its contact centre to NVQ Levels 2 and 3. Ticketmaster was one of the first businesses in the North West to commit to the Skills Pledge.

Cianne Moores, Head of HR, Europe said, "As a major employer in Manchester we have seen first hand the benefits of developing our contact centre staff internally. We think the Skills Pledge is a step in the right direction of targeting the UK's skills gap."

Who's Who in . . .

The Learning and Quality Directorate

The Learning and Quality Directorate is responsible for improving provider performance and achievement of targets through the effective development of a quality improvement strategy and its implementation across the North West region. The Directorate also ensures that learner health and safety standards are maintained or raised within the region.

Kewal Dass, Learning and Quality Director LSC North West, heads the Directorate. He leads the development and co-ordination across the region for LSC strategies, policies and procedures on quality and adult learning. He also ensures the integration of quality assurance within the planning framework, the business cycle and the local planning process.

Kewal comments "I am responsible for driving the LSC's commitment to equality and diversity and to high quality, cost effective provision. This in turn increases participation in line with the skills strategy, taking particular account of the needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities throughout the region."

The directorate consists of 4 teams, each covering specific responsibilities:

Equality and Diversity

The Equality and Diversity Team is responsible for implementing the LSC's Single Equality Scheme at a regional level.

The team is led by Jamila Astrom, Equality and Diversity Manager, working alongside Lenford White who is currently seconded into the Equality and Diversity Team from NIAACE.

"Our primary objective is to deliver the North West Strategic Equality and Diversity Action Plan which aims to remove disparities between different groups of learners across the 14-19 and Adult Skills agendas" says Jamilla "This requires a multi faceted approach and as a result a number of projects are in place that will be shared across key stakeholders to affect and influence policy changes where required."

Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LLDD)

The LLDD team consists of manager Margaret Pritchard and advisers Dianne Saxon, Sue Little, Donna Sutton and Sandra Blackmore.

The team is responsible for developing and monitoring the progress of a regional LLDD plan to implement the National Strategy,

Learning for Living and Work. A second strand of responsibility is to consider applications for placement at specialist colleges for learners who cannot access local provision. There are about 470 North West learners at any one time in specialist provision. The team's job is to ensure that fair decisions are made and that partners are aware of the decision making process.

Margaret Pritchard says that this dual role makes for an interesting life that offers real job satisfaction "We share the LSC's strategic role, but we also have the added benefit of coming into frequent contact with the learner."

Learner Health and Safety

This team is responsible for raising standards of learner health and safety within the region. The team is led by Paul Richardson, Health and Safety Manager, whose main role is to advise management and staff on health, safety and welfare requirements relating to all LSC funded programmes. Paul manages a team of Health and Safety advisers – Milly Foster, Carol Kirkham, Patrick Mackrell, Vicky Pye and Heather Richardson.

"The aim of the team is to work with providers that the LSC fund in order to continually improve the quality of learning and the environments in which they learn" says Paul "Our target is to improve the risk awareness of all learners and encourage new and innovative methods of delivery and training."

Provider Development

This team is responsible for supporting the LSC's strategies, policies and programmes for quality assurance. The team is led by Paul Donbavand, Provider Development Manager, working with Jim Rodgers, Provider Development Adviser and Stephanie Roe, Team Administrator. The team works with national, regional and local colleagues to strengthen the translation of policy into practice.

Paul says his team's core responsibilities are clear "To develop and implement a cohesive strategy for quality assurance and to develop evaluation and monitoring arrangements to assess the impact of national strategies, policies and programmes for quality improvement and assurance."



Members of the Learning and Quality team.
From left to right: Margaret Pritchard, Paul Richardson, Kewal Dass and Paul Donbavand

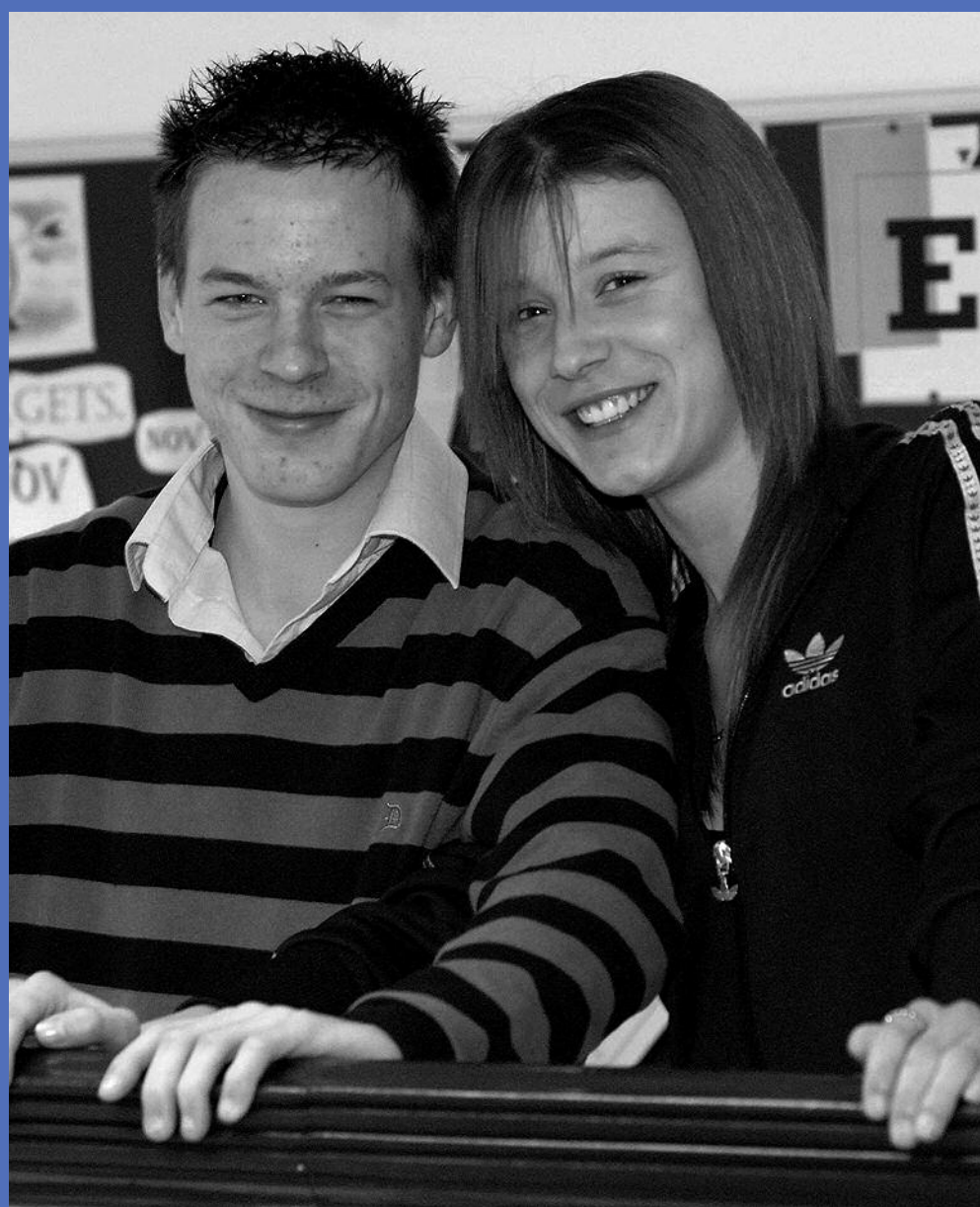
A brighter future for the region's young people

Young people across the North West are turning their lives around thanks to £6 million of funding, which is providing more options for those not in education, employment or training (NEET).

The funding is part of the LSC's national programme of support for areas across the North West that have been identified as 'NEET Hotspots', which aims to engage with an increased number of NEET 16-18 year olds and provide them with a way back into education, training and the world of work.

A wide range of initiatives has been launched, including specialist mentors to help those who are transferring to college, one-week 'energiser' courses that introduce new career routes and job clubs offering links to local employers.

Activity to date has generated excellent results, making a real difference to the lives of many young people across the region.



Robert Woodley and Lanette Rawcliffe

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Fresh start for Blackpool duo

Robert Woodley and Lanette Rawcliffe, both from Blackpool, left school in 2006 with limited options. Coupled with problems at home their situation looked bleak, to the point that both Robert and Lanette found themselves homeless. Finding out about the practical 'energiser' sessions that were being run in the town proved a pivotal point in Robert and Lanette's lives.

Robert and Lanette took part in the Prince's Trust 'Get off the Bench' course in Blackpool last November where they gained an exciting insight into the world of football coaching with inspirational tuition from the coaches at Blackpool FC and Bolton Wanderers. Robert also enjoyed a week long energiser course at Myerscough College, where he tried his hand at a range of subjects from landscaping to golf and even motorsports!

Just weeks later, Robert has now enrolled on a 14-week army preparation course. The intensive tuition, which is run by Avenir Training, will provide him with a strong grounding should he choose to go on and enter the army. Robert comments, "The energiser courses helped me to realise that I really like to be active and work outdoors. A couple of the other lads I met were going on the army prep course and it sounded like something I would enjoy."



Feed the mind to fatten the wallet

The LSC is encouraging everyone to invest more into personal development after research into consumer spending revealed that British households spend nearly twice as much on trips to beauty and hair salons, and snapping up the latest cosmetic and toiletry products as they do learning.

An LSC study revealed that half the population believes money would have the biggest positive impact on their lives. As learning a new skill can increase the average annual salary by £2,000 to £3,000, clearly learning should be seen as having great value.

Independent financial expert, Alvin Hall, agrees and comments: "In our already hectic lives, we frequently overlook the fact that developing new skills and acquiring fresh knowledge helps us to remain valuable. We are our biggest asset, and it's natural to want to spend money on looking

good, but if we invest more on training and learning too, there'll be more to spend on make-up and facials! "

Chris Banks, Chairman, Learning and Skills Council concluded, "We need to let people know that if they spend a little more on education, and if eligible for funding this could be a very low investment, they could actually afford more pampering sessions. It's another great incentive for everyone to improve their skills.

"It's all about taking the future into our hands and with so many ways to learn, there's something to suit everyone. Everybody has the right to learn, and we encourage everyone to look at their options, especially when the payback is so attractive."

To find out about the many learning options which can help towards a more prosperous future, visit lsc.gov.uk/inourhands

Demonstrating the value of learning

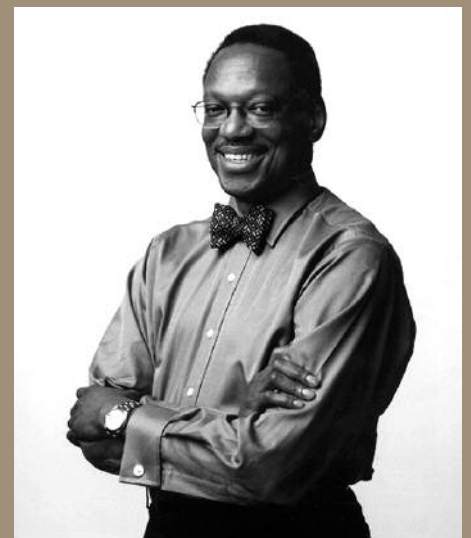
The latest phase of the LSC's long term skills campaign started on 18 February. The Value of Learning strand of the Skills campaign demonstrates to potential learners the long-term financial benefits of investing time or money (or both) in improving their skills. Where the broader Skills campaign demonstrates the more emotional benefits of learning, Value of Learning puts a figure on that benefit, expressing it in terms of hard cash.

The Value of Learning campaign initially ran from 26 November to 16 December 2007 using press and radio advertising and PR activity, including Alvin Hall as a

'consumer spokesperson' to conduct broadcast interviews about the financial benefit of "growing yourself".

Phase 2 of this campaign will run from 18 February to 16 March, again using press and radio advertising supported by PR, with a key objective of driving up demand for course places during the critical course sign-up period.

The Value of Learning campaign is just one strand of 'Our future. It's in our hands', the LSC's most ambitious communications campaign ever which, working with our partners, aims to inspire people across England to take control of their future through learning and play an active role in achieving their full potential.



Financial Expert, Alvin Hall

Two new Directors join the North West

The LSC welcomes two new appointments to the North West, John Temple as Director of Area for Greater Manchester and Emer Clarke as Director of Area for Cumbria.



John Temple, Area Director for the LSC in Greater Manchester



Emer Clarke, Area Director for the LSC in Cumbria

£1.4 billion investment planned

The LSC, working in partnership with a range of agencies, is committed to providing learners with modern, efficient and flexible learning environments.

The recently announced capital plan sets out how this vision is to be achieved – through the investment of over £1.4 billion, working towards creating world-class buildings for further education by 2013.

The capital programme incorporates funding for new buildings along with the refurbishment of existing buildings. With the aim of using funds to maximise learner opportunities, investment will deliver inspirational high specification buildings, not only to achieve world-class, fit for purpose facilities that reflect the needs and demands of learners, employers and the changing needs of the economy, but also to extend and improve the choice and quality of learning.

In line with the LSC's commitment to sustainability, the resulting buildings will be innovative, energy efficient and environmentally friendly.

John Temple, Area Director for Greater Manchester was formerly Area Director for the West of England. John began his career in the Manpower Services Commission and worked for a number of years as an economist on labour market and skills issues. Between December 1997 and September 2000 he was Head of the DfES Skills Unit and Secretary of the National Skills Task Force. Before joining the LSC in October 2006, John headed the Division in DfES responsible for lifelong learning strategy and HE and FE finance.

With a substantial background in further education, training and skills issues, he is well placed to work with all stakeholders to improve learning opportunities for young people, adults and employers in the Greater Manchester area.

Emer Clarke, Area Director for Cumbria, was formerly Area Director for South Yorkshire. Emer started her career in HR in the telecommunications industry in Liverpool and then moved to work in FE colleges and the local authority, still in Liverpool. She was subsequently an Assistant Principal at West Cheshire College and Principal of Merthyr Tydfil College in South Wales. Emer joined the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) at its start as an Inspector of colleges and later established the FEFC's Quality Improvement Unit. In 2001, she transferred to the LSC as Director of Quality Improvement in the national office in Coventry. Later she moved to South Yorkshire as Director of Learning Programmes and then Area Director. Emer is a season ticket holder at Manchester United and enjoys walking and cross country skiing in winter.

Reviewing Salford's learning provision

The outline proposal for the merger of Eccles College and Salford College with Pendleton College is currently out for formal consultation.

Seeking to enhance choice and flexibility across a wide range of curriculum areas and occupational sectors, the proposed merger will bring together three providers that currently serve primarily the City of Salford as well as drawing students from the surrounding areas of Greater Manchester and beyond.

The new college's ambition is to create a provision infrastructure that is distinctive and meets the needs of individual customers whether they be learners, employers or other key partners and stakeholders, in order to provide for the necessary step-change in the city to ensure that Salford learners have the opportunity to make the best of their individual chances.

Your views on the proposed merger are welcome, with a closing date for consultation on 20 March 2007, visit www.lsc.gov.uk/regions/NorthWest/SalfordConsultation.htm

Refurbishment contributes to regeneration

Liverpool Community College has officially opened its newly refurbished Bankfield Road site. The opening marks the completion of the fourth stage of the college's accommodation plan. The college, with the support of the LSC and other funding bodies, has invested £47 million in this strategy.

David Wade-Smith, Chair of Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, officially opened the site and made a passionate speech about the regeneration of Liverpool, complimenting the college on its success of working with its partners in delivering a prosperous future for the city.

The Bankfield Road building has been renovated to accommodate courses in horticulture, health and care, business, access to higher education, professional development and English for speakers of other languages. The centre also has childcare on-site and specialist provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.



L-R: Gideon Ben-Tovim, Chair of Corporation Board, Liverpool Community College; Wally Brown CBE, Principal, Liverpool Community College; David Wade-Smith, Chair of Liverpool Chamber of Commerce; Maureen Mellor, Vice Principal, Liverpool Community College

North West colleges recognised for excellence

Reaseheath and West Cheshire colleges in Cheshire and Tameside College in Greater Manchester, have all been accredited with the prestigious New Standard. The LSC held an event in London in December to recognise the high quality training being provided by these colleges and celebrate their achievements.

The New Standard highlights excellence in the two areas that employers have stated are most important to them:

- provider responsiveness to employer needs and
- provider excellence in a particular vocational area.

The Standard was developed by the LSC and its partners in response to the 2006 FE Reform White Paper which called for the development of "a new standard to strengthen and replace the current Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) standard . . . and to build upon the Quality Mark proposals". The Leitch report in December 2006 also recognised and endorsed the need for the development of a new standard to highlight employer responsive FE providers.

Following comprehensive consultation and testing the Standard became available in June 2007. Feedback from training providers involved in the testing phase of the standard was very positive. Almost all

reported that the process of going through the standard had sharpened their approach to working with employers and demonstrated to them where they need to make changes to better meet the needs of employers.

John Carroll Principal at Tameside College comments, "I am absolutely delighted that Tameside College is one of the first colleges in the country to be awarded the New Standard. It is a testament to the College's responsive approach to employers and the hard work and dedication of our staff."

A key development of the standard from previous accreditation schemes is that it is not attached to public funding or investment and will be open to both publicly and privately funded organisations providing higher and further education. In addition, accreditation is verified by employers, meaning that the criteria for achieving the standard reflects their needs.

Liz Davis, Area Director for the LSC in Cheshire and Warrington, said, "It is fantastic that these colleges have been acknowledged for their achievement building on their successes as Beacon colleges. This is good news for employers as the further education sector is improving its offer and responding more effectively to the needs of businesses".



A computer generated image of South Sefton College

LSC funding results in new college for South Sefton

Bolton colleges, a step closer to new facilities ... and each other

Bolton Community College and Bolton Sixth Form College have secured 'approval in principle' for £80 million funding for their respective new developments in the £300 million Bolton Innovation Zone.

The two colleges will share a single site in the new scheme - one of the largest planned investments in further education in the North West. The colleges will retain their separate identities, independence and distinctiveness of mission, whilst sharing a number of facilities. Bolton Community College's new 20,201 sq m site will boast state-of-the-art facilities, offering more than 70 vocational courses to learners across Bolton and the Sixth Form College will house a full range of advanced courses.

Bolton Community College received 'approval in principle' from the LSC for 80 per cent funding of the build costs associated with the £58.8 million new building. Likewise, the Sixth Form College has secured 85 per cent funding from the LSC for its £21 million development. Overall, the LSC will fund the £80 million scheme to the tune of £65.6 million.

The move is phase two in a three stage capital project which is part of the LSC's overall vision to provide world-class facilities for learners and the wider community. The first phase is already well underway funded by Bolton Sixth Form College and the LSC and sees a new £14 million campus for Bolton Sixth Form College due to open in August 2008.

Single Manchester college gets green light

Plans to create The Manchester College have been given the go ahead by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills.

The announcement follows an extensive review and consultation with a range of key stakeholders across the city which has been ongoing since May 2006. The move will bring together City College Manchester and Manchester College of Arts and Technology to form a new single institution.

The Manchester College will become operational on 1 August this year and will build on the strengths of the two individual colleges, bringing added value and synergy for the benefit of all learners, the City of Manchester and beyond.

Drawing learners from the widest range of groups, including adults, young people and employers, the college will provide excellence in education, and will work with other providers at school, college and university level. It will present a unique approach to 14-19 education and training, support for the economy and employers and provide opportunities for adult learners.

"The creation of The Manchester College is essential to effect the step-change required in Manchester to meet future needs for learners and employers and will support the continued development of the City of Manchester as a major player at regional and national level," commented John Korzeniewski, Regional Director, LSC North West.

Peter Tavernor, Principal of Manchester College of Arts and Technology commented, "Having initiated the process and following two years of working towards this, we are absolutely delighted at the decision to approve the merger. It couldn't be better news for Manchester residents, who have been the entire focus of our planning. The merger fully supports the City Strategy, the skills agenda and the government priority of inclusion, and has been completely endorsed by the leader of Manchester City Council and Manchester MPs. We're now looking forward to beginning the real work of ensuring that the new Manchester College builds on existing excellence and becomes the best in the country."

"We believe that a single college will give double value in further education and training for the people of Manchester," said Monica Box, Principal of City College Manchester. "It is no exaggeration to say that this merger is unique and will provide the chance of a lifetime to boost skill development in our city."

City Council Leader Sir Richard Leese concluded, "This is hugely welcome news. The merger is a significant moment for further education in Manchester and will make a key contribution towards ensuring Manchester residents have the skills to fill the jobs which are being created in the city. The City Council has supported this merger throughout and we are delighted it has come to fruition."

The LSC has invested more than £11 million in a new Sixth Form Centre for South Sefton, Merseyside. The decision follows a 'statement of need' from the LSC which set out an 'overriding case' for a new sixth form centre in the area.

The new college will accommodate up to 550 pupils from secondary schools across the area and provide state-of-the-art facilities and a wide range of A-levels, AS and A2 courses.

Building work is due to commence in the next few weeks, with a proposed completion date of Spring 2009 and students scheduled to start in September 2009.

Helen France, the LSC Area Director for Merseyside, commented, "We are pleased to be investing £11.8 million in this new Sixth Form Centre to help the young people of South Sefton develop their potential to the full. The collaboration of all the stakeholders - local high schools, LSC, Sefton Children's Services and others - has been and will continue to be instrumental in the success of this project."

Merseyside apprentices get involved in Capital of Culture

As Liverpool celebrates the start of its reign as European Capital of Culture 2008, 140 young learners across Merseyside are enjoying a range of creative, skills-based activities as part of the new Capital of Culture Badged Apprenticeship Programme.

As part of this exciting new programme, the LSC has added an innovative dimension to a number of its Apprenticeships, allowing Merseyside learners to further develop their skills, whilst at the same time participating in this year's Capital of Culture.

The programme, run by Greater Merseyside Learning Providers Federation (GMLPF) and training provider General Physics, enhances the LSC's Apprenticeships in Retail, Tourism and Hospitality, and Leisure, making 2008 a memorable year for learners.

Joanne Rymer, Project Manager at GMLPF comments, "The Apprenticeships will give learners access to an enhanced menu of themed learning experiences, from producing an hour-long show of Liverpool's music with Radio Merseyside, to learning about film and actually creating an animation with St. George's Hall. All the activities relate to the European Capital of Culture, allowing learners to get involved in what promises to be an unforgettable year for Merseyside."

Karon Brownbill, Economic Development Director at the LSC in Merseyside adds, "This programme has been developed with the intention of delivering a high quality and unique experience for a number of apprentices and their employers. It is about giving the young people who participate in the programme a real sense of engaging with the full 'culture' experience during the whole of 2008, whilst equipping them with sustainable skills for their future."



Minister for Skills, David Lammy, surrounded by the Media Production apprentices

Big broadcasting break

20 young people from across the North West have embarked on the UK's first-ever Apprenticeship in Media Production.

Launched in November by the Minister for Skills, David Lammy, the Apprenticeship will give the young people a platform on which to launch a career in TV, radio, post production, on-line and new devices such as mobile technology/gaming.

The Apprenticeship aims to make the broadcasting industry more accessible and inclusive to young people who may not normally get a chance to work in this sector, with 35% of the first intake from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The young people will have the opportunity to work with companies such as the BBC, ITV Granada, Lime Pictures and the Red Production Company. It will also help provide the skilled workforce needed for the development of mediacity:uk at Salford Quays which will include the BBC's new headquarters in the North of England as well as hundreds of other media based businesses.

Funded by the LSC, BBC, Skillset and Northwest Vision and Media, the development of the Apprenticeship has involved leading media organisations and agencies across the region working together to make their vision a reality. Other partners include Connexions, Oldham College and City College.

Speaking at the launch David Lammy said, "Any parent or teacher can tell you the huge appetite young people have for careers in media and new media. This new scheme addresses that appetite and is a great example of how employers, unions, public bodies and Sector Skills Councils can work together to deliver pathways for our young people into good careers.

"This new Apprenticeship represents an innovative way to meet employers' needs in skills provision. The North West's repositioning as a major national and international media hub will only realise its full potential with a steady supply of labour that has the skills to match what industry needs."

The 18-month Apprenticeship will result in a NVQ Level 3 qualification.

North West Learner Awards

The North West Learner Awards, held in conjunction with the LSC National Apprenticeship Awards, are moving forward, with the Apprenticeship categories now closed for entry and the FE categories closing for entry on 31 March 2008. Each of the sub-regions will host their own round of the awards, which recognise and reward excellence in learning, skills and achievement in individuals and organisations.

The sub-regional Awards finals will be held as follows

Cumbria *	9 May 2008	Center Parcs, near Penrith
Cheshire & Warrington	14 May 2008	Park Royal Hotel, Stretton, Warrington
Lancashire	15 May 2008	Mercure Dunkenhalgh Hotel and Spa, Clayton Le Moors, Lancashire
Greater Merseyside	19 May 2008	Anfield Stadium, Liverpool
Greater Manchester	22 May 2008	Venue to be confirmed

The winners in each of the categories from the sub-regions will go on to compete for the North West Regional Award in their category and could then be short listed for the National Apprenticeship Awards final, which will be held at the Royal Horticultural Halls in London on Thursday 10 July 2008.

* In Cumbria, the LSC North West Learner Awards form part of the Excellence in Cumbria Awards which this year are being run by Cumbria Chamber of Commerce.



Emmerdale's Christopher Villiers with Linda Dean, Partnership Manager for the LSC in Merseyside at the launch of the North West Learner Awards in Merseyside



Jonathan Pearson at number 10 Downing Street

First class delivery for Mr Brown!

Prime Minister Gordon Brown invited four apprentices to Number 10 last month to hear first-hand about how young people are improving their skills.

Lancashire's Jonathan Pearson, who works for Schwan's Consumer Brands, makers of Chicago Town frozen pizzas, was the perfect person to give the Premier the low-down after being named Apprentice of the Year at the LSC's prestigious annual Apprenticeship Awards last year.

Jonathan completed his Apprenticeship in food and drink manufacturing operations with Schwan's, and grasped the skills to succeed so quickly that within five months of finishing the programme he was promoted to his current role of deputy team leader and has already progressed to gaining a team-leading qualification. Jonathan commented, "I didn't do too well in my exams at school and when I joined Schwan's I started work on the production line at the entry level. I wanted to move up through the levels but I had no idea how long that would take. The Apprenticeship made me realise that to progress in your career you need skills, basic and otherwise. It has not only given me a great sense of wellbeing and security, but it has also given me the confidence to aim for the top. I've just completed my team leader qualification, and will be starting my NVQ Level 3 management in the next month."

Jim Harkness, Managing Director of Jonathan's training provider, North Lancs Training Group, says, "Jonathan is a prime example of what a young person can achieve when they have ambition and determination along with the support and Guidance given by North Lancs Training Group and Schwans Consumer Brands (UK) Ltd.

"During the last few months, Jonathan has progressed further and will shortly be starting on the Advanced Apprenticeship programme.

"We congratulate Jonathan on his achievements so far and are sure they will be the first of many."

Roll up for WorldSkills expert classes!

The Competence to Excellence project, designed to support the LSC's WorldSkills vision is now taking shape.

As part of the project, colleges, training providers and young people have been invited to take part in a range of expert classes, aimed at raising their aspirations and encouraging more learners to participate in local, regional and national skills competitions.

The vision is to build on England's success in WorldSkills competitions, creating world class national winners to represent their country ahead of the WorldSkills competitions of 2009 and 2011.

Following the launch of Competence to Excellence the North West region has received 45 expressions of interest in running expert classes from 27 providers, which represents over 30% of the national expressions of interest.

The expert classes will be delivered through April, May and June within the North West region. Training 2000, The Automotive North West Partnership for Learning, Cheadle & Marple Sixth Form College and Preston College are just some of the providers that have approached with

expressions of interest into running courses from Beauty Therapy to Manufacturing Technologies. With such a great response from training providers from the North West, it is hoped that up to 20 vocational areas will be demonstrated.

The project is being managed nationally on behalf of the LSC by Deloitte. In the North West the project is being coordinated by Christopher Butterworth from the LSC, who is delighted with progress and said "LSC North West would like to thank all the providers, tutors and employers who have offered to deliver the expert classes, enabling a good occupational and geographical coverage to be offered and highlighting the region's success within the project so far."

Providers will shortly be notified of the dates and venues where the expert classes will be held to enable them to encourage apprentices and tutors to attend.

If you would like further information about how you can participate in the Competence to Excellence project, please contact Christopher Butterworth on 0161 261 0435, or email christopher.butterworth@lsc.gov.uk



Viewpoint

Train to Gain has been operating for almost two years now in the North West – but what has that meant for employers and learners in the region, and how will the service develop in the future?

Kirsty Evans, Skills Development Director of the LSC in the North West, responsible for the Train to Gain service is positive about the success of the service in the region. "The North West has engaged more employers and supported more learners to start working towards a Skills for Life, Level 2 or Level 3 qualification than any other region. This means that more employers and employees than ever before have been able to reap the rewards of investing in skills, with employers seeing improvements in productivity and customer service, and employees benefiting from the achievement of qualifications that will

enable them to both sustain employment and provide a platform for further skills development."

Over 10,000 employers have benefited from Train to Gain support to identify and address their company's skill needs, resulting in almost 50,000 learners starting a qualification. More than 15,000 of these employees have already achieved their qualification, with the remainder continuing to work through their training.

But the region can't afford to rest on its laurels. Kirsty continues "Train to Gain: A Plan for Growth, launched in November last year, sets out ambitious plans for the continued growth and development of the Train to Gain service. As well as detailing the significant additional investment the LSC is making to support the expansion of the service, the plan sets out flexibilities that will enhance the offer to employers in 2008. In the region, we are complementing that through the use of European Social Fund to offer a full range of support to employers at all skill levels."



Kirsty Evans, Skills Development Director LSC North West



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Skills – the bread and butter of a better business

Ashberry Sandwiches, a busy food production and manufacturing operation in Blackpool, is enjoying the benefits of improved skills and productivity across the company, thanks to flexible training accessed through Train to Gain.

While the company already recognised the value of training, the nature of the business made it difficult to release staff for training. Neil Holden, Operations Manager comments, "We knew that to move forward we had to provide training in certain areas but we need all hands on deck during production hours so releasing staff to go out to college was not possible. When we discussed these concerns with the training provider they came up with the ideal solution that has helped us upskill the team without sacrificing valuable staff time."

Staff from Ashberry Sandwiches were able to progress to NVQ Level 2 through on-the-job training, while the academic element of the training was provided on-site via e-learning.

"We expected the training to help us maintain high quality standards within the business, but this has been only one of the results of Train to Gain for us," Neil continues. "The training has really helped motivate the team and staff retention levels are higher now than they have ever been."



Neil Holden, Operations Manager and Paul Branch, Production Manager at Ashberry Sandwiches



Gosia Sterkowicz, Zaneta Strzempa and Paul Branch from Ashberry Sandwiches

European funding boosts employment prospects for the people of the North West

Recent investment from the European Social Fund (ESF) is proving to have a significant impact on the people of the North West, boosting the skills and employment prospects of thousands of individuals and businesses across the area.

Across the North West £360 million worth of ESF investment has been made between 2004 and 2007*, successfully funding 700 projects and initiatives.

One organisation running such projects is Warrington Borough Council that has developed the 'Way Forward' project for disadvantaged school age learners across the area. A successful bid of £140,000 has enabled the council to start-up a range of schemes for school children across Cheshire and Warrington, with the primary aim of introducing new learning and work placement opportunities to those who might otherwise be held back by issues such as poor motivation and low self esteem.

Maureen Kelly, 14-19 Consultant at Warrington Borough Council comments,

"The start up of the Way Forward project would not have been possible without the ESF funding we have received. The schemes run as part of the project have allowed us to engage with children in years 9, 10 and 11 as well as post-16 learners. We have a range of objectives that the project is enabling us to achieve, from finding alternative types of education for those struggling in school to preparing students for further learning or the world of work through new work placement schemes".

Maureen continues, "The work we are doing reaches children who might otherwise be at a disadvantage due to behavioural or confidence issues. We work to improve the self-esteem of these young people, to motivate them to be more receptive to learning as well as introduce them to industry experience that they might otherwise miss out on. Since March 2007 we have engaged with 13 schools and 158 learners to date, and we are on target to increase this significantly by the end of the project in June 2008."



*Projects from the new programme of ESF investment are due to commence from April 2008 onwards.



Events calendar

Improving Information Service for Education: Introducing the MIAP Learner Registration Service; the information authority and the Data Service 18 March 2008 9.30am - 3.30pm

Event Description: To introduce people to these services, how they relate to each other, their purpose and to understand the changes that organisations will have to make for 08-09 academic year.
To register visit www.eventsforce.net/aoc/mia08

Aimed at: FE and WBL execs.

Venue: Booths Hall, Knutsford

Contact: Sharon Creary (02476 823426), Tim Barrett (02476 823494)

ITT Briefing - Mainstream Procurement

Event Description: ITT briefing for suppliers who are on the BRAVO database.

Aimed at: Suppliers on the BRAVO database.

Venues: Preston Marriot Hotel

Everton Football Club

Lancashire County Cricket Club

Castle Green Hotel, Kendal

Oaklands Hotel, Weaverham, Cheshire

Contact: Joanne Miles (0161 261 0267)

31 March 2008 @ 9.00am - 12.00 noon

2 April 2008 @ 1.00 - 4.00pm

3 April 2008 @ 1.00 - 4.00pm

4 April 2008 @ 9.00am - 12.00 noon

7 April 2008 @ 9.00am - 12.00 noon

NW Chairs of Governors Event 14 April 2008 @ 5.00pm-8.00pm

Event Description: Strategic briefing for NW chairs of governors.

Aimed at: College chairs of governors.

Venue: Manchester - venue tbc

Contact: Nicky Martin (0161 261 0266)

Learning for Living and Work - a Greater Merseyside Perspective 23 April 2008 @ 9.00am-4.00pm

Event Description: LLDD conference for Greater Merseyside partners.

Aimed at: Senior planning and strategic delegates.

Venue: Aintree

Contact: Laura Edwards (0151 672 3554)

NW learner Awards/Sub-Regional Finals

Event Description: Final of the NW learner Awards.

Aimed at: Awards finalists and providers/employers/partners.

Venues: Cumbria Final - Center Parcs, Penrith

Cheshire & Warrington Final - Park Royal Hotel, Stretton, Warrington

Lancashire Final - Mercure Dunkenhalgh hotel, Clayton-le-moors, Lancashire

Greater Merseyside Final - Anfield stadium, Liverpool

Greater Manchester Final - Venue to be confirmed

Contact: Joanne Miles (0161 261 0267)

9 May 2008 @ 6.00 - 10.00pm

14 May 2008 @ 6.00 - 10.00pm

15 May 2008 @ 6.00 - 10.00pm

19 May 2008 @ 6.00 - 10.00pm

22 May 2008 @ 6.00 - 10.00pm

The Development Programme for Train to Gain

Event Description: To facilitate the building of working relationships and a shared understanding of workplace Skills for Life provision between Train to Gain brokers, Skills for Life practitioners and provider business development staff leading to increased Skills for Life leads and achievements.

Aimed at: See event description.

Venue: Lancashire County Cricket Club, Manchester

Leyland Hotel, Lancashire

Contact: Toni Moore (0161 261 0371), Hazel Hampson (0161 261 0480)

2 April 2008 @ 9.30am-4.00pm

4 April 2008 @ 9.30am-4.00pm

Return of the region's biggest skills event

Skills NorthWest, the region's largest careers and training event, is set to return in 2009, giving thousands of young people the chance to gain a taste of learning opportunities and the world of work.

This time the well established event will move to a brand new location, the Bolton Arena, but its key aim remains the same - to give students a true feel for learning and job opportunities through hands on skills demonstrations and interactive activities.

At the event, school pupils from years 10, 11, 12 and 13, as well as college and university students will get to try their hand at work-essential skills and talk to people with true industry experience.

An array of key employers will be represented in industry sectors ranging from environmental industries to hair and beauty, engineering, sport and fitness and much, much more. There really is something for everyone!

Paul Holme, LSC Regional Director of Skills for the North West comments, "We are looking forward to supporting Skills NorthWest again in 2009 as it gives young

people the chance to meet a wide range of employers as well as colleges, universities, training providers, charities and sector skills councils. As exhibitors provide hands-on activities, students are able to get a more realistic impression of the industries represented, than if they just read about them in leaflets and prospectuses."

For more information visit www.skillsnw.co.uk



Interactive activities at Skills NorthWest



Local office locations and contacts

Cheshire and Warrington

Dalton House
Dalton Way
Middlewich
Cheshire
CW10 0HU

Tel: 01606 32 00 01

Email:

cheshireandwarringtoninfo@lsc.gov.uk

Cumbria

Venture House
Regents Court
Guard Street
Workington
Cumbria
CA14 4EW

Tel: 0845 019 4159

Email: cumbriainfo@lsc.gov.uk

Greater Manchester

9th Floor
Arndale House
Arndale Centre
Manchester
M4 3AQ

Tel: 0845 019 4142

Email: grmanchesterinfo@lsc.gov.uk

Greater Merseyside

14th Floor
The Plaza
Old Hall Street
Liverpool
L3 9TD

Tel: 0845 019 4150

Email: merseysideinfo@lsc.gov.uk

Lancashire

City Gate
Longridge Road
Preston
PR2 5BQ

Tel: 01772 443001

Email: lancashireinfo@lsc.gov.uk