



Apprenticeships

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The newsletter for stakeholders
of the LSC in the North West

autumn 08

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Welcome

Welcome to the autumn edition of NW News which as usual contains a broad range of updates and stories about the learning and skills sector in the North West. One key theme in the sector is of course the Machinery of Government (MOG) changes which continue to take shape.

On 30 July The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills and the Department for Children, Schools and Families published two documents. The first, *Raising Expectations: Enabling the System to Deliver - Summary of the Events and Written Responses* summarises the responses to the 12-week consultation on the proposed Machinery of Government reforms.

The second, *Raising Expectations: Enabling the System to Deliver - Update and Next Steps* lays out the next steps following the consultation and answers some of the most frequently asked questions about the proposed new arrangements, including how the new Skills Funding Agency and Young People's Learning Agency will work together.

I am pleased to say that one key decision that has been made is that the national offices of both the Skills Funding Agency and the Young People's Learning Agency will be based in Coventry, where the LSC currently has its national office. Meanwhile the LSC is continuing to shape itself to meet the needs of the new arrangements.

As part of this the National Apprenticeship Vacancy Matching Service is developing apace, and in the North West a team is now working to create our regional element of this important initiative.

Another key development that has taken place is the announcement of the 15 members of our new Regional Council. Chaired by Roger Hoyle, the Council will lead the LSC's regional presence; informing decision making, guiding progress and ensuring the successful delivery of the LSC's agenda in the North West. I am delighted that the Council members all demonstrate a strong commitment to learning and skills and are from such a diverse range of sectors and backgrounds.

You will find a feature on the new Council on pages six and seven, and I look forward to working with them as we enter a busy and challenging time in the learning and skills sector.

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Cover image: Amanda Holden with Victoria Snook from Preston and other Award Winners at the National Apprenticeship Awards

North West European Social Fund celebration and awards

The North West European Social Fund (ESF) celebration and awards were held in June to congratulate North West based projects supported by the ESF. Hosted by Jobcentre Plus and the LSC North West the event celebrated the success of the programme and recognised those who have benefited

The event, held at the Hilton Manchester Deansgate, highlighted the programme of ESF investment across the North West. Attended by delivery partners along with the people whose lives have significantly changed as a result of help and training funded by ESF, the event provided an opportunity for everyone involved to celebrate the achievements.

Speaking about the event, John Korzeniewski, Regional Director LSC North West comments, "The award ceremony proved a great success. ESF investment really does make a difference to people's lives and the commitment shown by our delivery partners and the individuals they work with is something they should all be proud of. The recent ESF investment made in the region is boosting the skills and employment prospects of thousands of individuals and businesses across the area and this event has allowed us to highlight some of the success stories of the North West."

Dominic Brankin, Customer Services Director for Jobcentre Plus North West continued, "The success of the ESF proves how working in partnership with the LSC, Government Office and local providers can make all the difference in tackling unemployment in our region. I am delighted to be able to celebrate the success of a programme that is evidently working to change the lives of people in the North West."



Angela Parody of Chester won the *Individual Workforce Skills Award*

Angela came out top for her commitment to increasing skill levels and responsibilities in the workplace.



Karen Keenan of Accrington won the *Life/Work Balance Award*

Karen was named the winner after showing determination and drive in overcoming barriers to employment whilst having caring obligations.



John Scholes of Lytham won the *Determination Award* and then went on to pick up the *Overall Achievement Award*.

John overcame significant barriers moving from welfare dependence into employment, turning around his previous negative experiences to prove himself a cheerful and committed employee.



Margaret Lloyd of Liverpool won the *Progression Award*

Margaret displayed drive and determination in overcoming complex barriers to achieve employment and independence in the face of disability and serious health problems.



Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council won the *Innovation with Employers Award*

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's project was rewarded for using innovative approaches to engage with employers especially in hard to reach sectors.



Big Life Company won the *Innovation with Beneficiaries Award*

Manchester based Big Life Company picked up the Innovation with Beneficiaries Award, for using innovative approaches to engage with employers and forging successful partnerships to provide work opportunities that led to real jobs.



Wai Yin Chinese Women Society won the *Embracing Diversity Award* and the *Excellence Award*

Wai Yin Chinese Women Society was recognised for successfully engaging with diverse and hard to reach groups from local communities across Greater Manchester.

What is . . . The Planning and Performance Directorate?

Planning and Performance is one of three regional directorates within the Learning Planning and Performance group. This group, led by Jane Cowell, Regional Director of Learning, Planning and Performance, also includes the 14-19 Reform and Learning and Quality Directorates.



Jane Cowell

The role of the Planning and Performance Directorate is to:

- Co-ordinate and lead delivery of the LSC business cycle across the region;
- Support area and partnership teams to make a difference on the ground in delivering Government priorities for learning and skills within agreed LSC frameworks and arrangements;
- Work collaboratively with partners who also work at a regional level to optimise coherence in planning and development work and communication to local partners;
- Work collaboratively with LSC national colleagues to provide a regional perspective to the development and delivery of LSC activity.

The Planning and Performance Directorate is headed by Planning and Performance Director, Mo Ahmed. The directorate is split into **three core areas**; data, performance, and research and planning.

The **data** team is responsible for designing, developing and maintaining a suite of LSC data platforms that are used to support regional and area teams. These platforms are updated on a continuous basis and are accessible to all staff in regional and area teams. The data managers also lead on the modelling work for all recurrent funding allocations.

The **performance** team utilises the data platforms to monitor and report on the region's performance against the regional plan in terms of regional participation and achievement and provider success rates.

The **research and planning** team designs and prepares the regional Strategic Analysis. This underpins the planning, commissioning and procurement strategy set out each year in the Regional Commissioning Plan.

Mo Ahmed says "The Planning and Performance Directorate is responsible for ensuring delivery of the LSC Business Cycle within agreed timescales. This includes understanding past and current performance, interpreting national targets and priorities for the coming year to develop regional/local targets and priorities linked to the new Demand Led Funding system the LSC has introduced this year.

"The Directorate's work includes liaising with key stakeholders, data analysis, modelling, developing commissioning priorities and implementing the allocations process, concluding with targets at provider level for the forthcoming year. My role is to look at where we are and develop this into where we should be going, influencing and working with national, regional and local colleagues, to ensure that the commissioning process is an integral part of the Business Cycle. In essence I have to have some awareness of all areas the LSC is involved in that touch upon delivery to ensure we are working towards our targets and priorities."

Who's Who . . . in Planning and Performance

Data and Analysis

This team is responsible for managing the data and analysis service for the region, providing both standard reports and ad hoc analysis for a wide range of needs. In addition, the team supports the planning and allocations cycle, contributing to the modelling and providing data to help inform negotiations and the decision-making process. The team is led by Navin Patel, Data and Analysis Manager, and supported by the Information Advisors, Irene Cartner, Deborah Green, Wendy Lovatt, Simon Patten and Leon Thompson. Simone Toole is the team administrator.

Performance team

Manager Christina Smith, adviser Hollie Dowdeswell and administrator Sam Mughal co-ordinate performance monitoring and evaluation in the region.

Their role is to understand, monitor, and communicate progress towards and the achievement of targets at a regional, local and partnership team level. The team aggregates data information and provides analysis to support critical points in the business cycle including performance review, commissioning and strategic analysis.

Peter Glennie – Data and Analysis Manager

With experience of quality systems, data analysis and further education, Peter leads on allocations across the spectrum of providers from Further Education Colleges, to School Sixth Forms, Independent Private Providers delivering E2E, Apprenticeships and Train to Gain. Peter also provides support on Demand Led Funding methodology and process, ensuring that North West partnership teams are well versed in allocations and funding methodology for dialogue with providers and partners. Anne Marie Ryan, information advisor, supports Peter in this work.

Planning, Research and Capital Team

The team consists of managers Claire Humphrey and Karin Mangan, research advisers Mark Stephens and Davina Wilcock, and administrator Kalpana Patel.

The team manages the planning and research aspects of the business cycle, the regional commissioning statement and the strategic analysis that informs it. The team also has a brief on capital and the regional capital plan. The team reviews the results of previous years' decisions in the strategic analysis, then arranges summit meetings where policy leads and area offices have an evidence-based discussion about next year's priorities. The result is a clear, transparent statement that is meaningful to all our stakeholders.

The team produces the regional Strategic Analysis. This analysis draws together information on participation and success rates in learning alongside trends in the economy, employment and demography to develop a comprehensive overview of the regional learning and skills environment. The Analysis is used to identify the current position against targets and plans and to identify any issues that need to be addressed in the next regional Commissioning Statement.



Mo Ahmed (top right) with members of the Planning and Performance Directorate

A welcome from Chris Banks

Learning and Skills Council Chair, Chris Banks, was in Lancaster in September for the first meeting of the new North West Regional Council.

Congratulating the new Regional Council members, Chris Banks said, "We have a single aim; to improve the skills of the nation. Over the next two years or so the LSC, supported by the new regional councils, has a huge and important job to do working with the Further Education sector to ensure that we can continue to respond effectively to the changing needs of

individual learners, employers and wider communities, and to secure the skills we need to remain competitive as a country."

"I am delighted that we have been able to attract such a high calibre of membership to our new Regional Councils from a wide range of sectors and backgrounds. The Regional Council will provide challenge, support and leadership to the LSC's work, and in doing so will help shape a world class education and skills system for the North West region."



Chris Banks, LSC Chair (back row, centre) and North West Regional Chair, Roger Hoyle (front row), pictured with members of the newly appointed Council

The new Regional Council, set up as part of the Further Education and Training Act 2007, will lead the LSC's regional presence, informing decision making, guiding progress and ensuring the successful delivery of the LSC's agenda in the North West. The 15 non-executive council members will act as guiding voices, translating national and regional strategy into practice and effectively investing the LSC's budget over the next few years.

The Act was introduced to streamline the LSC's 'non-executive tier' following the replacement of 47 Local Councils with the nine Regional Councils in existence today. This move has resulted in a simplified, less bureaucratic structure, as well as being aligned to the organisation of the LSC executive team. In this way, the new councils reflect both the local and regional needs of learners and employers.

Appointed members are required to have a combination of business, education, training and community experience in order

to contribute to the balance of the board. As a result of a successful recruitment drive earlier this year, the LSC in the North West received a significant number of applications for key positions on the Regional Council, including those from many leading businessmen and women in the region.

The appointed council members all demonstrate a strong commitment to learning and skills, and are from a diverse range of sectors and backgrounds. The new council consists of representatives from educational establishments, trade unions and from the public and private sector.

Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education, Bill Rammell, said: "The Government is committed to delivering the world class education and learning system that we need if we are to compete effectively in a global economy.

"The nine new Regional Councils will have a vital role to play in ensuring that in all regions we have the skills needed to strengthen our economic performance and to transform the ambitions and life chances of millions of people."

The newly announced non-executive members of the North West Regional Council



Pat Bacon

Pat has 30 years experience in FE and has been the Principal of St Helens College for six years. Her contribution to the regional agenda includes membership of the Regional Skills and Employment Board and, on a national basis, she is a member of the Association of Colleges Skills Group.



Kate Hollern

Kate is currently the Work-based Learning Contracts Manager at Blackburn College, and is a Local Councillor for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council. She has a total commitment to the skills agenda and is keen to ensure both the upskilling and the raising of aspirations of young people in diverse communities



Maureen Boland

Maureen is currently the Director for HR and Business Development of a construction company, based in Lancashire. Her focus is on training for all and she has found that this has been a key contributor to the success of the business and also to the motivation and personal achievement of individuals.



Graham Lamont

Graham is the current High Sheriff of Cumbria, as well as being Chief Executive of his own company - which is an Investor in People, has made the Skills Pledge and is a National Training Award Winner. He is passionate about helping everyone reach their full potential, and in particular by the vocational route.



Kath Boullen

Throughout Kath's career she has had involvement in learning and skills and has a particular interest and belief in the impact that education and skills can have on deprived communities. She is heavily involved in trying to improve the economic position of residents and businesses in the most deprived areas of St Helens.



Jenny Martin

Jenny is joining the council as the learner voice representative. She is currently North West Regional Organiser for the National Union of Students, specialising in governance, representation, and training and development.



Steven Broomhead

As Chief Executive of the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA), Steven is responsible for a budget of £1.5 billion over the next three years. He is committed to the promotion of lifelong learning and was appointed by the Government as a member of the Board of the Learning and Skills Development Agency in 2001.



Alan Roff

Alan has been a senior manager in higher education for the last 20 years and is currently the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for the University of Central Lancashire. He is keen to forge links between higher education and further education in the region.



Claire Dove

Claire's career spans over thirty years within the voluntary sector where she has been instrumental in setting up and leading a number of successful organisations. She has led social enterprise, Blackburne House in Liverpool since its inception in the 1980s.



Dean Royles

Dean is currently an Executive Director of Workforce and Education in the NHS Northwest. He believes that the delivery of objectives is only achievable through the utilisation of expertise and the experience of staff, and is passionate about learning opportunities for all.



Christine Gaskell

Christine is HR Director at Bentley Motors, based in Crewe. For the past ten years Christine has been actively involved in promoting learning and skills in Cheshire and has invested significantly in improving the skills and capability of the workforce.



Ray Short

Ray is currently a Senior Officer for the Public Sector with the Public Sector Trade Union, Unison. He is fully aware how lack of skills and education affects the diverse communities and their differing needs across the Region.



Abdul Hamied

Abdul currently works for Rochdale MBC as a Regeneration and Renewal Manager. He is fully committed to the equal opportunity and race equality agenda and is a firm believer in embracing the values, principles, needs and cultures of different community and social groups.



Bill Rutter

Bill has been a senior manager in business and was a member of the Council for LSC Cheshire and Warrington so has seen the positive effect that education and training can have on people and businesses. He is keen to ensure that all are given opportunities to develop, and transform their lives, benefiting themselves, the economy, and communities.



Skills for the future

As Train to Gain enters its third year of delivery, the service is going from strength to strength in the North West. This success will no doubt be reinforced and boosted by the increasing flexibility of the service.

Following decisions by Government Ministers, Train to Gain's offering is to expand - with more money and support available to help even more employers and learners. There is also a range of new flexibilities to enhance



the delivery of Train to Gain and enable the service to be even more responsive to the needs of employers and individuals.

The new changes represent a further significant improvement to Train to Gain and will support the rapid expansion of the service confirming its major role in delivering the Government's skills strategy and ambitions. By 2010/11 more than £1 billion of public funding will be routed through Train to Gain and each year the service will support in excess of 950,000 employees nationally.

The proposed changes will ensure employers have the widest possible range of support to upskill and qualify their workforce to improve the performance of their business. They will also give colleges and training providers more freedom to respond to employer demand.

Taken together, these changes and those described in *A Plan for Growth*, provide colleges and training providers with a clear signal of the importance placed on delivering and expanding the Train to Gain service so that it is able to work with more employers to address the skills needs of their whole workforce and make a significant contribution to the ambitions described in World Class Skills – the Government's response to the Leitch report.

Employers to gain from new website

A new Train to Gain website, specifically for employers, has been launched over the summer. It replaces the existing website and aims to:

- Bring the Train to Gain website content up to date to reflect the Plan for Growth launch in November 2007 and the new flexibilities available to employers
- Ensure the website is clearly employer-facing and to write the content for an employer audience
- Expand the offering of the Train to Gain Website to include employers with 499-4999 employees
- Support marketing campaigns in publicising the Train to Gain service

Visit www.traintogain.gov.uk to access the new site.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Carefully crafted skills

Based in Failsworth near Oldham, Axiom Displays has been a leading point of purchase design and manufacturing specialist for more than 50 years. The company creates a wide range of eye-catching retail displays to accommodate products as diverse as greetings cards, fashion and consumer electronics.

Axiom Display's diverse range of services means that it needs a highly skilled workforce across a number of areas including furniture assembly, wood machining, spray polishing and wood veneering. It also needs trained warehousing and distribution personnel.

The company recognised a need to give their employees the skills they require in order to maintain quality standards, encourage staff to take pride in the craftsmanship inherent in their jobs and give the business the edge in an increasingly competitive sector. A visit from their local Train to Gain Skills Broker helped the company define its training needs and select a training partner from a number of suitable providers. Axiom has since implemented a combination of NVQ programmes through the LSC's Train to Gain service for employees aged 19 and above as well as Apprenticeship training for its younger staff.

Phil Barton, Axiom Display's Works Manager comments, "The input of the Train to Gain Skills Broker was invaluable. He helped

us identify North Lancs Training Group as the best training provider for our needs as they had specialist equipment that offered invaluable training opportunities for our young employees that we simply couldn't provide in-house. As a result we've been able to expand the specialist skills base within the team and have really seen some of our young workers realise their potential."

"The training has not only upskilled the team," Phil continues, "it has also improved the attitude of our workers because it's really given them confidence in what they do and a passion for creating a quality product. We've seen a marked difference in the level of job ownership that our team shows now, they take pride in their work and want to follow a project from beginning to end. It's a result that you can't really quantify but it's just as valuable in terms of productivity and quality as the skills themselves."

While Train to Gain has given Axiom Displays motivational and operational benefits, ultimately, the real benefit is to the company's bottom line. The improvement in skill levels has increased the quality of workmanship, leading to higher levels of repeat custom and greater profitability.

"Train to Gain has offered us subsidised, high quality training, helping us deliver a quality product that keeps clients coming back to us. It has also allowed us to demonstrate that we can offer long-term career prospects to young people who join us, helping us recruit and retain talented young people."



Phil Barton with two of Axiom Display's apprentices

North West winners scoop top awards at the National Apprenticeship Awards 2008

The National Apprenticeship Awards 2008 saw three North West apprentices win top awards. Now in their fifth year, the Awards are designed to recognise the hard work and commitment of people who are currently undertaking, or who have recently completed, an Apprenticeship, as well as the employers who are successfully using Apprenticeships to improve business performance.

Rachael Hoyle of Preston won in the Advanced Apprentice of the Year category. Victoria Snook, also of Preston, was a winner in the Personal Achiever of the Year category, after previously scooping the same award in the Lancashire leg of the North West Learner Awards and the overall North West title.

Jessica Daisy Clark of Millom, Cumbria, was highly commended in the Personal Achiever of the Year category, after previously winning the same award in the Excellence in Cumbria Awards and sharing the winning title in the North West Learner Awards.

The apprentice award categories seek to celebrate apprentices'

commitment to developing their skills and experience through Apprenticeships, whilst the employer award categories seek to celebrate employers' commitment to developing their workforce through Apprenticeships.

This year's National Apprenticeship Awards attracted a record number of entries, with almost 1,400 individuals and companies all over England vying to be named Apprentice or Employer of the Year at the ceremony. Representatives from the various employers joined the rest of the finalists at the Royal Horticultural Hall in Central London in July, where TV star Amanda Holden presented the Awards.

John Korzeniewski, Regional Director LSC North West added, "The awards have been a great opportunity to recognise the dedication and success of not only the winning apprentices, but all apprentices across the North West. The Apprenticeship programme gives people and businesses real opportunities to succeed, with enthusiastic young people and dynamic employers teamed with a supportive delivery system. The awards have highlighted this success, showing what a real difference Apprenticeships can provide."



Amanda Holden with ...

Jessica Daisy Clark



... Victoria Snook



... Rachael Hoyle

Just the business!

When Chorley based Mercia Woest joined Lancashire County Council, little did she think she'd be training her own apprentice within two years, using her experience to develop another young person.

Having been through the learning experience first hand, apprentices are ideally placed to guide and support new apprentices through the programme. The added responsibility of training a new apprentice brings with it the opportunity to develop communication and leadership skills.

Mercia, 19, who won the Advanced Apprentice of the Year Award at this year's Lancashire Learner Awards, is currently undertaking an Advanced Apprenticeship in Business Administration with Lancashire County Council, and studies at Blackburn College.

Mercia believes training her own apprentice is beneficial to the both of them, "Since I started as an apprentice at the Council, I have been successful in gaining a promotion opportunity here as a Project Management Support Officer. I now have a lot more responsibility and work with a new Business Administration apprentice, setting her work and helping her with her studies. It's great to pass on what I have learnt and to see the new apprentice progress just like I did."

Mercia adds, "Apprenticeships are a great way for young people to get on in their careers and to gain qualifications. You can get a better understanding of job opportunities, plus earning and learning at the same time provides a nice balance."



Mercia Woest

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

North West winners have a first class day out

Following being named winners in the LSC's North West Learner Awards, high-achieving apprentices and learners from around the North West have enjoyed a first-class day out in London to celebrate.

They had each been chosen as overall winners for the North West Awards after previously winning their categories in one of the five LSC sub-regions in the North West - Cheshire and Warrington, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Greater Merseyside and Lancashire. As winners in their sub-region they were each presented with a trophy and a cheque for £250.

To celebrate their achievements, the winners were taken on a once-in-a-lifetime trip to London, where they were whisked by first-class train to a reception and lunch at the Houses of Parliament. Their local MPs were on hand to give their personal congratulations before they were given a whistle-stop tour of the building. Lunch was followed by a private flight on the London Eye.

Speaking before the event, John Korzeniewski, Regional Director North West LSC said, "I hope the winners enjoy their celebration day in London. They truly are a testament to the success that can be achieved through learning. I am confident they will continue to succeed throughout their future careers and develop the learning habit they have so obviously embraced."

The LSC's North West Learner Awards were held to recognise and reward excellence in learning, skills and achievement in individuals and organisations. They form part of the LSC's National Apprenticeship Awards which this year attracted record entries, rising by over 40 percent since last year. The North West attracted the highest number of entries in the country, with 20 percent of the national total.

The North West award winners were:

Further Education Vocational Award
– Sarah Jane Maher (Greater Merseyside)

Further Education Academic Award
– William Downes (Greater Manchester)

Apprentice Employer of the Year
– Delta International (Greater Manchester)

Young Apprentice of the Year
– John Shead (Cumbria)

Personal Achiever of the Year (joint winners)
– Jessica Daisy Clark (Cumbria) and Victoria Snook (Lancashire)

Apprentice of the Year
– Michelle Officer (Greater Manchester)

Advanced Apprentice of the Year
– Craig Robinson (Cheshire & Warrington).



The North West's winning apprentices in London, pictured with their host for the day, the Rt. Hon. George Howarth MP

Campaign to boost Apprenticeships

In November the LSC will launch a major national campaign to support Apprenticeships.

The primary audience of the campaign will be adults, including parents, employers and other stakeholders, and the campaign will seek to raise the profile of Apprenticeships as a route for ambitious and talented young people. Though still in its planning stage it is envisaged the campaign will use television, press and poster media.

Starting in autumn, and running through to spring 2009, the LSC will be working with the North West Provider Network who are managing a direct telesales campaign with the target of recruiting an extra 500 employers to employ an apprentice for the first time. The campaign involves sector specific mailings being sent to companies throughout the region which will be followed by a telephone call and then a visit from a work-based learning provider.

The Skills Pledge - one year on

The Skills Pledge was launched in July 2007 to encourage employers to make a commitment to training their staff. A little over a year on we look back over what has been achieved to date and see how North West employers are leading the way.

Since its launch 818* organisations, comprising over 400,000 employees, in the North West have made the Pledge to support their employees in developing basic skills and working towards relevant, valuable qualifications to at least Level 2 - the equivalent to five GCSEs at grades A-C. As well as raising staff skills, the aim is to enable organisations to develop a more productive and competitive workforce.

Group Managing Director of Liverpool based logistics company, Bibby Distribution, Sir Michael Bibby and Iain Speak, Chief Executive, made the Pledge earlier this year for 250 of their employees. Iain Speak

comments, "Investing heavily in training our staff is something we have done for a long time, and the LSC's Skills Pledge simply confirms our commitment. The Bibby Academy, which forms our training and development programme, is open to all our employees and allows our staff to work towards an NVQ.

"Our future plans include continuing with the Bibby Academy and extending our offering with the launch of a Foundation Degree in Logistics, which we hope to start next year, in conjunction with the University of Cumbria. I would strongly recommend that other employers make the Skills Pledge – to be competitive you have to make a solid commitment to your staff. Even though Bibby Distribution is part of a 200 year old group, we realise that we still have to develop and diversify in order to succeed and we need our employees to do this with us."

Kirsty Evans, Skills Development Director of the LSC in the North West said, "It is great

Sir Michael Bibby, Group Managing Director at Bibby Distributions, with CEO, Iain Speak



that 818 companies have already made the Pledge, underlining the benefits that can be achieved by making an investment in people. There are currently around 1147 organisations that have commenced their pledge journey in the North West, so the second year looks to be getting off to a great start. As major employers across the region are setting powerful examples I urge other organisations to follow their lead and make a commitment to the Skills Pledge."

*as at 19/09/08

Award winning company commits to boosting staff skills

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Lynton is a cutting edge company based in Cheshire, specialising in the design and manufacturing of laser and light systems for the medical aesthetics market. Selling machinery for treatments such as skin rejuvenation, hair removal and skin toning to private clinics and salons, Lynton has a philosophy of innovation and constant evolution, and recognises the value of developing its staff to stay at the forefront of the industry.

Taking pride in its after-sales service and a high level of customer satisfaction, Lynton decided to make the LSC's Skills Pledge to confirm its commitment to training its staff and supporting them to work towards relevant qualifications to at least Level 2.

Andy Charlton, Chairman of the Lynton Group, comments, "With the benefit of over 10 years experience in the design and manufacture of laser systems, we recognise that maintaining an innovative approach is an integral part of our long term success strategy. Training our staff is an important part of our company policy and can only help us to achieve and maintain our competitive edge

"We have been awarded Investors in People status and recognise that our staff appreciate the chance to learn new skills. Our investment in their development not only keeps our employees up-to-date it also helps to boost staff motivation and allows employees to recognise their value to the business."

Sue Weighell, Finance Director of the Lynton Group adds, "Training our staff will definitely play an important role in the future of the company. At Lynton, staff development is ongoing and is individually reviewed with each member of staff every six months."

"Making the Skills Pledge has provided a way for us to commit to this future development and is something I would advocate to other employers. Learning new skills and enhancing existing abilities can only help your company to progress in a positive manner."



Development Engineer, Richard Chongwain at work

VIEWPOINT

**Kewal Dass,
Learning and Quality Director,
LSC North West**

"The face of learning is ever-changing, moving towards a demand-led approach; demand of learners and demand of employers. It is therefore paramount that the provision on offer in the region meets their requirements in every way - appealing to the diverse population of the North West, offering a wide-range of choice, ensuring safety in the learning environment and delivering quality provision.

We all have a part to play in maintaining the high standard of performance in the North West, with our joined-up thinking and working underpinning our success. With almost a quarter of the UK's Beacon organisations hailing from the region, we must be doing something right!

As we all know, this doesn't happen without effort, and it is one of the purposes and priorities of the Learning and Quality Directorate to ensure that provider performance continuously improves, supporting the LSC's strategies, policies and programmes for quality assurance.

We can all feel very proud that the North West is a high performing region, and it is important that we work together to maintain this. Through working closely with the Learning and Skills Improvement Service and learning providers, appropriate support can be identified and put in place to address any issues, ensuring the North West's high standards continue to improve.

Providers are also becoming increasingly aware of the role health and safety needs to play in the delivery of learning. It is so important for learners to feel confident and assured that their safety is being considered at all times. The LSC in the North West continues to develop its Learner Health and Safety Team, and is focusing its strategy through the Safe Learner Blueprint, working with providers to minimise any risk to learners – providing a safe learning environment and a good learning experience.

Within the North West's changing landscape of learners, there is a growing number that are identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In light of this, the LSC has taken the important step of refreshing its mental health strategy, working alongside providers to ensure that appropriate provision is available to continually broaden the offering.

Another key objective that the LSC and providers are keen to meet is the promotion and delivery of learning to the diverse population of the North West. The LSC's Single Equality Scheme Strategy and Action Plan has led to the rollout of a number of projects targeting young people, adult learners and employers. The intention of this scheme is to further encourage all sectors of society to participate in learning.

Collaborative working between the LSC and stakeholders has helped to create the well-rounded and all-encompassing range of provision available, and continuing in this vein is sure to keep the North West region high on the performance tables and at the forefront of learning across the country."



Cheshire and Warrington employers are top of the skills race

Leading Cheshire and Warrington employers came together over summer to mark the success of their commitment to developing workforce skills. Hosted by the LSC in the North West and the Cheshire and Warrington Economic Alliance (CWEA), the celebratory 'Racing to the Top' event held at Chester Racecourse demonstrated the achievements made by local employers in boosting the skills and employment prospects of thousands of employees across the local area.

Among the delegates were well known Cheshire and Warrington based employers such as Bentley Motors, HBOS and Vauxhall along with established local companies such as The Dane Housing Group and Edmund Nuttall. The event marked the proactive growth and development of such companies through the Apprenticeship and Train to Gain programmes.

Margaret Cheshire, Head of Learning and Organisational Development at Bentley attended the event and commented, "It is clear that the LSC's aim of improving workforce literacy and numeracy and encouraging staff to gain qualifications fits perfectly with our organisation's overall business plan and our goal to improve skills and capability. As a company we have been very successful and we want this to continue. Our view is that the only way we can achieve our goals is to develop our people, as ultimately they deliver our success."

Liz Davis, LSC Director of Area for Cheshire and Warrington, commented, "The Racing to the Top event was a great opportunity for us to highlight the excellent work going on within local companies and to champion a number of Cheshire and Warrington employers as leading the way in raising skill levels. Many of those who attended provide a great example of the success that can be gained by harnessing the potential of employee training programmes, such as Apprenticeships and Train to Gain, to other employers in Cheshire and Warrington and indeed across the North West."



David Pickering of Cheshire and Warrington Economic Alliance with Liz Davis LSC Area Director for Cheshire and Warrington

Events calendar

Wigan Learner Awards Evening

16 October 2008
6.30pm

Event Description: Awards will be given for Apprenticeships, 14-16 attainment, and E2E. There is an award for an Apprentice of the year.

Aimed at: Wigan schools that have nominated learners, colleges and training providers

Venue: Kilhey Court - Wigan

Colleges Week

10-14 November 2008

Event Description: A week of activity to celebrate the work and successes of colleges in England.

Aimed at: Potential learners, employers and all with an interest in the FE sector.

North West Provider Network Conference - Tracking Transition

24 & 25 November 2008
All day

Event Description: The conference will look at developments and plans across a wide range of areas such as Train to Gain, Apprenticeships and Employability Skills as well as any further developments around the Machinery of Government (MOG) reforms.

Aimed at: North West Training Providers with LSC contracts for Apprenticeships, e2e and Train to Gain

Venue: Manchester Airport Hilton Hotel

Contact: Gail Power (07813 339037)

Framework for Excellence - Support for Excellence

28 November 2008
10.00am

Event Description: The focus will be on incorporating the Framework for Excellence (F4E) within the self assessment processes. Includes an introduction into 'supporting software' for providers who are participating in F4E as well as including an update session on the Finance Dimension within F4E.

Aimed at: All North West providers who are in scope for Version 1 of F4E (i.e. General FE Colleges, Sixth Form Colleges, Work Based Learning and Train to Gain providers)

Venue: Manchester Britannia Sachas Hotel

Contact: For more information visit <http://www.tcp-events.co.uk/qiasfe/> or contact the Support for Excellence programme team at qiasfe@deloitte.co.uk

Providers check-in to conference

Representatives from training providers across the North West are invited to attend the 2008 Provider Network Conference on the 24th and 25th of November. The two-day event is to be held at Manchester Airport Hilton Hotel.

The conference will look at developments and plans across a wide range of areas such as Train to Gain, Apprenticeships and Integrating Employment and Skills as well as any further developments around the Machinery of Government (MOG) reforms.

Provider representatives will be invited through the North West Provider Network (NWP) and the sub-regional networks. Further information will be coming out shortly.

If you would like more information on the conference, contact Gail Power, Regional Manager of the NWP on 07813 339037.

Colleges set to celebrate success

National Colleges Week, which will be dedicated to celebrating the success of colleges across the country takes place Monday 10th – Friday 14th November 2008.

The LSC is working closely with the Association of Colleges (AOC) and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) in the initial planning stages for the week. The key themes for the week will be centred around:

- Employer engagement
- Personal and team skills challenges
- Community values and cohesion
- The transformational nature of college work - individual stories
- Academic excellence

Colleges and other supportive partner organisations will be contacted as soon as further details are available and colleges are urged to be involved, to make this year's National Colleges Week a success.



... new venue, new date, same great event

Skills NorthWest, the region's largest careers and training event for young people, is coming in Spring 2009. Supported by the LSC, Skills NorthWest will give thousands of young visitors the chance to find out more about career opportunities and the world of work in a fun and interactive way.

This year the well-established event moves to a brand new venue, Bolton Arena, the £15 million sports and leisure complex sited in the Middlebrook Leisure and Retail Park in Bolton. Easily accessible for visitors from across the region the venue provides over 5,000 sq metres of exhibition space.

Skills NorthWest is always a popular event in the academic calendar and over 10,000 visitors have already booked to visit in Spring next year. The event will take place from Tuesday 3rd to Thursday 5th February.

Many employers and organisations from across the region have already booked to be a part of Skills NorthWest including the BBC, Cogent, Lantra, Greater Manchester Police, the Financial Services Skills Council, the RAF, Royal Navy and Army, the College of Law, Wolsley UK and many more.

John Korzeniewski, LSC North West Regional Director 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. Apprenticeship opportunities will feature prominently at next year's event as well as a broad range of other routes into further and higher education and vocational training. There will be something for each and every visitor to try their hand at. With exhibitors providing hands-on activities, students are able to get a more realistic impression of the industries represented, than they can just from reading leaflets and prospectuses."

To attend the event contact 01823 362800 or go online at www.skillsnw.co.uk.

Local office locations and contacts

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