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nw news

The newsletter for stakeholders
of the LSC in the North West

winter 08

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Priorities page 06

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Welcome

Welcome to the winter edition of LSC North West's stakeholder newsletter. With Christmas fast approaching the newsletter provides an opportunity to reflect on some of the learning and skills sector's many achievements over the year. It also lets us communicate some important developments to you.

In this issue you'll find a summary of our Statement of Priorities for improving learning and skills across the North West - a plan that sets out the LSC's focus for the next year.

Looking back, notable events in 2008 have included Train to Gain celebrating its second anniversary and going from strength to strength in the region. The Skills Pledge is also becoming well established and North West local authorities were singled out for praise by Beverley Hughes, Minister for the North West, for their enthusiastic uptake of the Pledge, showing real leadership to the public sector in the rest of the country.

The development of Machinery of Government reforms has also been a key theme as the LSC continues to shape itself to meet the needs of the new arrangements. For example, by the time you read this the National Apprenticeship Vacancy Matching Service will have been introduced (see page three for more information).

December sees the launch of the LSC's 2009 Apprenticeship Awards. The North West set the standard this year, with several national winners and commendations and 20% of all entrants to the Awards making us the most successful region in the country.

This year instead of sending LSC Corporate Christmas Cards we will again make a donation to the Helena Kennedy Foundation which is celebrating its 10th anniversary. The Foundation works in close partnership with the FE sector, supporting individuals who, for one reason or another, were denied the opportunity to continue their education first time around.

On that note I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you, our valued partners and stakeholders, for your continued support during 2008. I wish you the very best for Christmas, a prosperous and safe new year and I look forward to continuing to work with you in 2009.

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Cover image: Merry Christmas in the office

Now is the time to invest in skills

The LSC is urging companies not to be tempted to cut back on training as a result of the economic downturn.

Skills Secretary John Denham recently revealed research showing that businesses that do not train their employees are 2.5 times more likely to fail than those that do. He also unveiled a new Train to Gain package for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

The key elements are:

- Funding for "bite-sized chunks" - small units or modules of qualifications in subjects known to be important to SMEs, such as business improvement, team-working, customer service, and risk management;
- Extending the successful leadership and management programme so that more SMEs can benefit from it, including companies with just 5-10 workers;
- Relaxing the rules to allow workers to get relevant training at GCSE level (Level 2), even if they already have a previous qualification at this level; and more funding for training to Level 3 (equivalent to two A-levels); By contacting Train to Gain directly, employers can access their local skills broker, local college or learning provider to find out more about training available for their staff.

For more information visit www.traintogain.gov.uk

Ministerial praise for Merseyside councils

Six Greater Merseyside local authorities welcomed Minister for the North West Beverley Hughes to Liverpool as they made the Skills Pledge. Liverpool, Wirral, St Helens, Sefton, Knowsley and Halton councils have now joined the growing list of councils in the North West who have made the Skills Pledge commitment to their staff.

Ms Hughes said: "I am delighted that all the Merseyside local authorities have now decided to make the Skills Pledge together and make a public statement about investing in skills to improve the lives of the people on Merseyside. This is showing real leadership and demonstrating the important contribution the public sector can make.

"The benefits of the Skills Pledge to the development of the whole of the Merseyside city region are potentially enormous and by making the Pledge together Merseyside authorities are demonstrating their shared commitment to work together to build the local economy for the benefit of Merseyside.

"I am encouraged that the North West is making more progress than other regions and that the approach here may be used as a pathfinder for other regions."

LSC launches £2.4 million Train to Gain campaign



November saw the start of a new national advertising campaign promoting Train to Gain. The campaign includes peaktime television advertising during popular programmes including Coronation Street, The Bill and Emmerdale, as well as radio advertising.

The adverts were created to tell employers that it is now quicker and easier for them to get the training they need to keep their businesses moving by accessing the Train to Gain service. They form part of the LSC's ongoing campaign 'Our Future. It's in Our Hands'.



The Train to Gain 'hand ballet'



Minister for the North West Beverley Hughes (left) and Simon Pierce, Acting Director of Area for Greater Merseyside at the LSC (fourth from right) with representatives from Merseyside's local authorities

Cumbria recognises apprentices' achievements

LSC Director of Area for Cumbria, Emer Clarke, has presented the Most Improved Learner award at the GEN II West Cumbria Learner Awards 2008. The award recognises learners who have shown progressive and significant improvement in their first year of training.

This year's winner was Ben Graves, who won £150 and a commemorative trophy. In total the event recognised 14 learners, covering each Apprenticeship discipline plus Foundation Degree Student of the Year and Adult Apprentice of the Year.

Another Cumbria learner has also been celebrating after being named the LSC's North West Young Apprentice of the Year. Emer Clarke and MP for Carlisle Eric Martlew presented winner John Shead with the award at a ceremony at John's employer Story Rail. John is now an advanced apprentice with the company, studying for his NVQ Level 3 in Motor Mechanics at Carlisle College.

Emer said: "John is an outstanding example of commitment as he moves from being a young apprentice into a full apprentice, with distinctions in his examinations and a great improvement in both

his technical and communication skills. He is an example of how hard work gets results, and has proved just how successful Apprenticeships can be - both for employers and for the apprentices themselves."



GEN II award winner Ben Graves with Emer Clarke, LSC Director of Area for Cumbria

Badged Apprentices add a cultural element to their training

Liverpool's Capital of Culture Year has been a resounding success for the city's Badged Apprentices. Funded by the European Social Fund (ESF), the Badged Apprenticeships programme offers apprentices in retail, tourism, hospitality and leisure the chance to add an additional cultural element to their Apprenticeship training.

The apprentices have had the opportunity to attend a diverse range of workshops throughout the year, including TV and radio production, stand-up comedy, kite design, making music and foreign language skills. All the activities are designed to give young people a chance to develop their team work skills and self-confidence.

The Greater Merseyside Learning Provider Federation (GMLPF) has worked closely with a range of partners including the LSC and the Culture Company to deliver the

scheme. Key Liverpool media and cultural organisations including the Liverpool Echo, Radio Merseyside and Tate Liverpool have also lent their support.

Joanne Rymer, Manager of the Badged Apprenticeships programme and GMLPF Operations Manager, said: "Liverpool's Capital of Culture year has been an overwhelming success so far and we can proudly say that the Badged Apprenticeships programme is a very real part of this success.

"We have recently celebrated the end of the first phase of the programme which has helped almost 70 apprentices undertake over 400 exciting creative opportunities linked to Liverpool '08."

The second phase of the programme is now well under way, and the apprentices are looking forward to their graduation celebration at Liverpool's Echo Arena – venue for the 2008 MTV Awards – in February 2009.



Hollyoaks star Zoe Lister with Capital of Culture Badged Apprentices



Images courtesy of Rossiter Media Ltd.



Apprentices in action

Local Government taking up the challenge to increase Apprenticeships

North West Employers (NWEO) is urging more local authorities to take advantage of the Apprenticeship programme and to increase the number of apprentices they employ.

The public sector accounts for around 20 per cent of the national workforce, but employs less than 10 per cent of all apprentices.

At the recent DIUS/DCSF summit on Apprenticeships within the public sector, Liz McQue, Chief Executive of the NWEO, made a presentation around the importance of apprentices to local government and the North West. The presentation highlighted some of the main reasons why local authorities should take action;

- Over 300,000 people in the North West are directly employed in local government
- 31% of the workforce are due to retire in the next 10 years
- 70% of the public sector workforce have qualifications over 10 years old
- People aged under 25 are three times more likely to be recruited by the private sector than the public sector.

Liz comments: "With many critical skills shortages and an ageing workforce, local authorities could face serious skills and recruitment difficulties in the future. Now is the time for strategic workforce planning and apprentices are essential for this.

"Apprenticeships can provide fantastic opportunities for the young people that live in our communities and for older people in the workforce who are interested in improving their skills and career changes.

"NWEO is working to dispel many of the myths surrounding Apprenticeships and their relevance to the public sector by promoting the wide range of Apprenticeships available and the advantages and opportunities that can be gained through them."

The North West has already shown its commitment to developing its workforce and 28 local authorities have signed the Skills Pledge with NWEO working to increase the recruitment of apprentices.

There are already some shining examples and progress has been

made with the Lancashire LAA (Local Area Agreement) which now has a target of recruiting an additional 480 apprentices by 2010, with Lancashire County Council's contribution being 250. Warrington Borough Council is working to match Apprenticeships to skills shortages and new roles and Merseytravel is encouraging suppliers to sign the up to the Skills Pledge.

NWEO is also working to promote local government as a career to young people, encouraging them to consider options such as Environmental Health, Occupational Therapy and Social Work. Examples of recent promotions in W2Go magazine can be found on NWEO's website and the latest edition highlights the opportunities across Greater Manchester.

www.nweo.org.uk/JobsAndCareersNorthWest/Promoting+Local+Government/

Liz concludes: "Many more organisations could be taking advantage of the benefits that Apprenticeships bring, as a way of unlocking talent within their local communities and ensuring that they have a workforce equipped with the skills it needs for today and tomorrow.

"In encouraging local authorities we need to practice what we preach and even as a small organisation we have shown our commitment and now have two apprentices who have already made an amazing difference."



Apprentices at North West Employers, Kirsten Taylor & Stuart Baguley

Academy interns are an education for everyone

LSC employees in Manchester have put their management training to the test acting as mentors for Academy of Business and Finance students. Davina Wilcock, Deborah Green and Wendy Lovatt of the Learning, Planning and Performance directorate welcomed two interns to the LSC's regional office for six weeks this summer.

The interns shadowed a local area team, spent a day with Director of Area for Greater Manchester, John Temple, and attended events on behalf of the LSC. They also worked with the Data Team; contributing to their day to day work and creating the departmental intranet pages and a new floorplan.

Since completing the internship, teachers have seen both learners gain in confidence as a result of their experiences. Jen Sutton, Regional Manager North West at the UK Career Academy Foundation also wrote to Jane Cowell, LSC Regional Director of Learning, Planning, and

Performance, to express her appreciation to the mentors and the whole team, and to highlight the positive effect that the internship had had on both young people.

The experience wasn't just an education for the interns themselves, as it gave their mentors a valuable opportunity to practise the skills they had been studying as part of their Certificate in Management. These include carrying out competency-based interviews, writing job descriptions and overseeing the interns on a day to day basis.

Jane Cowell said: "This project has been beneficial to everyone here in the directorate as well as to the interns themselves. It has really opened our eyes to the challenges and benefits for organisations that arrange internships, and I think this insight will have a positive effect on all of our work.

"Following on from this success, we are already looking at ways of offering more internships to young people next year."

Statement of Priorities

The LSC's Statement of Priorities 2009/10 was launched by John Denham, the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills; Ed Balls, the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families and Chris Banks our Chairman, at the Association of Colleges' annual conference in November.

This year, the document is in a different format as we have joined together with DIUS and DCSF to produce a document that pulls together all of the information on spending priorities that we and the sector need.

Our priorities, together with the £12.1 billion budget allocated to the LSC in this year's Grant Letter, set out the ways we intend to focus our efforts and resources for the coming year.

Space dictates that this article can only give an overview of the Statement of Priorities and Grant Letter but both can be easily accessed on the home page of our North West region website (www.lsc.gov.uk/regions/NorthWest) beneath the heading *Latest Strategies and Plans*.

Targets

In brief our targets aim to raise the educational achievement of all children and young people and narrow the gap in achievement between children from low income families and their peers. For adults, the aim is to improve the skills of the population and deliver a world-class skills base by 2020. We continue to focus on Train to Gain, Apprenticeships and work much more coherently on the integration of employment and skills.

Statement of Priorities - Some Key Aspects

We have three key priorities:

1 Meeting the needs of young people

Plans include:

- Building upon our major successes in supporting increased levels of participation in education and training by 16 –18 year olds.
- Continuing to reduce year on year the numbers of young people not in education employment or training.
- Working with both Departments to develop the Framework for Excellence.
- Reaching out to young people facing multiple disadvantages.
- Focussing on strong local 14 –19 partnerships to help young people to access a wide range of opportunities.

2 Improving adult skills

The four key pillars to support our plans :

Train to Gain –

By 2010 we will be investing £1 billion per annum in Train to Gain. Recently announced measures for small and medium sized businesses mean additional flexibility and enable

more workers to access training. For businesses of all sizes the service will increasingly be geared towards the needs of employers through targeting key qualifications in sectors.

Integrating Employment and Skills / Skills for Work

Our overall strategy is to work with Jobcentre Plus to jointly commission provision for people seeking to move into employment. We will link pre-employment training into in-work provision such as Train to Gain, supporting progression, sustainable employment and career development.

Adult Learner Responsive Provision / Developmental Learning

A new adult advancement and careers service will be introduced in 2009.

This service will provide support for the delivery of Skills Accounts which will be rolled out across England in 2010. Progression Pathways within the Foundation Learning Tier will become part of mainstream provision. Learning for its own intrinsic value is recognised and we will maintain in 2009/10 the annual budget available to support Adult Safeguarded Learning.

Apprenticeships / National Apprenticeship Service

The new National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) will operate across England from April 2009. It will be responsible for delivering the increase in participation in Apprenticeships from 250,000 to 400,000 a year, the delivery of the Leitch target of one in five young people participating in an Apprenticeship, and the entitlement for all suitably qualified young people of an Apprenticeship place.

3 Reforming the FE system

The LSC is committed to reform of the further education and training sector to raise standards and to make learning provision more responsive to the needs of individuals and employers.

To achieve this we will continue with our dynamic programme for transforming the sector, driving forward initiatives such as National Skills Academies and the Training Quality Standard; capital investment to create world class facilities; Framework for Excellence (FfE) /Quality; Vocational Qualification System Reform.

Welcoming the increased investment in learning John Korzeniewski, Regional Director North West LSC said:

"These priorities focus on the needs of learners, employers and the wider North West community – particularly at this time of economic challenge for the country. Through this focus and working ever closer with our partners we can confidently continue towards our vision that young people and adults in England have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world."

Budget Line	2008-09	2009-10
	£000's	£000's
Youth Participation		
of which for planning purposes:		
School Sixth Forms	2,085,184	2,095,837
16-19 FE	3,290,280	3,519,295
16-18 Apprenticeships	628,021	675,054
Entry to Employment	171,365	180,780
Specialist Provision for Learners with Learning Disabilities and/or Difficulties	204,311	221,311
TOTAL YOUTH PARTICIPATION (DCSF)	6,379,161	6,692,277
Adult Learner Responsive	1,735,508	1,699,888
of which for planning purposes:		
<i>Foundation Learning Tier</i>	220,652	222,481
<i>Skills for Life</i>	562,219	608,899
<i>Full Level 2</i>	237,212	259,172
<i>Full Level 3</i>	339,084	378,889
<i>Developmental Learning</i>	376,340	230,447
Employer Responsive		
Apprenticeships	328,323	366,514
Train to Gain (including FE NVQs)	797,281	925,661
Employer Responsive Sub Total	1,125,604	1,292,175
of which for planning purposes:		
<i>Foundation Learning Tier</i>	9,229	6,818
<i>Skills for Life</i>	35,410	57,688
<i>Full Level 2</i>	525,673	625,737
<i>Full Level 3</i>	119,275	161,496
<i>Apprenticeships</i>	328,323	366,514
<i>Developmental Learning</i>	19,769	14,921
Adult Safeguarded Learning	210,000	210,000
Offender Learning & Skills Service	122,203	124,770
TOTAL ADULT PARTICIPATION (DIUS)	3,193,315	3,326,833
Block A - Total Participation	9,572,476	10,019,110
Block B - Learner Support and Development		
LSC DCSF non-participation	771,030	730,429
LSC DIUS non-participation	382,424	378,372
Block B - Total Learner Support and Development	1,153,454	1,108,801
Block C - Capital Grants		
14-19 Capital Grants (DCSF)	210,000	210,000
19+ Capital Grants (DIUS)	484,400	609,800
Block C - Total Capital Grants	694,400	819,800
Block D - Administration (DIUS)	214,775	210,171
TOTAL DCSF FUNDING	7,360,191	7,632,706
TOTAL DIUS FUNDING	4,274,914	4,525,176
GRAND TOTAL	11,635,105	12,157,882
European Social Fund	240,800	250,100

8 December 2008 - Apprenticeship Vacancy Matching Service goes live

As announced by the Prime Minister in January 2008, a country wide Apprenticeship Vacancy Matching Service has been developed by the LSC and will be available to employers and providers from week commencing 8 December. The system will match employers' Apprenticeship vacancies with potential applicants. This will be an on-line service through which employers, learning providers and candidates can match applications to opportunities and access support through the recruitment process. The service will initially run in parallel with existing Apprenticeship recruitment processes but is intended to become the preferred method for candidates, employers and providers alike.

A key objective of the service, which forms part of the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), is to increase uptake and participation in Apprenticeships throughout England, with the aim of achieving 250,000 Apprenticeship starts and 190,000 framework completions by 2020.

For more information visit
www.apprenticeships.org.uk

Brighter future for Blackpool's young people

Over 100 people including young learners, stakeholders and Blackpool Council's Director for Children's and Young People's Services, have attended an event at Blackpool Pleasure Beach to mark the success of an initiative that has seen the number of young people in the town who are not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET) fall by over 10%.

The LSC identified Blackpool as a NEET 'hotspot' in early 2007. Since then a range of stakeholders including the LSC, Connexions, local colleges and training providers and Blackpool Council have worked together to create an innovative programme of support for young people who are, or are at risk of becoming, not in education, employment or training.

Initiatives include a scheme at Bispham High School offering personalised learning programmes to young people who would not normally continue on to further education or training, and another at Beneast Training to equip NEET young people with essential skills to find and secure a job. In addition Blackpool and the Fylde College has employed two Specialist Learning Mentors to work with young people who may be facing difficulties in their lives and could be at risk of leaving education.

The most innovative aspect of the initiative has been the Energiser strand of courses, giving young people a week of activities designed to boost confidence and employability skills. Organised by The Prince's Trust in partnership with Connexions, the courses use specialist mentors to help young people identify the career or training route that is right for them.

Ian Haworth, LSC Director of Area, Lancashire, said: "The excellent work that has been done in Blackpool illustrates just what working together can achieve, and how an innovative approach to training can change people's lives. Many young people in the town can now look forward to a brighter future."

Councillor Don Clapham, Blackpool Council Cabinet Member for Children's Services added: "The aim of the event was to celebrate the achievements of young people from across Blackpool who were unemployed or at risk of becoming unemployed but seized the opportunities presented to them despite the many challenges they faced. We are immensely proud of their achievements and delighted that our dedicated team of staff were able to assist via the schemes funded by the Learning and Skills Council."



Attendees celebrating at the Pleasure Beach event

Third sector embraces the Skills Pledge

Ten Cheshire third sector organisations have shown their commitment to training their staff by making the Skills Pledge. The charities and voluntary organisations all made the Pledge at an event hosted by *Learning Together Cheshire and Warrington*, a non-profit company which promotes the training and skills agenda to the third sector.

The event attracted over 100 guests. LSC Skills Development Manager Ian Ruff was among the speakers, while Liz Davis, LSC Director of Area for Cheshire and Warrington, presented pledge certificates to the organisations taking part.

She said: "The Skills Pledge is a public statement of an organisation's commitment to increasing the skills of their staff. By making the Skills Pledge, organisations of all sizes are seeing the benefits of more motivated happy staff, higher productivity and a lower staff turnover.

"It is extremely encouraging that more and more voluntary and community organisations are recognising the value of training and developing their existing workforce. I would urge all third sector organisations to contact their local Train to Gain Skills Broker to find out exactly what the Skills Pledge could mean for them."

Making the Skills Pledge were:

Learning Together Cheshire and Warrington, Furniture Finders of Winsford, Youth Federation, Barrowmore Macclesfield, Wilmslow and District Citizen's Advice Bureau, Warrington Council for Voluntary Service, Ellesmere Port and Neston AVCO, Voluntary Action Vale Royal, Y Action and Barnabas Associates.



Third sector organisations making the Skills Pledge

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Trading up

Based in Workington in West Cumbria, Past Times Trading is a warehousing operation which supplies the national chain of Past Times gift shops. The busy logistics operation manages stock levels and delivery for around 70 stores across the UK, so the role of skilled warehousing and distribution specialists in maintaining efficiency is essential.

Debbie Reynolds, Warehouse Manager at Past Times Trading, explains: "We had a real need to develop our team and increase their skills but we had to balance this need with the day-to-day demands of running the business. That meant that releasing people to spend days off site simply wasn't an option. Through Train to Gain, Lakes College West Cumbria was able to offer us an ideal solution, providing tutors to deliver the courses on site at our premises in Workington, so that our employees could learn and be assessed on the job."

"We have seen a real difference in the team as a result of the training," Debbie continues: "Staff that have been working towards the qualifications are more confident which has made them more effective in their roles, particularly when dealing with customers.

"We've also seen clear improvements in productivity, which has enabled us to reduce our costs and, obviously, that adds to the overall profitability of the business."



Past Times employees in the warehouse

Apprenticeship Awards – North West sets the pace

The North West excelled in the LSC's National Apprenticeship Awards this year, with several national winners and commendations and 20% of all entrants to the Awards making us the most successful region in the country. The 2009 National Awards will be launched in December and, as part of these, LSC North West will again be running competitions in Cheshire & Warrington, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Greater Merseyside and Lancashire. These will culminate in 'Oscar' style finals in each area in May 2009.

The winners of these area finals will feed into a North West regional final. Our North West winners will then have a chance to fly the flag for the region on a national stage as they compete for a place in the LSC's National Apprenticeship Awards Final in London.

The Apprenticeship Awards are held annually to celebrate the success of apprentices who have made a real difference to their future and to the organisation they work for. They also recognise the work of employers who are successfully tackling skills shortages to build their future workforce through Apprenticeships.

Categories in the North West Awards reflect the national competition. In addition there are two further education (FE) categories, where North West colleges will be invited to send their nominations for the FE Academic Learner of the Year and FE Vocational Learner of the Year.

When the Awards are officially launched you will be able to download entry forms at www.apprenticeships.org.uk and if you have any queries please contact joanne.miles@lsc.gov.uk. All entries must be received by Friday 27 February 2009.



Rachael Hoyle of Preston, 2008 Advanced Apprentice of the Year, being presented with her award by TV star Amanda Holden

Setting his stall out

When Martin Fisher left college he decided he wanted to move into the world of work and when a position at the Co-op in Crewe came up he seized the opportunity to apply.

Martin explains: "I started college after I left school, but quickly realised it wasn't for me. I had always worked in retail - while I was at school I worked on market stalls and when I was at college I had a part-time job at a local convenience store - so when a customer service assistant role came up at the Co-op I decided to give it a try. That was four years ago and since then I have completed my Apprenticeship, started new qualifications, and moved up the ladder to the position of Supervisor."

"I came across the idea of doing an Apprenticeship when Total People, a local training provider, came in to the Co-op to talk about the different types of training they offer." Martin continues: "I always like to be learning new things and so the idea of studying for my NVQ Level 2 in Retail Operations as part of an Apprenticeship programme sounded ideal. I'm always doing various training courses, so it made sense to add a recognised vocational qualification to my CV."

Martin concludes: "Since completing my course, I have encouraged a colleague here at the Co-op to enrol onto an Apprenticeship. It's a great way to get some qualifications under your belt, and can only help you reach your future goals."

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Martin at work in Co-op

Ringing the changes to encourage Apprenticeship training

The current telemarketing campaign by the North West Provider Network (NWPN) to encourage employers to take on apprentices has got off to a promising start. The project aims to increase awareness of Apprenticeships in the North West, and generate 1200 Apprenticeships leads, in turn generating 500 employers recruiting apprentices for the first time by the end of March 2009.

The campaign is targeting employers and businesses with 2-249 employees, and its aim is to establish if businesses need Apprenticeships or any other training. If an employer is interested, the lead will be passed on to an appropriate training provider.

Gail Power, Regional Manager for the NWPN comments: "We have had some very positive feedback already and some definite leads. The general response is encouraging and employers seem keen to be involved. In the current climate it is essential that training is not put on the back-burner, employers need to be aware and informed of what's available and this campaign is proving to be a great way of passing on this information.

"Speaking directly to different businesses in different regions and sectors provides a tailored, informative service so that employers can get the specific information they require to make an informed decision on training."

Business benefits of Apprenticeships being communicated in the campaign:

- Employers can increase their business' productivity and performance
- Employers can show their long term commitment to workforce development to their employees and customers
- Employers can train their staff to meet their business needs
- Employers can develop new employees with the skills to meet the business needs of the future
- Employers can attract young people, at a time when the number of young people available is reducing.

To find out more information about the project visit www.nwpc.co.uk



North West celebrates Colleges Week

Colleges across the North West took part in the first national Colleges Week. The week, which highlighted the role colleges play in unlocking talent in communities and transforming the lives of learners, was held 10 – 16 November.

As part of the celebrations Skills Minister Sion Simon visited South Cheshire College in Crewe where he met a group of adult access students who are returning to learning, plus apprentices from a range of sectors. He then visited Reaseheath College in Nantwich, where he toured the capital learning resource centre and food manufacturing line, and chatted with engineering students from the college's specialist workshops.

LSC Director of Area for Cheshire and Warrington, Liz Davis, accompanied Mr Simon on his visits. She said: "I am very pleased that these two colleges are playing such an important role in Colleges Week. The week is a great opportunity for colleges to promote their courses to a wider audience."

"Cheshire has more colleges with Beacon Status than anywhere else, among them South Cheshire College and Reaseheath College, so it is fitting that we welcomed the Minister to the county to celebrate Colleges Week."

Elsewhere, Bolton Community College's 'Beauty and the Brickie' challenge saw construction and beauty students swapping places, while Bury College had a visit from MP for Bury North, David Chaytor. Wirral Metropolitan College, Blackpool and The Fylde College and Wigan and Leigh College were among the other North West colleges that helped to make the inaugural Colleges Week a big success.



'Beauty and the Brickie' challenge at Bolton Community College

New 14 -19 IAG standards toolkit

Partners in the region have launched a new toolkit on implementing the new Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) standards for 14 -19 year olds.

The toolkit was launched at a stakeholder event at Wigan's JJB Stadium. The event included five workshops, including Workforce Development, Auditing the National Quality Standards, and IAG Peer Monitoring and Coaching. Attendees came from across the North West and included representatives from Connexions and local authorities as well as the LSC.

The toolkit was initiated by the NW 14 -19 Strategy Group which is chaired by the LSC, working jointly with Government Office for the North West. The funding for the work was provided by the LSC.

Jane Cowell, LSC Regional Director of Learning, Planning, and Performance in the North West, said: "The 14 -19 training and education landscape is changing rapidly and young people are now faced with more choices than ever before. They need to understand the full range of options on offer, and what these opportunities could mean to them.

"This increased choice heightens the need for effective and impartial information, advice and guidance services. Young

people traditionally go to a variety of sources for advice, and this toolkit will ensure that everyone involved in implementing the new IAG standards is supported to deliver a high quality service to young people."

The toolkit and further information regarding IAG standards can be found at www.cegnet.co.uk



Kieran Gordon, Chief Executive Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership, Jayne Wylde GONW and Dr Kevin Mothersdale LSC Partnership Director and Regional 14 -19 Director

Salford's colleges to join forces

Plans have been approved to merge Salford's three colleges. In January 2009 Eccles, Pendleton and Salford colleges will become Salford City College.

Under the proposals the new college will continue to offer a wide range of provision throughout the city, with plans to increase access by adding new centres. There are no plans to close any of the existing sites.

Principal Designate of the new college, Peter Crompton, said: "This is great news for Salford. By combining the traditions and expertise of three successful colleges, we will be able to build on existing strengths and expand into many new areas – particularly in adult education and skills training. The new college will definitely be greater than the sum of its parts".

Retiring Principals Stuart Wattam of Eccles College and Tony Craven of Salford College agreed that a bright future for the new college was assured. The proposal has also been supported by Salford City Council. Jane Bracewell, LSC Director of Area for Greater Manchester South said: "The LSC's job is to make England better

skilled and more competitive. I have seen the positive effects that improved access to training and education can have on individuals and on local communities and the economy, and that's why I am very pleased that the merger of Eccles College, Pendleton College and Salford College is going ahead.

"Salford has enjoyed major economic improvement in recent years, but it still suffers from inherited disadvantages. It is extremely important, therefore, to work together to grow further education provision in the city; increasing the number of young people in education or training, and enabling more adults to gain Level 2 qualifications.

"Salford City College will give the local community access to greater vocational opportunities, along with industry-standard training and facilities. It will offer excellence in education and training that is tailored to the specific needs of this community, delivering a brighter future for Salford's 14 -19 year olds and adult learners. This is good news for the city's businesses and employers, and will have a transformational effect on the city as a whole."



Principal Designate of Salford City College, Peter Crompton

An autumn review for the North West Mental Health & Learning Network

The North West Mental Health & Learning Network exists to provide an opportunity for practitioners from different organisations and sectors to learn from each other and share ideas and good practice in a supportive and proactive environment.

The Network recently held its Autumn meeting, where Kathryn James, Development Officer at the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), was the main speaker. Kathryn gave an overview of the LSC's refreshed National Mental

Health Strategy, and invited members to respond to the consultation document about the strategy. The consultation is open until 19 December 2008.

Members of the Network include learners and professionals from the further education and third sectors, and the Network is particularly keen on encouraging members from work based learning providers.

Run by the NIACE/LSC/NIMHE Partnership Programme, led by Clare Worrall for the North West, the network welcomes anyone with an interest in improving learning services for people with mental health difficulties.

Network meetings take place on a quarterly basis in different venues around the region. The next meeting is scheduled for 14 January 2009. If you would like further information about the Partnership Programme or would like to join the Network please visit www.niace.org.uk/mentalhealth or contact Clare Worrall on clare.worrall@niace.org.uk

To view the LSC refreshed National Mental Health Strategy consultation document and see details of how to respond please visit <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nationalhealthstrategy-ps-29sept08-v1-0.pdf>

Latest addition to National Skills Academy network is launched

November saw the launch of the National Skills Academy for Sport and Active Leisure and the announcement that the North West regional hub is based at Penrith*, Cumbria.

The academy is one of a network of 16 national skills academies covering a wide range of industry sectors. It will have a strong presence throughout the country and nine regional hubs operational by 2010.

The vision of the National Skills Academy for Sport and Active Leisure is to deliver a single coherent approach to the very best skills training within the sector which will solve the acute demand for better skills. Currently a fifth of the sector's 36,500 organisations report skills gaps, 79% of the industry lack good customer service skills and 64% of industry managers need better management and leadership skills.

The academy will also play a key role in getting 50% of the UK population active and healthy by 2020, and improve the performance of the UK leisure sector by training 85,000 people per year.



From left to right: Andy Worthington - Chair of NW Regional Sports Board; Jon Owen - NW Regional Director, NSA; Mark Lavington, PGL (one of the largest employers in the Outdoors); Lucy Harrison, NW Regional Business Development Manager, NSA; Allan Pilkington, Chair of SALSIPA (Sport and Active Leisure Skill and Productivity Alliance NW); Dave Robinson, Coaching NW; Graham Bayliss, Leisure Services Director, Sefton Council.

Lord Young, Minister for Skills and Apprenticeships and Gerry Sutcliffe, Minister for Sport, officially launched the academy at Lord's Cricket Ground.

Speaking at the event Lord Young said: "I am delighted that employers in the sport and active leisure sector have seized upon the National Skills Academy initiative. The employers investing in this partnership will reap the dividends of high quality tailored training and safeguard future growth in their industry. Today's launch is great news for the future of the nation's health and will work to directly deliver skilled workers for London 2012 and beyond."

For more information see: www.nationalskillsacademy.co.uk

* The North West hub is located on the University of Cumbria's Penrith campus.

Competence to Excellence success to continue into 2009

Following the completion of the first phase of the 'From Competence to Excellence' project, designed to support the LSC's World Skills vision, phase two of the project has now been confirmed.

The intention will be to build upon all the good work from phase one that raised awareness of vocational skills and highlighted the difference between competence and excellence.

As in phase one, expert classes are planned to run during the Spring term of next year with the aim of aligning the experience against the expectations of the regional and national skills competitions. This will provide a taster and a stepping stone for learners wishing to enter competitions at this level.

Tutor briefing workshops have been running throughout November with the objective of providing a background into World Skills and competitions at regional and national level,

outlining the expectations and scope of the expert classes and providing examples of good practice.

There will also be an opportunity for learners looking to enter skills competitions to attend a 'Skills Steps' workshop, led by experienced World Skills practitioners, that will provide support for the preparation for competitions.

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



Students from Blackpool and The Fylde College honing their motorsports skills at Donnington, in an expert class during phase one of the 'Competence to Excellence' project

Events calendar

Chemical Elements: Succession Planning 15 January 2009

Event Description: A Chemicals Northwest event featuring the National Skills Academy for Process Industries and their latest schemes for employers.
Aimed at: Those responsible for or with an interest in HR and training in process industries.
Venue: Tickled Trout, Preston
Contact: helen.cross@chemicalsnorthwest.org.uk

ESP NW Provider Network Event 27 January 2009

Event Description: To support providers delivering the Employability Skills Programme (ESP) to Jobcentre Plus clients. To share good practice and to encourage innovation, engagement and achievement.
Aimed at: ESP providers across the NW, may include sub-contracting providers.
Venue: Haydock Thistle Hotel
Contact: Pauline.Heron@lsc.gov.uk

Skills North West 3-5 February 2009

Event Description: The North West's largest interactive skills, careers and training event.
Aimed at: All 14-19 year olds.
Venue: Bolton Arena
Contact: joanne.miles@lsc.gov.uk

Embedding Skills for Life into Programme Delivery

Cheshire and Warrington Event - De Vere, Daresbury Park 6 February 2009
 Cumbria Event - Castle Green Hotel, Kendal 20 February 2009
 Lancashire Event - The Leyland Hotel, Lancashire 27 February 2009
 Greater Merseyside Event - The Crowne Plaza Hotel, Liverpool 6 March 2009
 Greater Manchester Event - Premier Inn, Old Trafford 13 March 2009
Event Description: To support practitioners to deliver Skills for Life using embedding approaches.
Aimed at: OLASS, ESP and IES providers.
Contact: Pauline.Heron@lsc.gov.uk

Employer Engagement Activity for IES Providers 18 February 2009

Event Description: To identify best practice in developing cohesive "joined up" marketing of the economically inactive to employers in an economic downturn.
Aimed at: IES providers
Venue: Lancashire County Cricket Club
Contact: Pauline.Heron@lsc.gov.uk

Apprenticeship Week 23-27 February 2009

Event Description: A week of events and marketing activity to highlight the benefits and success of Apprenticeships.
Aimed at: Employers, young people and their parents/guardians/advisers.
Venue: Country wide

QIA/ SFLIP Numeracy Regional Event Day 1 – 12 March 2009 (Pedagogy for Teachers, Managers, Mentors and Subject Learning Coaches) Day 2 - 2 April 2009

Event Description: Improving teaching and support.
Aimed at: Teachers, Managers, Mentors and Subject Learning Coaches.
Venue: Provisional - Leyland Hotel (TBC)
Contact: Pauline.Heron@lsc.gov.uk

UK Nuclear Skills Awards 2009 12 March 2009

Event Description: A joint National Skills Academy for Nuclear and Cogent Sector Skills Council informal evening to celebrate success in workforce development in the nuclear industry.
Aimed at: Employers and stakeholders across the Nuclear Industry.
Venue: Palace Hotel Manchester
Contact: J.Maykels@nuclear.nacademy.co.uk

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