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The newsletter for stakeholders
of the LSC in the North West

summer 09

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Welcome

Welcome to the Summer 2009 edition of LSC North West's stakeholder newsletter. The pace of change in the further education sector continues, exemplified by the fact that in the time between the last issue and this one the LSC now reports to a brand new Government department.

The Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS) was created on 5 June by the merger of BERR and DIUS. Its key role is to build Britain's capabilities to compete in the global economy, bringing together the parts of Government with the key expertise needed to do this. Clearly the learning and skills sector will have a key role within this - a high quality and responsive sector is essential to achieve the ambitions of strengthening UK economic performance and transforming the life chances of millions of people.

Of course the learning and skills sector is itself undergoing significant change, and the Machinery of Government transitions are now well advanced. More details about this can be found on page four. Key to success is ensuring that we maintain the stability of the system for learners, providers and employers. We also need to make the best use of existing LSC expertise, so that the sector can continue to deliver and improve services and outcomes for our learners and employers.

I am delighted that so many of those learners and employers have come to the fore recently with the running of our five sub-regional North West Learner Award ceremonies. The region wide winners then took part in an activity skills day on 3 July, with the winners of the Apprenticeship categories attending the National Apprenticeship Awards in London on 16 July. My best wishes go to them and to all who entered the awards – and my thanks go to their families, training providers, employers and all who have supported them in their endeavours.

I will end this introduction where I began – with reference to the changes taking place in our sector. Together with the pressures resulting from the economic downturn it is now more important than ever that we all work together to keep moving forward and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the sector. Our combined efforts are achieving great things and I thank you all for your hard work and support as we continue to make a real difference for so many people, communities and businesses in the region.



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Cover image: Centre stage for Lancashire's nominees at the North West Learner Awards

ESF investing in the North West



Between 2000 and 2007, the European Social Fund (ESF) helped over four million people in England and had a major impact on employment prospects in the North West.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Cheshire's young people are 'Streets Ahead'

'Streets Ahead' is a project aimed at young people aged 14-16 from schools in Chester, rural Cheshire, Ellesmere Port and Neston who are at risk of becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). Funded by the LSC as part of its 2007-10 European Social Fund (ESF) Co-finance Plan, the project runs throughout the academic year to support the learners and ensure they remain in education.

The contract is delivered by YMCA Training and Building Young People's Potential (BYPP), providing activities and programmes to raise skill levels and prepare each learner for a successful, healthy and fulfilling adult life.

One of the project's participants experienced difficulties at school and was at risk of being permanently excluded. She had a low attendance record and struggled to interact positively with peers and teachers. Since joining the project, she has achieved 100% attendance and has dramatically changed as a person. Her confidence has increased and she has completed Practical Work Skills qualifications and is currently working towards her ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) bronze qualification. With the help of her tutors and peers the participant is now in the position to continue with education at college and has a bright future ahead of her.

Following on from this success, the European Union launched a new ESF programme, which will run until 2013. This new programme is investing £4.6 billion across the country, with the LSC in the North West securing £185million of ESF funding for 2007-2010, which is matched with an equivalent amount of LSC funding. This overall package of £370million is being used to:

- Up-skill unemployed people so they can secure sustainable employment
- Support young people who are not currently in employment, education or training
- Support employers to up-skill their workforce.

In the North West, the LSC has contracted over 130 colleges and training providers to deliver projects out of this funding to achieve these objectives.

Advocating success through learning

The Johnston Partnership, based in Windemere in Cumbria, is putting the £225,000 it secured from the LSC North West's European Social Fund (ESF) 2007-10 Co-finance Plan to good use, delivering the Learning Advocates Initiative across the region.

The initiative enables non-unionised companies to nominate members of staff to be trained as either Learning Advocates or Learning Supporters.

The trained members of staff can source training, some of which may be free or subsidised, for their colleagues while receiving on-going support and up-to-date information on training opportunities.

Liz Johnston, partner of The Johnston Partnership said: "The funding that we have received will benefit many companies and employees across the North West. Having an in-house learning expert is a real boost to companies and particularly helps employees who want to improve their maths and English or gain their first vocational qualification."

Liz added: "We are building a network of advocates and supporters in all of the sub-regions of the North West. We've currently got around 60 advocates and over 30 supporters now promoting learning in their companies. The fact that we offer employers the choice of a four day course to train an advocate or a two hour online course to train a supporter means that most companies, regardless of their capacity issues, can release a member of staff.

"This network will grow during 2009/10 to reach 100 advocates and 50 supporters and we are looking for companies from the Manchester and Merseyside areas to get involved in the coming months. This level of activity will have a significant impact on learning awareness in non-unionised companies in the North West."

John Korzeniewski, LSC Regional Director North West said: "It is great to see schemes like the Learning Advocates Initiative in action and the positive results that are being achieved are exactly why ESF investment exists."

For more information visit www.learningadvocates.co.uk



Liz and Graham Johnston of The Johnston Partnership

Machinery of Government changes well advanced

The LSC is now well advanced in the transition required by the Machinery of Government changes announced in the white paper *Raising Expectations: enabling the system to deliver in March 2008*. As a brief reminder these changes entail:

- Transferring the LSC's 14-19 funding to local authorities to help colleges and sixth forms deliver the reforms needed to raise the education and training leaving age to 18 by 2013. A new national Non Departmental Public Body, the **Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA)** will support local authorities in their new role in commissioning and funding 14-19 provision.
- Directing the LSC's adult skills funding through a new organisation, the **Skills Funding Agency (SFA)**, to provide training and skills for adults, further transforming the system to be even more responsive and demand-led. This Agency will also house the National Apprenticeship Service, the National Employer Service, and the Adult Careers and Advancement Agency.

The YPLA, SFA and local authorities will formally take over their new responsibilities in April 2010, at which point the LSC will cease to exist.

The LSC has been working hard with Government and our partners on plans to ensure the transition is as smooth and successful as possible. A key success factor will be to retain the unique knowledge and expertise built up in LSC staff over the years. This will help to ensure a seamless transition and maintain the continued availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. It will also help maintain the drive towards the reforms to the further education system that the LSC has initiated.

This is a massive undertaking which includes transferring LSC staff into over 150 local authorities, creating the YPLA and SFA and transferring staff into them.

Aligning the processes and cultures of a number of large organisations requires real energy, thought and goodwill, but great progress has been made – one milestone was the April launch of the National Apprenticeship Service, which will form part of the SFA – but a huge amount of work has also been going on behind the scenes.

- The functions and work processes within the LSC have been mapped and described to enable them to be allocated to the new organisational structure. A set of role descriptions is being used to identify those staff matching the functions, and a process has been developed to enable the transfer of those staff to the successor bodies.

- The LSC, local authorities and the other 'shadow' successor bodies are working to determine, in consultation with the staff concerned, how those transferring can best be integrated into existing teams and new bodies to discharge the new functions effectively.
- LSC staff are already working with local authorities as part of the arrangements for transition, and will soon begin 'shadow' arrangements, working closely alongside local authority staff on their planning and commissioning functions for 2010/11, before responsibility and staff are formally transferred. The 'shadow' period will begin at the start of the 2009–10 academic year and will end when responsibility is transferred to the successor bodies in April 2010.

At the same time the LSC's normal business processes need to continue and it is important that throughout the transition from the LSC to the new organisations that we maintain clear accountability for management of the LSC and its work. The overriding aim of the transition is to ensure that we maintain the stability of the system for learners, providers and employers and to ensure we make the best use of existing LSC expertise, so that we can all continue to deliver and improve services and outcomes for our customers.

In the North West a number of senior appointments into the new structure have now been made.

- YPLA Director of Implementation, North West
Jane Cowell
- Government Office - Young People's Policy and Performance Director, North West
John Rawsthorne
- SFA Senior Account Director, North West - Liverpool
Liz Davis
- SFA Senior Account Director, North West - Manchester
Ian Haworth
- SFA Senior Account Director, North West - Manchester
Jane Bracewell
- SFA Portfolio Provider Accounts Management Director, North
Paul Holme
- SFA Portfolio Finance Director, North
Chris Griffin

In the period from now until September, John Korzeniewski will act as Director of Strategy and Implementation in the YPLA, after which John will act as strategic support to the new YPLA top team during the transition year.

We are now working on the remaining role structures in the North West and will continue to update stakeholders as this progresses.

Introducing Geoff Russell

As I am sure many of you are aware, I came into the LSC three months ago at an interesting time for the organisation, the sector and the economy in general. I can assure you, that although things are starting to settle down, the job is still one of the most challenging I have ever undertaken.

The main reason I chose to accept the role and the reason I was asked are slightly different. I was seen as a suitable candidate due to the experience I have from 25 years at KPMG and the management and financial expertise that brings, as well as my knowledge of the public sector culture and finance from working at the Treasury for two years. This was seen as beneficial for the LSC as the economic environment we as a country find ourselves in means that the growth of public investment is slowing, but also the demand for education and skills is increasing.

My own perspective was that my work in the Treasury made me passionate about the work of the public sector and I thought the idea of being involved in an organisation that plays such a crucial role in the nation was compelling. I also recognised that there are challenges ahead and that the biggest management challenge is the transition into the new structure next year.

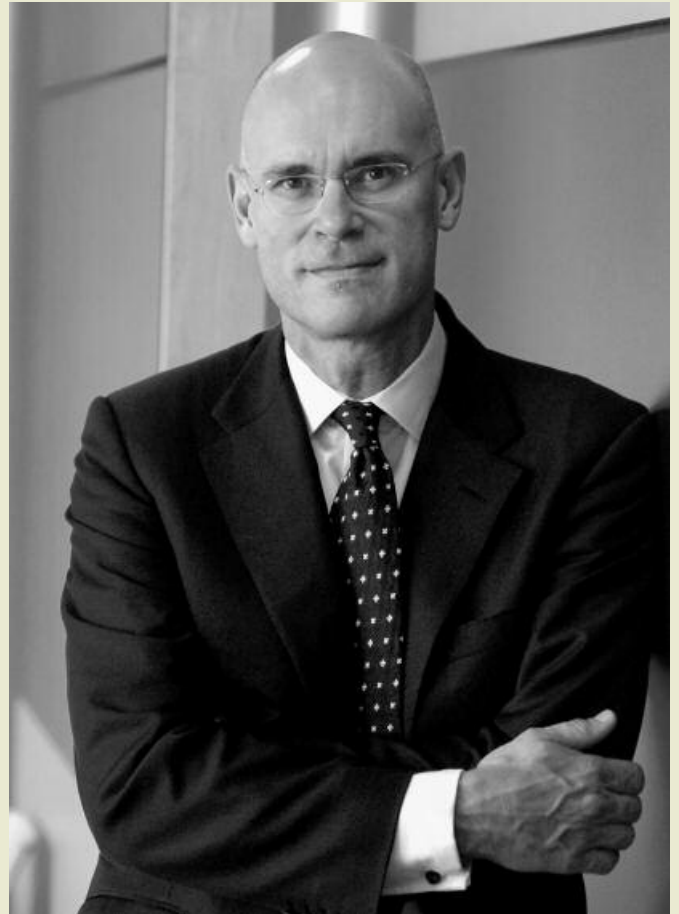
After I joined, I was soon overwhelmed by the achievements of colleges and providers all around the country. For example, learners and employers from across the North West are celebrating after being named winners in the North West Learner Awards 2009, while five of the 24 finalists in the National Apprenticeship Awards are from the North West, the highest showing of any region.

These achievements are something we should all be proud of. The common goal is to make sure that the interests of the learner are at the heart of everything we do. It is also about ensuring that businesses are equipped to deal with the challenging times we find ourselves in.

I have been impressed with LSC staff who remain committed and dedicated in these challenging times. The LSC continues to work hard to provide resources, services and programmes, but it is through the dedication and hard work of our colleges and training providers that there is such high quality provision in the region. We greatly appreciate the work of all our providers; the region's success is down to them, and it is also testament to the powers of collaboration to meet the needs of our learners.

The LSC is committed to making this period as smooth as possible. We are working towards being in shadow structures before September. This will give us an opportunity to get our minds set into our new roles and will ensure everyone is energised to work towards the future. It will also allow our business partners and stakeholders to engage with us and understand how we will work going forward.

The transition period the LSC is entering will bring its own challenges. The changes are positive ones, which will continue to place the learner at the heart of what we do. Most importantly, as an organisation, we need to ensure that our stakeholders and our learners continue to receive the right advice, the right training and continuous leadership to ensure our workforce is ambitious, skilled and equipped to take advantage of the upturn when it comes.



Geoff Russell, LSC Chief Executive

Adult Learners' Week 2009

The region's colleges and training providers really got behind this year's Adult Learners' Week, ensuring that the UK's largest festival of learning was once again a great success.

Adult learners from throughout the North West took part in a wide range of activities organised by colleges and training providers, proving that it's never too late to learn!

Here is a selection of just some of the events and activities that took place right here in our region throughout the week.

Nelson and Colne College held a celebratory Adult Awards Evening, with over 100 guests in attendance to recognise the outstanding achievements of its students.

Adult learners from **Ashton Sixth Form College** were joined by Tameside dignitaries to celebrate their successes.

Bolton Community College took to the streets of Bolton to kick start Adult Learners' Week, where adult learning providers from Bolton took part in the 'Adult Learners' Week Awareness Event' to highlight opportunities for adult learners. Visitors attended practical workshops, and talked to trained careers advisors and representatives from the College. As part of the event's 'Dance Off' theme, visitors enjoyed performances from local dance groups - who performed everything from belly dancing to folk dancing.

Blackburn based **Training 2000** held Open Days, at which the training provider was able to engage with adults thinking about returning to learning, providing them with a taste of what's available through free workshops, covering topics including English, maths and IT.

Wirral Metropolitan College had a busy Adult Learners' Week, with student advisers greeting shoppers at The Pyramids shopping centre in Birkenhead. The advisers gave out information about the wide range of courses available at the College and the many learning opportunities available.

Carlisle College took learning out into the community, attending five events throughout the week. These sessions enabled adults from the city to take part in 'taster' activities including fitness tests, hair styling and electronic fault testing on a car engine.

Cheadle and Marple Sixth Form College gave adults the opportunity to try their hand at sign language, guitar playing, yoga and creative writing, whilst others opted to browse round displays including fashion and embroidery and demonstrations on hanging baskets, flower arranging and willow weaving. Art tutor Charles Hickson was soon surrounded as his quick portraits provided a highlight of the day and others enjoyed tasting a section of foods from various countries whilst finding out about the language courses on offer.



Dignitaries and students at Ashton Sixth Form College



Toqeer Nazir getting to grips with IT at Training 2000



Wirral Metropolitan College - Student Advisers at the Pyramids Shopping Centre



Carlisle College helping the city's adults get fit for learning



Cheadle and Marple Sixth Form gets crafty

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Preston's Ruksana looks forward to new career



Ruksana Bodiwala from Fishwick, Preston, is looking forward to a new future as a midwife, thanks to financial support from an Adult Learning Grant (ALG). Mother of three Ruksana returned to the classroom aged 36 to study a Level 3 Access Diploma in Nursery, Midwifery and Health.

Ruksana originally enrolled at college to study for A Levels when she was a young mother, but struggled to motivate herself on the courses and left with poor grades. She worked as an auxiliary nurse at the Royal Preston Hospital before marrying and moving to London with her husband and young children, where she worked as a manager at a job centre in London before returning to Preston and getting a job in social security.

Now Ruksana is hoping to set a good example to her 14, 11 and 6-year old sons by applying to study midwifery at the University of Central Lancashire, a decision prompted by her own experience of miscarriage and stillbirth.

She said: "I went back to college to build a better life for myself and my children. Getting £30 every week from an Adult Learning Grant really helped us out money-wise. If any other women were thinking about returning to college I would tell them to go for it! See if you are eligible for an ALG. At the end of the day, you are bettering your own life and no-one will ever be able to take those qualifications away from you."



Making learning child's play, adult learner Ruksana Bodiwala

Nelson's Harun looks to the future

Fifty three year old Harun Juma was the subject of a story in the Lancashire Telegraph during Adult Learners' Week, where he encouraged other learners to follow in his footsteps.

Harun came to the UK in 1972, and quickly found a job as a machine operator. Over the years he raised a family and built a comfortable life for them in Lancashire. But, after 35 years working for the same company, late last year Harun was made redundant.

Like many other people facing redundancy, Harun had developed valuable skills during his career, but he realised that these may not be enough to help him find a new job. When he found himself struggling to fill in job application forms he decided to get the training he needed to improve his chances.

Harun explains: "After working with machinery for many years, it was a challenge when presented with application forms which required the reading and writing skills that I did not have. I heard that the Employability Skills training programme was being held by Training 2000, so decided that the course was definitely the way forward for me.

"The course has helped me with my reading and writing and I am now more confident with the job application process and filling out the forms. The course has inspired me to train further and gain more qualifications to help me secure success in the future."

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

CXL makes training a priority

CXL is a dynamic social business that provides high quality information, advice and guidance to help individuals move forward in work and life and to support employers in developing their staff.

Recognising that their own people are key to their continued success, CXL has designed and implemented a training development programme for all employees to provide opportunities and raise skills across the company.

CXL's Strategic Business Development Manager, Julie Gelder explains: "We knew that to maintain our high standards and ongoing success we needed to keep our staff up-to-date with relevant training, so last year we decided to make the LSC Skills Pledge to publically confirm our commitment to training our employees."

Julie concludes: "I would definitely recommend that other employers make the Skills Pledge. It's streamlined all our training needs so we have a focused plan, with all of our development needs now under one umbrella."



CXL employees at a team training session

Celebrating two years of the Skills Pledge



June 2009 saw the second anniversary of the introduction of the Skills Pledge. Nationally over 16,000 employers have made the Pledge to develop the skills of their staff, representing 6.3 million employees.

Here in the North West employers have shown great enthusiasm for the Skills Pledge, and real recognition of the benefits that the Skills Pledge can make to a business. Nearly 3,000 North West employers have made the Skills Pledge, covering over half a million employees.

LSC Regional Director North West John Korzeniewski said: "We have seen significant changes in the economic landscape since we launched the Skills Pledge two years ago, and these changes have brought new challenges for many employers. Yet fundamentally businesses still have the same needs; to ensure that they are best equipped to compete effectively in whatever conditions they find themselves in.

"This means that they have to get the best out of their employees, by making sure they have the skills and the enthusiasm to do their jobs to the best of their abilities. The Skills Pledge helps employers to deliver this, and because it is a public statement it gives them the opportunity to make a lasting record of the way in which they value their staff."

In Greater Manchester representatives from local authorities and other public sector employers gathered at the Lowry Centre in Salford to celebrate two years of the Pledge. The event also marked the launch of the new Skills Award, which will enable local authorities to benchmark themselves.

Liverpool Community College and Liverpool Social Care Partnership together hosted a Skills Pledge morning on Tuesday 16 June, where they highlighted the benefits of the Skills Pledge to employers from across Merseyside.

The Reebok Stadium in Bolton was the venue on 30 June when NHS North West and Skills for Health held an event aimed at encouraging NHS trusts to make the Pledge on behalf of their staff.

Skills Pledge - the benefits

- The Skills Pledge is a public demonstration of an organisation's commitment to valuing employees
- Employers see the Skills Pledge as a valuable way to increase productivity, retain and develop their staff and enhance their reputation
- By developing tailored action plans, the Skills Pledge enables organisations to take control of training and focus on the skills that they need to succeed
- The Skills Pledge enables organisations to drive forward one comprehensive, strategic training programme for the entire workforce, resulting in cost and time efficiencies
- By making the Skills Pledge, employers are driving a culture change in the workplace, which improves morale and provides staff with the opportunity to improve their wider careers and life prospects.

For more information visit

<http://inourhands.lsc.gov.uk/employers-pledge.html>

Looking ahead – young people and mental health

'A Whole Life Ahead', the LSC-funded conference on young people and mental health in the North West, took place at the Best Western Premier Leyland Hotel on 9 July.

The conference attracted learners, training providers, local authority and LSC staff. It was designed to promote good practice in mental health support for young people in further education, and as a launch pad for new regional and national initiatives both within the LSC and as part of the NIACE/LSC Partnership Programme.

The LSC is committed to working with partners to meet the educational and training needs of young people facing mental health difficulties, and our involvement in this event reflects the high priority that we give to this work on both a national and regional level.

The LSC Mental Health Strategy – The Way Forward (2009) recognises that "Adolescence and early adulthood can be a vulnerable time for the onset of mental health difficulties. The transition to adulthood and stressful events... can trigger mental health problems." The Strategy promotes the need for staff development, effective partnership working and effective resources to provide the necessary support to these learners.

Kewal Dass, Learning and Quality Director, LSC North West, chaired the event. He said: "The experiences people undergo as adolescents and young adults can have a profound effect on the rest of their lives. By working together and sharing best practice we can ensure that young people who experience mental health difficulties get the support and advice they need to continue with their education or training."

One of the highlights of the day was the launch of the North West pilot of Back on Track 2: Linking Early Intervention in Psychosis Teams with Further Education by LSC North West Mental Health lead Clare Worrall. The project supports young people involved with Early Intervention in Psychosis services to re-engage with, achieve in, and progress on from education and training.

The conference also featured four 'Knowledge Cafes' which gave delegates more in-depth information about key areas of interest. Clare presented the key findings from the North West Further Education Project: The Mental Health & Wellbeing of Learners Ages 14-19, while LSC North West Skills Development Manager Sheila Adams spoke about the LSC Care Leavers Guides for professionals working with young people leaving care.

Honour for Reaseheath Principal

Reaseheath College Principal Meredydd David has been awarded an OBE in the 2009 Queen's Birthday Honours.

The award recognises his outstanding services to local and national further education.

On hearing the announcement, Meredydd said:

"I was very honoured, humbled and surprised. But I was thrilled as well because this is recognition of the wonderful achievements that Reaseheath College has made both locally and nationally. It has been achieved by all our staff due to their dedication and professionalism."

Meredydd became Principal of the Nantwich, Cheshire, college in 2004. Since then student numbers and income have doubled and the college has gained recognition as one of the premier land-based colleges in Britain.



Meredydd David OBE

Awards recognise the North West's top achievers

Apprenticeships

Learners and employers from across the North West are celebrating after being named winners in the North West Learner Awards 2009. The awards recognise the achievements of individuals in five categories, as well as businesses which employ apprentices.

The awards season in the North West began with ceremonies in Cheshire and Warrington, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Greater Merseyside and Cumbria.

The winners of these heats then went on to the regional final. In Cumbria the awards formed part of the Excellence in Cumbria Awards, and were presented by Richard Farleigh of Dragon's Den fame. In the other areas former Blue Peter presenter Konnie Huq hosted the ceremonies on behalf of the LSC.

The North West winners took part in an activity skills day on 3 July, while the winners of the Apprenticeship categories also attend the National Apprenticeship Awards in London on 16 July.



Richard Farleigh (centre) congratulates Cumbria's nominees



Konnie Huq (left) with some of the Cheshire and Warrington winners

North West leads nominations for National Apprenticeship Awards

It looks like being another good year for the North West at the National Apprenticeship Awards, with five of the 24 finalists from the region. Now they are all hoping to follow in the footsteps of Rachael Hoyle, who after winning the Advanced Apprentice award in 2008, went on to speak at the National Apprenticeship Service's Parliamentary Launch in May 2009.

This year's finalists from the North West are:

Jignesh Madhavji – Apprentice of the Year

Jignesh works at Chet's Barbers in Bolton and trains at Bolton Community College. He specialises in 'imaging' – shaving patterns into hair – and his clients come from as far afield as London.

Jignesh has appeared on the BBC's *Celebrity Scissorhands*, and contributed to the *Hairdressing/Barbering Level 2 and Level 3* text book. He has also been placed second in the Hairdressing Federation Competition, third in the region in the UK Skills Challenge, and has raised thousands of pounds for charity.



Apprentice of the Year regional winner and national finalist, Jignesh Madhavji

Greenfields Kennels and Cattery – Small Employer

In the six years since they bought the Wirral kennels and cattery John and Gaynor McNally have transformed what was a run-down and underperforming concern into a successful business – thanks to their belief in Apprenticeships.

Greenfields apprentices attend Reaseheath College one day a week where they work towards NVQ Level 2 in Animal Care. John and Gaynor also ensure the apprentices have all the support and guidance they need, and their hard work has resulted in a significant expansion of the business, and positive customer feedback about the standard of the staff.

Rosy Apple Childcare Ltd – Medium Employer

Preston's Rosy Apple Childcare is committed to staff training and development, and has picked up awards for its employee development. The company, whose training provider is Preston College, enjoys an extremely low staff turnover which has enabled it to expand rapidly since its foundation five years ago.

Many of the business' managers started their careers as apprentices. Among them is a former homeless teenage mother who is now a member of Rosy Apple Childcare's senior management team.

Bentley Motors Ltd – Large Employer

Recruiting apprentices gives Bentley Motors in Cheshire access to the skills they need in critical areas of the business. The company's commitment to Apprenticeships is reflected by its retention of a board-level Apprentice Ambassador.

As well as training with Total People Ltd and developing their skills around the business all Bentley's apprentices undertake charity work, which helps build the business' ties with the local community.

Sellafield Ltd – Macro Employer

Sellafield Ltd has 200 apprentices within its workforce of 5,000, and a history of employing apprentices that goes back over six decades. In the last academic year, 98% of Sellafield apprentices successfully completed their training and went on to permanent jobs within the company.

Sellafield apprentices train at GEN II. The company also works closely with the National Skills Academy for Nuclear and is a founder member of Energen, the new nuclear training facility in West Cumbria, as well as having strong links with schools across Cumbria.

North West Learner Awards Regional Winners

Young Apprentice

Sophie Martin, St. Benedict's Catholic High School and Lakes College West Cumbria

Apprentice

Jignesh Madhavji, Bolton Community College

Advanced Apprentice

Nathan Michael Wilson, South Cheshire College

Micro Employer

Andy Williams Plasterers Ltd

Small Employer

Greenfields Kennels and Cattery

Medium Employer

Rosy Apple Childcare Ltd

Large Employer

Bentley Motors Ltd

Macro Employer

Sellafield Ltd

Further Education Academic

Joseph Maguire, West Cheshire College

Further Academic Vocational

Kelly Aspinall, Wirral Metropolitan College

VQ Day

Celebrating Vocational Achievement

dents each year gaining vocational qualifications, such as BTECs, City & Guilds and Apprenticeships, at colleges all over the country."

Celebrity chef James Martin also showed his support for vocational qualifications, saying: "At long last, vocational learners are getting the opportunity to stand up and say that they're proud of their achievements. For far too long, vocational qualifications have been seen as the poor relation to their academic counterparts, and I'm glad to be part of the move to change this."

The second annual VQ Day took place on 24 June, celebrating the importance of vocational qualifications as a route to career success.

This year's event was launched at a House of Commons reception on 4 March, where Blackpool South MP Gordon Marsden was among the speakers.

LSC Chair Chris Banks said: "VQ Day is a great way of recognising the achievements of the millions of stu-

North West colleges get into the mood for VQ Day

Colleges and training providers from across the region held special events to mark VQ Day. Here's a selection of what some of them got up to:

Wirral Metropolitan College, Greater Merseyside really made sure that their community knew about their students' successes, by publishing a special wrap-around feature in the local paper which was delivered to 135,000 homes. They also invited prospective students to a Fun and Food Day with paintballing provided by the army, a barbeque, quizzes and demonstrations.

Preston College, Lancashire held an awards ceremony for 30 exceptional students, followed by a showcase event with demonstrations.

Lakes College, West Cumbria marked VQ Day with their own VQ Awards.

Other colleges marking VQ Day with events included Blackburn College, Wigan and Leigh College, and Bolton Community College.

North West VQ Heroes

Learner of the Year – Allen Mills, VT Group's training business, NVQ Level 3 Hospitality Supervision

Allen returned to learning after 22 years in the army, and despite feeling that he was too old to retrain.

He started working at Fulwood Barracks in 2006 as an Officer's Mess Steward and was soon promoted to Mess Supervisor. After undertaking an NVQ Level 3 Hospitality Supervision programme he was then promoted again to become Mess Manager.

Allen says that his training has given him new confidence, and he has since embarked on more courses.

Young Learner of the Year – Lucia Castro, Loreto College, GNVQ Intermediate Health and Social Care and BTEC National Diploma Health and Social Care

Manchester University midwifery student Lucia has an impressive track record in vocational study, combined with experience working with people with drug and alcohol dependency. She gained distinctions in her GNVQ and BTEC National Diploma at Loreto College while at the same time providing support for a fellow student who was a refugee.

Now at the end of the first year of her degree course, Lucia is looking forward to her future career. Her achievements to date are made even more impressive by the fact that she only moved to England – from Angola – in 2003.



Loreto College's VQ Hero, Lucia Castro

It's a wrap for media production apprentices



The first learners in the country to undertake Advanced Apprenticeships in Media Production have marked the completion of their Apprenticeships at a celebration at The Lowry at Salford Quays. The apprentices were joined by Creative Apprentices from the Tate in Liverpool.

The event was hosted by regional screen agency Northwest Vision and Media, the organisation responsible for the Media Production Advanced Apprenticeships. Managing Director Lynne McCadden presented the 'graduating' apprentices with a certificate to mark their achievement.

The North West is already one of the most important centres for media outside London, and the opportunities within the sector are set to increase with the completion of Media City UK which will also occupy a site at Salford Quays. The Media Production Advanced Apprentices are well placed to benefit from this growth, having gained valuable experience in television, film or radio.

Sue Price, Regional Director for the National Apprenticeship Service spoke at the ceremony and was keen to recognise the success and future potential of the programme:

"The success of this creative and media Apprenticeship programme, especially with the Media City development, is key for the North West. The rollout of a further 100 Apprenticeships in creative, media, digital and ICT across the region over the next three years will bring vital future opportunities for apprentices."

Northwest Vision and Media's Training Manager David Longworth said: "The Advanced Apprenticeship in Media Production has been a huge success and is in the process of recruiting candidates for its third year.

"It's a truly ground breaking scheme which has enabled the younger generation, who wouldn't normally have the opportunity to work within these industries, to try something new and forge a career path for themselves."



Creative Apprentices from Manchester and Liverpool mark their success at Media City UK



Stockport College's first female Principal,
Lynn Merilion

Stockport College appoints new Principal

Stockport College in Greater Manchester has appointed Lynn Merilion as its new Principal. She replaces Peter Roberts, who will become Chief Executive at Leeds City College.

Ms Merilion, who takes up the post in July, will be the first female Principal in the college's 120 year history. She has been at the college since 2001, initially as Director of Planning and Quality, and since 2006 as Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality.

Speaking on her appointment she said: "I am delighted to be Principal of Stockport College. The College is in great shape, the achievement rates are over 90%, applications are increasing year on year, and the new buildings for construction students are looking fantastic.

"The College is also at the heart of economic and social regeneration of Stockport. The future challenge will be to make Stockport College an even better place to work and study for the people of Stockport."

Unlocking the door to a career in law

Eversheds LLP won the LSC North West 14-19 Education and Skills Award at this year's North West Business in the Community Awards. The international law firm triumphed despite tough competition from United Utilities and Avenir Training.

The award was announced at a gala dinner at Manchester's Gorton Monastery on Thursday 11 June. LSC Regional Director North West John Korzeniewski presented the prize to the winners.

The award recognises organisations which have made a significant impact in the area of 14-19 education and skills, and celebrates successful collaborations between industry and education in areas such as relating the school curriculum to the world of work, engaging young people who are not in education employment or training (NEET), and tackling gender stereotypes.

Eversheds won the award for its 'Evershed Unlocked' programme which gives young people from a range of backgrounds a taste of life inside the legal profession. Other winners at the event included United Utilities who won the Lancaster University Management School Leadership for Sustainability Award and Merseylearn – Skills for Life who won the npower Skills for Life Award.

John Korzeniewski said: "We all know how education and training can transform lives, and this award recognises the role that industry can play in helping young people to develop the skills and aspirations they need for a successful future.

"I am particularly impressed by the way that Eversheds' programme has engaged with young people from a very wide range of backgrounds, illustrating how with the right training and guidance young people who may have had a very tough start in life can go on to a successful career."

Eversheds' award commendation from the judging panel

'The panel considered that the 'Eversheds Unlocked' programme was an innovative and well thought out programme that provided real benefits in terms of raising the aspirations of young people, and improving awareness of the legal profession.

The targeting of students from 'non-traditional' backgrounds was particularly positive, and the dissemination of the outcomes of the programme will ensure that the benefits are realised in other parts of the country and not just in Manchester.'



Evershed representatives, having accepted their award from the LSC's John Korzeniewski (left)

£75 million package for working parents

Thousands of parents from across the North West could benefit from a new package of financial help announced by the LSC in May. The Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work Scheme will pay up to £175 per week per child, providing out of work parents with help towards childcare and travel costs.

Twenty four year old Tanya Smith is one North West parent who is hoping to benefit from the new scheme. Mother of three Tanya from Walney Island, Barrow-in-Furness, wants to get her career on track by training for an NVQ Level 3 in Child Care while the weekly grant pays for her two year old son's nursery care.

Tanya said: "Finding out that I could be eligible to receive extra money for my son's childcare gave me that extra push to return to my studies and in turn build a better life for myself, my children and my partner. This additional funding will be very helpful for parents across the North West, and I would encourage parents who are not working to apply for this grant."

Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work is a national scheme which is open to families in England with at least one partner in work, an annual household income of £20,000 or less per year, and a child or children aged 14 or under (or at least one child with disabilities aged up to 18).

Teaming up for Worldskills 2009

The WorldSkills Calgary 2009 team line-up has now been announced. Following months of hard work and training to make sure they are ready to take on the best in the world, two team members from the North West were selected to compete at WorldSkills Calgary 2009 in September. Three training Managers from the North West have supported the UK Team in preparation for World Skills Calgary 2009.

Team Members

Christopher Coates - CNC Milling

Christopher trained at Reaseheath College while working at Bentley Motors and feels that the WorldSkills experience has improved his personal skills and technical skills.

Joe Massie - Floristry

Joe trained at St Helens College and is keen to progress and develop through WorldSkills whilst continuing to work at Fishlocks Florist.

Training Managers

Karl Vella, Group Managing Director, Karl Vella Preston Ltd - Autobody Repair

Having been involved with WorldSkills for 13 years, Karl Vella has trained bronze and gold medal winners.

Susan Simpson, Self employed consultant - Beauty Therapy

Enjoying working with young people and seeing them develop their skills and confidence to become world class, is just one of the reasons Susan Simpson has been involved with WorldSkills since 2000.

Andrew Mclean, Bentley Motors Ltd - CNC Milling

Andrew Mclean enjoys helping the competitors with their training as they strive to be the best and believes the UK has some of the best skilled young people in the world ready to compete at Calgary 2009.

Three team leaders from Brathay Hall Trust in Cumbria will be supporting and inspiring the UK team members throughout Worldskills Calgary 2009.

WorldSkills Calgary 2009 is a key landmark in the run up to WorldSkills London 2011, when the UK will host the 41st WorldSkills Competition. WorldSkills London 2011 will provide the chance to positively change public attitudes to skills and provide a national celebration for achievement in vocational skills.

LSC North West would like to congratulate all team members and thank the employers and training providers of all team members for their time and input, and wishes Team UK the very best of luck at WorldSkills Calgary 2009.



Double Olympic Gold Medallist and Adventurer, James Cracknell, and UK Skills Chairman, Chris Humphries CBE, congratulate the North West's team members (top - Christopher Coates and bottom - Joe Massie)

Our future. It's in our hands.

A unified voice for skills

In these challenging times, it is important that all those passionate about skills in the North West speak with one voice.

The media agenda is crowded and many campaigns are competing for the public's attention, but the "Our future. It's in our hands." Skills Campaign continues to provide a highly relevant, well known rallying cry for providers, employers and learners. In the current climate, research has shown that the Skills Campaign is helping people become more acutely aware of the need for and value of qualifications and skills.

The more colleges, providers and other partners who use the "Our future. It's in our hands." campaign strapline, messages and other resources – alongside their own marketing materials – the louder and more successful this message will become.

The LSC recently won a major honour at the Marketing Society Golden Jubilee Awards for the Skills Campaign. Judges complimented the campaign's ambition, complexity and, most importantly, its results. Thank you to all partners for your contributions, which have made the Skills Campaign a success.

Summer 2009 is the second 'Summer of Skills', a nationwide campaign to promote the value of skills and break down the barriers to learning. Running from the launch of Professional and Career Development Loans on 1 July, right through to new enrolments in the Autumn, Summer of Skills is the umbrella under which all activity will fall – backed up by a PR and marketing campaign.

A new 'Five Step Guide to the Summer of Skills' highlights how partners can get involved. Whether you're running your own advertising, taster courses, road shows, open days or exam result events, the Five Step Guide will help you link your campaign to the nationwide Summer of Skills activity.

For more information about Summer of Skills and to download your free 'Five Step Guide' visit the Campaign Resources Site (CRS) www.lsc.gov.uk/campaignresources. More materials to support the Summer of Skills are available. To keep in touch with the latest developments, subscribe to the Skills Update e-Newsletter by emailing skillscampaign@lsc.gov.uk.



LSC Head of Marketing and Communications, Nicky Brunker accepting the Marketing Teamwork award at the Marketing Society Golden Jubilee Awards

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