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Leading learning and skills

nw news

**EMBF awards celebrate
North West business
success page 05**

The newsletter for stakeholders
of the LSC in the North West

spring 09

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Welcome

Welcome to the Spring 2009 edition of LSC North West's stakeholder newsletter. From the start of the year a key priority for the LSC and our partners in the region has been responding to the economic downturn.

The LSC has worked very closely with the North West Development Agency, Business Link, and Jobcentre Plus to develop a plan which brings together our collective resources to offer support to companies and individuals affected by the economic situation. We have had to be extremely responsive in developing this major strategy, and in ensuring it is rolled out quickly and starts to make an immediate impact.

The full response covers a wide range of initiatives; for business this will include skills support for survival and growth and for individuals this will be support to acquire the skills to secure and maintain employment. More details about this can be found on pages six and seven.

Our ability to respond quickly was only possible with the effective relationships we have with our partners and stakeholders. Evidence of this can be found in operational areas such as improvements in the range and quality of provision and in areas such as the recent Apprenticeship Week. The amount of energy and enthusiasm put into supporting this campaign with events and promotional activities this year was outstanding.

This was particularly pleasing in such an important year for Apprenticeships. The new National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) was launched on the 1st April and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Sue Price on her appointment as Regional Director North West for National Apprenticeship Service. More information on her new team and the developing role of NAS will be communicated to you over the next few months.

Finally, I'm sure you will be aware of the departure of our former Chief Executive Mark Haysom. Mark has led the LSC for the past five and a half years and I know he will be missed by both - colleagues and partners. Mark was particularly proud of the efforts made to change the face of Further Education across the country.

Geoffrey Russell has been appointed as Acting Chief Executive. He brings extensive experience of the financial management of large organisations and has recently retired from KPMG where he held a number of senior roles over a period of nearly 25 years. I look forward to working with him as the LSC continues to move into the Machinery of Government transition.

John Korzeniewski
Regional Director North West

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Cover image: Young people learn about career options at Skills North West

Beryl's back!

Beryl, the 'face' of the memorable 'Get On' campaign adverts, was back on our screens in March.

The three-week national television campaign and two-week national radio campaign aimed to help people *Get Maths Confident* and enrol on a free Skills for Life course.

The campaign followed the success of the Football Chants competition, which asked fans to create new chants. Ex-England player John Barnes acted as a spokesperson, and Premiership stars, including Manchester United's Ryan Giggs and Liverpool's Fernando Torres, also gave their support to the campaign.

Our future. It's in our hands.

lsc
Leading learning and skills

England only

"Before I took a maths course, the only numbers I was relying on for my future were lottery balls."

Is your lack of maths skills holding you back in life? If it is, don't rely on luck, take your future into your own hands. Sign up for a free adult maths course and you can learn in a small friendly group of people like you, at your own pace. So the lottery won't be the only numbers that might improve your life. To get maths confident and Get On, call 0800 66 0800 for your free DVD or visit www.direct.gov.uk/geton

get on

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The 'Get On' campaign adds up to success for Julie

When Julie Kenrick decided to brush up on her maths skills she didn't have to travel far. Julie works for Bury Adult Learning Service, and turned to her colleagues to help her improve her numeracy skills.

Like many people Julie had always struggled with maths, despite doing well at school generally. And while her lack of confidence in maths had never held her back in her career she always knew there was room for improvement, as she happily admits:

"When I was at school the expectation was - because I was considered to be bright - that I would have no difficulty in maths and, therefore I'm not sure the teachers knew what to do when they found that it did present a difficulty for me. So there was no adaptation of teaching methods to suit my learning needs... which resulted in me failing maths twice before I eventually did achieve it.

"Learning with Bury Adult Learning Service has been an absolute revelation really. It's so different being an adult learner and being taught by people who understand the needs of adults, and can accept that even though you may be a manager of a service (with considerable responsibility) you still may struggle with some of your maths concepts. That was always taken on board by the tutors and I think just their sheer enthusiasm for the subject really helped me succeed."

Julie is the subject of a video created by Bury Adult Learning Service, which can be viewed at www.learningpool.com/bury. She has also been shortlisted for a Special Award for Numeracy at the national Get On Awards, while Bury Adult Learning Service, which delivers training to employees from throughout Bury MBC via Train to Gain, is on the shortlist for a provider award.

What is . . . The National Apprenticeship Service?

In January 2008 Gordon Brown announced the Government's strategy for building the future of Apprenticeships in England, which included the formation of the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS); a distinct organisation to lead on the growth and development of Apprenticeships in England.

The National Apprenticeship Service took on end-to-end responsibility for the delivery of Apprenticeships on 1 April 2009, led by Chief Executive Simon Waugh, who took on the role in February of this year following a successful career in business.

NAS will concentrate on encouraging more employers to offer Apprenticeships, and as a key priority to significantly increase the number of Apprenticeships in the public sector. A unique feature of the new service is an online system where employers and training providers can post their Apprenticeship vacancies and where young people and adults can apply for Apprenticeship opportunities.

Who's Who in the National Apprenticeship Service in the North West?

The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) in the North West is led by Regional Director Sue Price, previously LSC Partnership Director in Liverpool. Sue's role will be to lead the development of the service in the region, and to ensure that the Service meets the needs of the North West's employers and individuals.

Supporting Sue are two Employer Service Directors, Graham Fisher and John Myers. They are responsible for engaging with employers from across the region, to develop strong working relationships and increase the number of businesses offering Apprenticeships. Nicky Martin has also been appointed to NAS in the role of Marketing and Communications Manager. Nicky will develop the marketing and communications strategy for NAS in the region, to engage employers, potential apprentices and stakeholders.

Recruitment for the rest of the 40 strong North West NAS team, including a Learner Services Director, is close to completion.

The service went live on 1 April and key focuses for the new team include:

- Developing strong relationships with all key stakeholders in the region;
- Maximising the take up of Apprenticeships in the Public Sector;
- Working closely with work-based providers to deliver the challenging Apprenticeship targets for the region.

For more information about NAS in the North West please contact Nicky.Martin@lsc.gov.uk



Sue Price, Regional Director of the National Apprenticeship Service

Cumbria's Katie is nuclear Apprentice of the Year

Sellafield-based Katie Maxwell is celebrating after being named Apprentice of the Year at the UK Nuclear Skills Awards. Katie, who is working towards her NVQ Level 3, joined the National Nuclear Laboratory (NNL) in September 2006.

Katie won the LSC-sponsored award for Northwest/Northeast Regional Apprentice of the Year, and was named the national winner at a ceremony at Manchester's Palace Hotel on 12 March. She received her award from double-Olympic champion rower Steve Williams OBE.

After starting her career at NNL as an apprentice with training provider Gen II Katie has been a permanent employee since January 2008. Based in Sellafield's Central Laboratory she carries out work in support of various teams, and is currently busy working with small scale processes such as ruthenium volatility testing in support of high level waste evaporators.

Emer Clarke, Director of Area for the LSC in Cumbria, said: "The nuclear industry makes a significant contribution to Cumbria's economy, and offers some great opportunities for apprentices.

"Katie is an excellent example of how far Apprenticeships can take you. The fact that she was the only female national finalist should serve as a prompt for other young women to consider undertaking an Apprenticeship in a traditionally male-dominated field.

"On behalf of everybody here at the LSC in Cumbria I'd like to congratulate Katie on her impressive achievement."

Katie is in her final year of her HNC course at Lakes College, and hopes to progress onto a BSc in Chemistry. She also puts her experience into practice in her new role as an NVQ Assessor.



Kewal Dass, LSC, with Umar Mohamed of Deliz Ltd and presenter Ranvir Singh

EMBF Awards celebrate North West business success

The Leader of the House of Lords Baroness Amos, Shere Khan Group CEO Dr Nighat Awan OBE, and BBC presenter Ranvir Singh were among those taking part in the Ethnic Minority Business Forum's North West Awards 2009, held at Manchester United's Manchester Suite on Thursday 12 March.

The awards honoured the achievements of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) businesses in the North West, and recognise the contribution these businesses make to the region. The Ethnic Minority Business Forum (EMBF) was established by the Northwest Regional Development Agency, whose Chief Executive Steve Broomhead also attended the event.

The LSC sponsored the award for Young Entrepreneur of the Year, which went to Deliz Ltd, a snack food company that targets the event catering industry with 'one dip' trays comprising naan breads, mini poppadums, curry dip, cup holder and hand wipe. Deliz Ltd's founder Umar Mohamed was at Old Trafford to collect the award from Ranvir Singh and the LSC North West's Learning and Quality Director Kewal Dass.

Kewal said: "These awards celebrate the real business talent that exists in our region's BME communities. They also illustrate the invaluable contribution that BME businesses make to our economy, and to the North West as a whole.

"The LSC's vision in the region is to develop our skills to world class levels. These businesses and individuals show how much can be achieved with the right skills and support. I'd like to congratulate Umar and all the other winners, and wish them, and their businesses, every success for the future."

The EMBF Award Winners 2009

Rising Star Award - The African Caribbean Company

Young Entrepreneur of the Year - Deliz Ltd

Social Enterprise of the Year Award - Castlemere Community Centre

Entrepreneur of the Year - Fazila Foods

Achievement in International Business - Olive Strachan Resources

Business of the Year - Gafoor Poultry

Responding to the economic downturn

Real help now

For more information visit: www.realhelpnow.gov.uk

Businesses and individuals across the region face new challenges as a result of the economic downturn. Nationally the Government is responding with a package of extra support:

- to help businesses survive and prepare for the recovery
- to support individuals affected by unemployment.

Regionally the North West joint response is led by Minister for the North West, Beverley Hughes through the Joint Economic Commission (JEC). The Regional Skills and Employment Board (RSEB) is co-ordinating the skills and employment elements of the response, while the board of the Business Support Simplification Process (BSSR) is leading on the business response. Other elements of the response include health and housing.

John Korzeniewski, LSC Regional Director North West said: "The LSC has worked very closely with our partners to develop a plan which brings together our collective resources to offer support to companies and individuals affected by the economic situation. We have had to be extremely responsive in developing this major strategy, and in ensuring it is rolled out quickly and starts to make an immediate impact."

Keeping North West businesses fighting fit

Businesses can access free support to help them raise finance, improve productivity, or save money by reducing waste and saving energy. Whether businesses need to increase cashflow, maintain staff numbers, improve employee skills and flexibility, or simply reduce costs, they can get **real help** to keep their business fighting fit.

The Government measures include:

- A £10billion Working Capital Scheme, securing up to £20billion of short-term bank lending to companies with a turnover of up to £500million
- An Enterprise Finance Guarantee Scheme, securing up to £1.3billion of additional bank loans to small firms with a turnover of up to £25million
- A £75million Capital for Enterprise Fund (£50million from Government augmented by £25million from the banks) to invest in small businesses which need equity.

Announcing the new measures, Business Secretary Lord Mandelson said: "UK companies are the lifeblood of the economy and it is crucial that Government acts now to provide real help to support them through the downturn and see them emerge stronger on the other side.

"We know that some companies are struggling to secure the finance they need, not because of any failure in their business but due to the tougher credit conditions. That is why we have designed a package of measures addressing different forms of credit and providing real help for businesses."

The online portal can be found at www.businesslink.gov.uk/realhelp/finance or call Business Link Northwest on 0845 0066 888.

Support for individuals affected by unemployment

Skills Secretary John Denham has announced a package of measures for people affected by the economic downturn. As part of the package, the LSC has £100million to support individuals who are at risk of redundancy, have been made redundant, or are otherwise unemployed.

The LSC is undertaking a single tendering exercise to deploy £50million funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) and £50million from Train to Gain.

This support will help increase skills interventions for individuals under notice of redundancy, those made redundant recently, and those that are unemployed. It will ensure that those affected are provided with the high-quality training and education support that they need to continue in, enter, or re-enter sustainable employment, enabling them to contribute positively to the local labour market. The support will be available from April 2009 until December 2010.

Training providers will also strengthen existing links with Jobcentre Plus to provide support and skills development activities that are relevant to both identified vacancies and sectoral-based skills demand in local labour markets. Once in employment, individuals will be able to access continued support through Apprenticeships or Train to Gain.

Joint effort drives NW Region support

Minister for the North West, Beverley Hughes, set up the Joint Economic Commission (JEC) to represent the region's interests during the current difficult economic climate, and to ensure that it emerges stronger than ever. The Commission, which includes LSC Regional Director John Korzeniewski, has introduced a range of support to help unemployed individuals get back to work.

This joint support is being coordinated by the Regional Skills and Employment Board (RSEB) which is marshalling the activities and resources of key partners including ACAS, Business Link NW, Jobcentre Plus, LSC, NWDA and TUC. The support includes a number of principles such as:

- Getting involved before redundancy
- 'Hiding the wiring' from businesses and individuals, making access to the support as simple as possible
- Local focus and targeting of resources
- Integrating employment and skills and re-skilling for recovery.

Beverley Hughes recently met David Stafford from Irlam, Greater Manchester, to find out how he was benefiting from the support. David was unemployed through redundancy, and thanks to a £3,000 grant through the JEC from Jobcentre Plus, has now retrained as a driving instructor, running his own successful driving school.

There are a number of services available to help people return to work through Jobcentre Plus, including a personal adviser service, access to support on job searching and CV preparation.

A 'rapid response service' is also managed by Jobcentre Plus and aims to help people affected by redundancy to make a successful transition back into employment.

Beverley Hughes commented: "The Government has invested in extra help and support for those faced with losing their jobs.

"David's example is one that others can follow. Being made redundant is hard, but support is available to help people rebuild their lives and get back on track. He benefited from the rapid response service which supports people made redundant and helps them quickly back into work."



Beverley Hughes with Driving School Owner, David Stafford from Irlam

£350million to support small businesses

Small businesses will be the focus of £350million of Government funds, to help them train their staff. The money will be available to deliver a new package of support to help small business get through the tougher economic climate by building the expertise of their workers, through the Train to Gain programme.

It will deliver funding for training, including areas such as business improvement techniques or leadership and management, which are proven to provide skills to increase the productivity of individuals and firms. The LSC announced the extension of Train to Gain's leadership and management programme in November, giving businesses with between five and 250 employees the ability to access up to £1,000 in funding for training in business critical areas such as financial planning.

John Denham, Skills Secretary commented: "Small businesses are an important engine of our economy and we must make sure that we support them during tough economic times.

"We are overhauling the training system to make sure they can get help with training their staff with the very minimum of bureaucracy."

The funding to support training will be drawn from the Train to Gain programme. Train to Gain forms a key part of the Government's plans to help businesses and individuals make it through the downturn and emerge stronger. To find out the latest, go to page nine.



ESF providers learn PR tools

Representatives from over 40 providers that benefit from the 2007-2013 ESF programme have taken part in three ESF PR workshops organised by the LSC. The workshops were run by LSC North West's PR agency The Write Angle, along with freelance journalist Victoria Jayne.

The sessions showed providers how to gain publicity for their projects, and demystified the worlds of media and PR. There was also an opportunity to remind participants of the importance of submitting case studies about their projects – a statutory requirement of all projects receiving ESF funding.

If you deliver an ESF project but were not able to attend a workshop you will shortly receive a copy of the ESF PR Toolkit. Please send any ESF-related press releases or news stories to nwmarketing@lsc.gov.uk

For more information, and to access the Toolkit online visit www.lsc.gov.uk/regions/NorthWest/ESF/ESF+Publicity/



Stephanie Lord from the The Write Angle presenting to a workshop

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Passport to Health and Social Care Employment

Working in the Greater Manchester area, 'Passport to Health and Social Care Employment' is funded by the LSC as part of its regional European Social Fund (ESF) programme. The project has been set up to enable people who are long-term unemployed to gain new skills and secure employment in the Health and Social Care sector.

The contract is held by Stockport College with the project based at Eccles College operating in partnership with Salford Royal Hospital, Jobcentre Plus and care homes throughout Salford.

The five week course concludes in a guaranteed interview with Salford Royal Hospital or local care homes. In addition individuals are offered the opportunity to do work placements to gain an insight into the sort of roles they would like to work in.

During the course, the participants attend college four days a week - combining vocational learning and personal skills development. On the current cycle, thirteen of the eighteen individuals are completing literacy and numeracy courses, in addition to learning the practical elements relevant to the Health and Social Care sector such as food preparation, behaviour patterns and health and safety.

One of the project's success stories is Lyn who has overcome many barriers with the course, gaining new skills and building her confidence. Lyn not only scored the highest of her group at the interview but successfully secured employment as a Clinical Support Worker. This was a massive achievement for someone who had previously suffered with depression and agoraphobia and had spent 20 years receiving incapacity benefit. Subsequently Lyn has won the 'Getting Back to Work' award at the North West Local Employment Partnership awards, for her success and development since joining the project.



Businesses continue to gain from training



The LSC's Train to Gain service continues to go from strength to strength, with 331,800 adults starting training towards a qualification in 2007/2008, up 61 per cent on 2006/2007.

169,200 adults achieved a qualification through Train to Gain in 2007/08 - an increase of 80,900 adult achievers on 2006/07.

In addition, 74 per cent of the employers who have benefited from Train to Gain to date are 'hard to reach' businesses that have not previously trained their employees in the last 12 months, or received Investors in People accreditation.

The need for training has never been greater, and that is why a number of changes have been made to Train to Gain, designed to reduce the bureaucracy, cut down the constraints, increase the flexibility of the service and enable more businesses to access training designed specifically to help improve productivity. The new flexibilities will help businesses weather the economic storm and ensure they are in a better shape to respond when the upturn comes.

Following enhancements introduced in 2008 all businesses now have access to quality-assured, impartial and independent advice from Skills Brokers. The service is available to businesses who want:

- help to identify skills needs at all levels of their business so that they can make the right, informed choices as part of a wider business needs analysis
- to identify and source high quality, vocational skills training, including Apprenticeships, delivered at a time and place to suit them, from a wide range of high quality colleges and training providers.

The Government recently announced that small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) will be top priority for Train to Gain funds including the £350million growth over the next two years. As part of Train to Gain there is a new package of support to help smaller businesses get through the tougher economic climate by building the skills and expertise of their workforce and tackling more immediate business-critical needs or issues.

From January 2009, the LSC has relaxed the funding rules for SMEs so that they can get funding for bite-sized courses in business-critical areas, and more funding for qualifications even when employees already have a qualification at that level. We have also expanded the support available for Leadership and Management development so that it is open to employers with 5-250 employees.

In addition, for small businesses (fewer than 50 employees), the LSC contributes to the cost of staff spending time away from work whilst undertaking agreed training.

Alongside Train to Gain, additional flexibilities for the unemployed and those under notice of redundancy will be available from April 2009 from a special package of support worth £100million, introduced as a response to the economic downturn. At the Jobs Summit in January, the Prime Minister also announced a further 75,000 training places for those reaching six months of unemployment.

All of this support will clearly link pre-employment training to in-work training through Train to Gain and will be designed to meet the needs of employers with current and future vacancies.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Watson Steel builds a solid foundation

With more than 70 years experience in the structural steelwork field Bolton-based Watson Steel has a world-class reputation. Along with its sister companies it is part of Severfield-Rowen plc, one of the most successful businesses in its sector.

Watson Steel operates in a highly-skilled field, and past contracts include high-profile projects such as the Emirates Stadium, Blackpool Pleasure Beach's famous roller-coaster 'The Big One', The Reebok Stadium in Bolton and the City of Manchester Stadium built for the 2002 Commonwealth Games. Working on such major – and potentially hazardous – sites it is essential that employees' skills are up to date.

Training coordinator for Watson Steel, John Dodd, explains: "We had great support from the LSC's Train to Gain service in setting up the training courses, which have enabled us to develop our staff and ultimately, benefit the wider business."

John concludes: "We have seen great results using the Train to Gain service. Many members of staff thought they were too old to be trained, but they have embraced the new opportunities offered to them and this in turn has increased not only productivity but loyalty. It's the case these days that even if employees have years of experience and are experts in their area, they need the qualifications to back this up. I would certainly recommend Train to Gain to other companies as it can save a lot of money and delivers the right results."



Watson Steel Training co-ordinator, John Dodd



Apprenticeship Week 2009

Apprentices, employers, colleges and training providers work together to make Apprenticeship Week a huge success

The final week of February marked this year's Apprenticeship Week... and what a week it was! Across the North West apprentices and their employers and training providers took part in a wide range of activities, while the LSC and our partners organised a series of events to highlight the business benefits of employing apprentices.

Nationally, Apprenticeship Week started with Gordon Brown's announcement of 21,000 new public sector Apprenticeship places. The LSC released research that illustrates just what employing an apprentice can do for a business, and held the first of four Apprenticeship Seminars hosted by Sir Alan Sugar.

Preston apprentices shatter stereotypes

Apprenticeships in motor mechanics and hairdressing are commonplace. But two Preston College apprentices were in the spotlight during Apprenticeship Week for helping to dismiss gender stereotypes.

Eighteen year old Jennifer Rigby from Preston is following in the footsteps of her vehicle mechanic father by undertaking an Apprenticeship in motor vehicle mechanics. She works at John Handley in Preston, while studying for her NVQ Level 2 at Preston College.

Jonathon Smith, also from Preston, is in his fifth year of a hairdressing Apprenticeship, and is about to complete his NVQ Level 3. He said "My advice is to make sure you know what you want to do before starting an apprenticeship but then to go for it! In my experience, it can really help you to get ahead because it gives you the practical experience as well as the theory."

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Apprenticeships are the formula to training success

The Heinz manufacturing plant based in Kendal, Cumbria, produces a range of food products including Complan, Heinz Infant Formula, and Heinz Baby Cereals and Weaning Foods. Employing skilled engineers is the key to the smooth running of the plant, and good quality training is at the heart of Site Engineer Robin Sandman's team.

As one of the UK's most trusted brands, Heinz needs to ensure its products are of the highest quality. The highly skilled workforce is essential to the manufacturing process.

Robin comments: "Recruitment had always been a challenge for us, as tourism is the main industry within Cumbria it's difficult to find a pool of qualified engineers in the area.

"To address this potential skills gap I started to look into what training providers could offer Heinz. I came across Rathbones and Gen II which offered hands-on workshop training to apprentices and were flexible enough to adapt the training programme to our needs."

Like many other employers, Robin has seen successful apprentices progress in their careers to senior positions within the company. The Apprenticeship programme provides a great opportunity to get to know a new employee, see how they work and develop the skills they need to become a valued member of staff.

Robin concludes, "My future plans for the team definitely include employing new apprentices. I would wholeheartedly recommend the Apprenticeship scheme to other employers; it's a great way of integrating new members into our team while they gain the quality of training we require."



Heinz Site Engineer, Robin Sandman

College capers for Comic Relief

Furness College came up with a novel way of raising the profile of Apprenticeships, while raising money for charity. They gave local businesses the chance to hire apprentices for a day, with all money raised going to this year's Red Nose Day appeal. And it wasn't just the charity that benefited – participating businesses discovered the business benefits of employing an apprentice too.



Students at Furness College with a £300 donation raised for Comic Relief

Downing Street date for Oldham apprentice

Apprentice Christopher Taylor, 21, from Oldham, visited Prime Minister Gordon Brown at 10 Downing Street earlier this year, after being invited to share his experiences of the Apprenticeship programme.

The Prime Minister took the opportunity to hear first-hand from people that are benefiting from the scheme which enables participants to 'earn as they learn'.

The Premier also used the occasion to outline the launch of the Government White Paper – 'New Opportunities: Fair Chances for the Future' – setting out plans to give individuals the best possible chance of fulfilling their potential and equipping the nation with a skilled workforce.

A former Painting and Decorating apprentice, Christopher began his Apprenticeship in 2004 working for Dave Luck Ltd and attending The Oldham College. His eagerness and determination to succeed resulted in him being named Apprentice of the Year in 2007 and shortly after completing his Apprenticeship he was promoted to site foreman.

Apprenticeships form a key part of plans for upskilling the nation's workforce, as they give people the opportunity to achieve nationally recognised qualifications while gaining practical experience in their chosen career. Gordon Brown recently announced the £140million expansion of the Apprenticeship programme, which will take the total number of apprentices to more than 250,000 by 2010.

During his visit to Downing Street, Christopher spoke to Gordon Brown about the benefits of education and training, and quizzed him on how the White Paper would benefit apprentices and other workers.



Christopher Taylor (far left) outside 10 Downing Street

Apprentices in the news

Apprenticeship Week generated a huge amount of media coverage across the region and beyond. Jordan Wood from Dave Luck Ltd in Oldham appeared on BBC Breakfast News in a film to accompany an interview with the Rt Hon John Denham MP, Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills. Meanwhile Channel M television filmed hairdressing apprentices at training provider Manchester Solutions, and apprentice Sarah Corbett was a guest on Channel M's breakfast show alongside the LSC's Gareth Jones.

There was also a high volume of press coverage about Apprenticeship Week. The Manchester Evening News, Lancashire Evening Post, Blackpool Gazette and Times and Star in Cumbria in particular devoted a lot of space to the Week.

And not forgetting ...

- Apprentices in Cheshire and Warrington and Cumbria shadowed high profile business people to find out what life in the fast lane is really like. The LSC arranged the activities along with the local Employment and Skills Boards.
- The LSC held an Apprenticeship Summit in Cheshire and Warrington. The event, which was designed to showcase the business benefits of Apprenticeships, was held at the Daresbury House Hotel, near Warrington.
- The Greater Manchester Learning Provider Network launched a new enterprise boardgame. The LSC contributed to the funding of the game.
- Liverpool celebrated the success of its Badged Apprentices with a graduation ceremony at the city's Maritime Museum.
- North West Employers (NWE) held an Apprenticeship Conference for public sector employers, attended by Regional Minister Beverley Hughes MP. Liz Davis, National Apprenticeship Service Project Director for the LSC in the North West, was among the speakers.
- Burnley College and ProSkills, the sector skills council for manufacturing, held a business breakfast for furniture manufacturers.

These are just a few of the many and diverse activities that took place during the week; thank you to everyone who was involved in making Apprenticeship Week such a success.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

'All You Need is' ... Training!

Located within Liverpool's historic Albert Dock, The Beatles Story is a unique visitor attraction that transports guests on an exciting and atmospheric journey into the life, times, culture and music of The Beatles.

Lizz Morgalla, Guest Services Manager, explains how the quality of the experience at the attraction is maintained through The Beatles Story's core values:

"We have a structure of five key values that are followed; quality, entertainment, life-long learning, accessibility and leadership.

"We have created a working environment where respect for different roles, talents and experience is paramount. We promote equality, trust and integrity so all staff feel motivated and staff training plays a big part in maintaining this."

The Beatles Story now forms part of Merseytravel alongside Mersey Ferries, and has adopted its ideas and philosophies in relation to staff progression through its pioneering training and development arm, Merseylearn. This includes making the LSC's Skills Pledge, a public commitment to driving a business forward by training its employees.

Lizz explains: "We already had a similar philosophy to Merseytravel in terms of training, but the Skills Pledge has helped structure this.

"Training and development is a key part of our recruitment process, once we have recruited a candidate we will train them from within, incorporating each individual into the team. Managerial posts are also frequently filled internally, and we feel that this helps keep staff motivated and increases staff retention.

"I wouldn't hesitate to recommend the Skills Pledge to other employers; it's all about giving our staff opportunities which benefit them, but that also benefit us as a business by ensuring we have the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed, a win, win situation!"



Mary Chadwick, Commercial Manager at The Beatles Story making the Skills Pledge

VIEWPOINT



Neil Scales,
Chief Executive and
Director General
of Merseytravel

Addressing the skills of the nation's workforce is, quite rightly, taking increasing precedence on the Government's agenda. Particularly in these difficult times, it is comforting to think that the UK will be prepared to respond to the demands of an improved economic situation when the good times return.

As a business leader, I believe that the investment in training and skills should be a priority above all others. When it comes to running an effective and efficient business, you need to be able to rely on your workforce to carry out tasks in a way that makes you confident and proud.

Merseytravel was one of the first employers to make the Skills Pledge, following its launch in June 2007 – as a £400million organisation with almost 1,000 employees, I felt it was vital to remove the barriers preventing our workforce from getting back into learning – and as a result we've seen significant improvements in business performance and service provision.

We're proud to have made the Skills Pledge and we will continue to develop new ways of training our staff. We recognise that by involving employees and boosting their skills through training we can encourage greater levels of motivation and retention and offer better service to our customers.

Celebrating the Skills Pledge's Success

This June sees the second anniversary of the launch of the Skills Pledge. Since its introduction thousands of employers from all sectors have made the public commitment to train their staff. Employers that have benefited from making the Skills Pledge are being encouraged to share their experiences with business contacts and partners.



Here in the North West Merseytravel held a Skills Pledge event for their supply chain and business contacts in Liverpool late last year. Thirty employers took part, among them Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, Liverpool Institute of the Performing Arts, and The Beatles Story.

Another North West college awarded the Training Quality Standard

Bury College is the latest college in the region to be awarded the Training Quality Standard (TQS) for Employer Engagement. The college also received the TQS sectoral specialism for its Early Years provision for Excellence in Childcare.

The Training Quality Standard is an assessment framework designed to accredit those organisations that can demonstrate excellence in delivering training solutions to employers. It is designed to reflect employers' priorities and expectations in sourcing training and development solutions, and the practices of the organisations proven to be the best at delivering them. Nationally over 100 colleges and training providers have gained the Training Quality Standard.

Bury College provides Apprenticeships, Skills for Life qualifications, professional programmes and Train to Gain funded programmes. As part of the accreditation process for the Training Quality Standard, assessors spoke to a range of employers who are already working with Bury College.

Lauran Chatburn, Bury College Principal, said: "We are very proud to receive the Training Quality Standard. We work extremely hard to be responsive to employer needs and provide high quality training solutions. This award recognises Bury College's commitment to providing the very best training and support to employers and learners in the workplace."

John Rawsthorne, LSC Director of Area, Greater Manchester North said: "During these difficult times it is more important than ever for businesses to have access to the best training for their staff. Because it was developed with employers, the Training Quality Standard helps businesses identify high quality training, and the organisations that can help them deliver the results they need."

The Training Quality Standard in the North West

The following colleges and training providers in the region have been awarded the Training Quality Standard:

- Accrington and Rossendale College
- Blackburn College
- Bury College
- Furness College
- Hugh Baird College
- Myerscough College
- Preston College
- Reaseheath College
- Tameside College
- The Manchester College
- Training 2000
- West Cheshire College

Andrea gears up for the future with the Adult Learning Grant

Teenager Andrea Shuttleworth is following in her father's footsteps to train as one of an elite band of women in Britain who are becoming tractor mechanics, with help from an Adult Learning Grant (ALG).

Andrea, from Inskip, Preston, is currently in her final year studying a National Diploma in land based mechanisation at Myerscough College, and one day hopes to own her own company servicing and diagnosing land based machinery. She receives £30 a week ALG which she uses to pay for her petrol to travel to college, to buy course books and for new overalls and work boots.

The 19-year-old is currently in the final year of a National Diploma in Mechanisation at Myerscough's Bilborrow Campus near Preston, and hopes to go on to study for a Degree in Machinery Management and Logistics at the college.

Andrea, who went to Broughton High School, said: "I am the only girl in my class, but I just get on with my studies and the blokes treat me like one of the lads and as an equal. I've been brought up with my father owning a large number of tractors as a contractor, so I would like to eventually set up my own business fixing tractors, or work for a large company like JCB.

"Getting an Adult Learning Grant has gone a long way towards helping me with my studies, it has paid for my work boots, petrol to get to college each day and also provided me with the extra cash I've needed to buy new overalls. I would definitely encourage other adults considering going back to college to think about applying for an ALG, it can make all the difference financially."

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



National Diploma Student, Andrea Shuttleworth



EMA roadshow hits the region

Shoppers in Liverpool and Manchester were among the targets of the EMA roadshow tour, part of the nationwide effort to reduce the number of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET). The tour's aim was to raise awareness of the EMA (Education Maintenance Allowance) among young people, their family and friends.

The scheme provides young people who wish to continue in education after 16 with up to £30 per week to contribute to the cost of books, travel, equipment or anything useful to support their learning.

The roadshow truck gave young people the chance to 'hang out', play computer games and speak directly with a Connexions adviser about their learning and financial support options. Its presence in the two cities was supported by on-air coverage by local commercial radio stations Radio City and Key 103.

To find out about eligibility, potential EMA candidates can visit their local Connexions centre, call the EMA helpline on 0800 121 8989 or visit www.direct.gov.uk/ema



EMA NEET Roadshow hits the streets of Liverpool

More choices and more chances for young people at Skills North West

Thousands of young people from across the North West were in Bolton in February for Skills North West. The LSC-supported event attracted big crowds.

Skills North West is the largest interactive skills and careers event in the region and featured an impressive range of exhibitors.

LSC Regional Director John Korzeniewski gave the keynote speech at a reception for stakeholders at the event. Commenting on Skills North West, he said: "The Government's commitment to increasing the number of Apprenticeships gives young people more options than ever before. But with such a range of opportunities available it is essential that young people have access to up-to-date, accurate information about careers.

"Skills North West has given thousands of 14-19 year olds from across the region the chance to find out about a variety of opportunities in a format which is interactive, engaging and, above all, fun. And it has illustrated how important it is to research these opportunities, so you choose the career – and the route into it – which is right for you."



Young people learn about career options at Skills North West



Students get interactive with Alliance Learning

North West learners dominate WorldSkills squad

The 30-strong UK squad for WorldSkills 2009 has been announced, and eleven members of the squad are from the North West. The three selected Training Managers from the region will be supporting the eight North West based learners hoping to win a place in the final team, and the opportunity to travel to the event in Calgary in September.

The team line-up will be announced this June. In the meantime the whole squad is working hard to ensure that it has the ability to take on the best in the world.

Speaking at the Squad UK launch event, Skills Minister Lord Young said: "At a time when the country is facing tough economic challenges it is heartening to see just how much talent we have in the UK, and how dedicated these people are to making sure they are world class in their profession. I hope they will inspire others to recognise just how skilled and rewarding vocational careers can be."

The three Training Managers will continue to share their experience and expertise with the competitors throughout the competition, and are now working hard to prepare the squad members for the team selections.

Training Manager	Vocational Area	Company
Karl Vella	Autobody Repair	Group Managing Director, Karl Vella Preston Ltd.
Susan Simpson	Beauty Therapy	Self employed consultant
Andrew Mclean	CNC Milling	Bentley Motors Ltd

The eight North West competitors selected as part of the UK squad will now go on to contend for places within the final UK team, with the aim of competing at WorldSkills Calgary 2009.

North West squad members

Squad Member	Vocational Area	Training Provider	Employer
Elouise Mayor	Beauty Therapy	Preston College	Naomi Waite Nail & Beauty Studio
Christopher Coates	CNC Milling	Reaseheath College	Bentley Motors Ltd
Elliot New	CNC Milling	South Cheshire College – Total People	Bentley Motors Ltd
Fraser McLean	CNC Turning	Anniesland College – Total People	Rolls Royce
Christopher Kenny	Cookery	Runshaw College, Leyland	Le Manoir Aux Quat' Saisons
Joe Massie	Floristry	St Helens College	Fishlocks Florist
Andrew Christopher Fielding	Industrial Electronics	Wigan and Leigh College	MBDA UK
Richard Ellwood	Joinery	Furness College	Self Employed

The LSC North West would like to wish all North West squad members the very best ahead of the team selections and good luck to the chosen team and their Training Managers at WorldSkills Calgary 2009.

Squad UK members demonstrate their skills



Christopher Kenny



Joe Massie



Elouise Mayor

The stage is set for the North West Learner Awards

Plans are well under way for the area finals of the 2009 North West Learner Awards. Nominations for the awards closed at the end of February, and this year competition looks fiercer than ever.

The LSC in the North West recognises winners in two further education learner categories and three apprentice categories, with additional awards for apprentice employers. Area winners could go on to the regional final of the awards, while winners in the apprentice and apprentice employer categories could go on to the National Apprenticeship Awards.

The dates and venues for the awards are as follows:

Greater Manchester	
Manchester Town Hall	14 May
Cumbria	
Rhedged Conference Centre, near Penrith	14 May*
Lancashire	
Dunkenhalgh Hotel, near Blackburn	19 May
Cheshire & Warrington	
Mere Golf and Country Club	20 May
Greater Merseyside	
Aintree Racecourse	21 May

**Part of the Cumbria Chamber of Commerce Excellence in Cumbria Awards*

This year for the first time nominees can get the latest information about the awards via Facebook, myspace and Bebo:

<http://www.bebo.com/LearnerA>

http://www.myspace.com/lsc_nw_learner_awards

Facebook search term "North West Learner Awards 2009 group"

Going green

As you read this newsletter you may be interested to know that it is printed using vegetable based inks and on material approved by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). This indicates that the wood used to make the product comes from a forest which is well managed according to strict environmental, social and economic standards.

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