

## **Challenges, Changes, Champions**

Annual North West Conference for Learning Providers looks Ahead

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Over 130 representatives from Learning Providers and the Learning and Skills Council attended the second annual North West Conference at the Reebok Stadium. The event focused on the theme of 'Challenges, Changes and Champions' with keynote speakers picking up on current and future issues linked to the Agenda for Change, the need to improve the quality of delivery and the regionalisation of the Learning and Skills Council.

John Korzeniewski, Regional Director for the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) opened the conference with the view from the LSC. He started by covering the LSC's National Vision and the need for delivering cost effective training, high quality learning, encouraging regeneration and meeting the long-term needs of employers.

John went on to talk through the implications of the FE White Paper and the Agenda for Change. Putting them into a regional economic and skills context, he said:

"In terms of the North West economy the productivity gap is inline with the average for England and there has been recent growth in employment. There are also significant opportunities for the Region; however, we need to be aware of the risk of excluding local people from these opportunities.

With skills, there are still 80,000 people across the North West in need of higher level qualifications to meet the productivity gap, 2.5m adults with literacy basic skills needs and 3.5m with numeracy needs. Despite progress this remains a major challenge for the Region."

John was followed by Jane Cowell, Regional Director of Learning, Planning and Performance for the LSC, who spoke about the need to align planning and resources, to improve the match between supply and demand.

The presentations were concluded with Fran Hulbert, Director of Skills Policy for the NWDA, setting out the remit of Regional Development Agencies, the contribution that skills make to the regional economy, the skills priorities and key challenges for learning providers.

Fran went on to highlight the key Regional Priorities, which included:

- Increasing the proportion of young people with the skills and qualifications needed for employment.
- Equipping adults with the skills required for employability, including literacy, language and numeracy.
- Addressing employers' skill needs.
- Developing innovative and enterprise skills.

The conference is run by the North West Provider Group/Association of Learning Providers and following the success of last year's event, has become an annual forum for learning providers to review progress and input into the development of future plans across the Region.

**Ends**

*Photo: John Korzeniewski, Regional Director for the Learning and Skills Council championing the challenges and changes ahead for Learning Providers*

Media contact Debbie Cooke, Regional Press Officer LSC North West on 0161 261 0434.

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### **Learning and Skills Council**

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for planning and funding high-quality vocational education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world class standards. Our vision is that by 2010, young people and adults in England have the knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. Established in 2001, we work nationally, regionally and locally from a network of offices across the country.

#### Top Level Messages

- We plan and invest in high quality education and training for young people and adults that will build a skilled and competitive workforce.
- We help employers to get the training and skills they need for their business.
- We are transforming the further education sector to meet the needs of employers and the local community.
- We are committed to improving learning opportunities for everyone.